For the rest of this school year, our “Lynne Says” column will follow Lynne’s efforts to enhance her child’s learning by finding, accessing, and organizing primary sources to engage him and develop content understanding. The materials will match topics in an assigned textbook. The purposes of matching primary source materials to textbook topics are to: (1) demonstrate how easy it is to construct resource sets that enhance textbook information; (2) make learning more interesting; and, (3) add rigor to standards-based instruction. Using primary sources supports PA Academic Teaching Standards in all subject areas at all grade levels and aligns well with the Language Arts standards—namely, Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening.

The focus this month is on teaching with case studies—a popular instructional tool. (Some schools even have a policy to build the method into every course.) The idea behind it is to use real world scenarios to stimulate critical thinking and discussion. Conversely, case studies also assist students with transferring classroom learning into the real world. They require a paradigm shift in that they teach students that there is more than one answer to a problem, a truism that’s often not presented in traditional classrooms. For more information of this method, search for “Ask Nik” on the TPS Blog: http://tpscalu.wordpress.com

I am the mother of a 7th grader here in Washington County, PA, and I am going to show teachers how to find, access, and organize Library of Congress primary sources that align with textbook topics taught in the classroom. My son is using The Prentice Hall World Studies Book (The United States and Canada). I began with the textbook topic, Lewis & Clark Expedition. I conducted a site search and started by typing www.loc.gov in my address bar. Once there, I clicked on the “Teachers” link in the upper left hand corner of the screen in the “Resources for” box. Then I typed in "Lewis and Clark Expedition" in the “search this site” box and clicked on “Go.” A list of several resources came up. You can also access several links on different topics on the TPS Blog: http://tpscalu.wordpress.com/

One-on One Professional Development—Just Ask
Teachers can receive personalized professional development through class visits from TPS staff. An example of this is associated with Cal U’s Primary Sources History Day competition: a local competition modeled on the National History Day competitions at the regional, statewide, and national levels. In this example, Instructional Specialist Nik Roberts visits with teachers who are sponsoring and preparing students for entry into Cal U’s Primary Sources History Day competition. In the classroom, he provides teacher professional development by training teachers about the use of primary sources for the competition. He also shows students how primary sources fit into their entries and he trains them to navigate the Library of Congress web site to locate, access, and organize primary sources. After the competition, Mr. Roberts again makes himself available to visit classrooms to offer students suggestions to improve their entries for the regional level competition.
SOCIAL MEDIA AND EDUCATION by NIK

This month, we're featuring Google Docs (GD). In April's Newsletter, I defined GD as a set of highly collaborative online programs, including a word processor, slideshow software, and a spreadsheet. The key word is “online” as GD goes beyond the utility of MS-Office applications in that users can access their work from any web location. Thus, the common problem of collaborating on a group project in which each student has a separate version of the file is totally eliminated. Users can work simultaneously on the same document without the added difficulty of piecing one final version together from various sources. Also, each document can be assigned a URL. Check out GD: http://docs.google.com

RESEARCH AND CURRENT THINKING

Last month, this article focused on the rationale for using Inquiry-based Learning in conjunction with primary sources. This month, we provide links to IBL research and current thinking. Link 1: http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/764. The purpose of this action research project was to examine approaches and techniques that would improve critical thinking skills in history classes at the secondary level. Link 2: Using Inquiry to Teach Social Studies Diane E. Newby, Ed.D. & Peter L. Higgs, Ph.D., Central Michigan University. The authors present examples in which teachers provide opportunities for students to participate in inquiry processes; engage in collaborative, substantive, and reflective discussions; speak their minds; listen respectfully to the contributions of others; and, engage in problem-solving and decision-making activities. Feel free to visit http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/quarterly/research.html for more research links.

CENTER FOR ORAL HISTORY

Teachers searching for ideas about using oral history in the classroom should read Dr. Kathryn Walbert's article, “Incorporating oral history into the K-12 curriculum” at http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/764. It states that even K-3 learners can benefit from oral history in the classroom provided young learners operate in the world they are most familiar with (i.e., families, neighborhoods, and communities). In grades 4-5, students begin going beyond what's known to them and connect with the state and nation. They may begin taking responsibility for conducting oral histories themselves. At the middle school level, students broaden their knowledge of the rest of the world. In high school, students participate in more complex oral history projects, which prepare them for oral history learning at the college level. Recently, 10 area teachers attended a TPS oral history workshop series and each of them submitted an oral history Action Plan for Learning (APL). The APL's are archived and available upon request. Contact Nik Roberts at roberts_n@calu.edu

COMMUNITY AND CLASSROOM

Here is a fine example of linking community and classroom: Using Family and Community History to Foster Historical Inquiry in the Elementary Grades. In this paper, the author first discusses the teaching of social studies and history in elementary grades. Second, the value of history and historical inquiry are explored. Family and community history are highlighted as well as techniques for beginning an oral history study. Third, a family history story from the early 20th century is shared with a focus on group decision making, interviewing strategies, and extension activities. Teacher recommendations are offered. http://www.socstrp.org/issues/PDF/1.2.6.pdf

Monzell and Lucile Wentz Anglin on their wedding day, November 24, 1918 http://www.socstrp.org/issues/

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h1567.html

Critical thinking is the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking.