Teachers who prepare or have never prepared students for National History Day competition should consider entering students in Cal U’s Primary Source History Day competition. Modeled after National History Day, the competition is open to students from surrounding school districts. The competition is broken down into junior (grades 6-8) and senior (grades 9-12) levels in five categories. Individual and group entries are eligible. Teachers who participate are eligible to receive Act 48 continuing education hours. For more information, contact Nik Roberts at 724-938-6022 or roberts_n@calu.edu.

There’s a false dichotomy that arises in my primary source workshops—namely, the absolutist choice between teaching online and in traditional classrooms. Neither is better overall; learning environments and technologies are never general, but are specific. What has been shown to be “blended learning,” where teachers combine classroom and online learning (see tinyurl.com/blendedlearning). However, it may be that blended learning has been more effective because it is typically more student-centered than one or the other. You can offer and discuss your opinion about effective practices for blended learning with other primary source educators at tinyurl.com/asknik1109.

This month I will provide you with resources for the upcoming Thanksgiving Holiday. These resources will also tie in with the textbook theme about English Colonists. The first resource is from the Teacher Guide section of the Library of Congress. It is a Primary Source Set on Thanksgiving: http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/thanksgiving/pdf/overview.pdf.

This next resource is about Colonial Settlement from 1492—1763. Once on this site, you can click on several other links pertaining to the Colonial Settlement: http://www.loc.gov/teachers/additionalresources/relatedresources/ushist/chrono/colonial.html. The picture to the right can be found on Page 40 of the Prentice Hall Textbook, World Studies: The United States and Canada series.

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Social Media and Education by Nik

An educator familiar with my column recently approached me during a school visit and asked, “What is educational about social media?” (When one person asks a question, I feel that it’s probably on other people’s minds as well.) I attempted to answer the teacher’s question with another one: “How can primary source learners and educators leverage social media to become better learners and educators?” This very question represents a line of inquiry that guides our columns and workshops in this area. Online social media isn’t always “social,” just as personal computers aren’t always “personal.” The idea is to make online media more social for your courses. We will explore ways to do this next month.

Research and Current Thinking

Incorporating Oral History Into the K-12 Curriculum
http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/764

Bringing History to Life: Oral History, Community Research, and Multiple Levels of Learning.
http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/jah/88.4/crothers.html

Critical thinking is also creative and playful thinking. It is the possibility of imagining the impossible, which allows us to grow new ways of seeing in our brains.

Center for Oral History

The Center for Oral History at California University of Pennsylvania operates similar to other university-related oral history centers nationwide. Following are links to other university-sponsored programs that serve as models.

Baylor University - Institute for Oral Histories
http://www.baylor.edu/oral_history/

Character Education Oral History Project
http://cup.uchicago.edu/~kharris/oralhist/

Using Family and Community History to Foster Historical Inquiry in the Elementary Grades
http://www.socstrp.org/issues/PDF/1.2.6.pdf

For more links, contact Nik Roberts at 724-938-6022.

Community and Classroom

Connecting students to community through the study of local history helps students make connections at the national and global levels. Curricular resources to further local understanding can sometimes be found at local museums, libraries, and historic sites. When no formal teaching materials exist, teachers can create their own materials from repositories of historic photographs, documents, maps, and timelines. Walking tours and guided questions, along with the teacher generated materials, can engage students and promote inquiry. Timelines and maps are also useful tools. For other tips on methods for teaching local history, visit http://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/ask-master-teacher/22471