



Teaching with Primary Sources Western Region End of Project Report

Teaching With Primary Sources Leadership Team
Educational Service District 112
Matt Karlsen, Project Director

Final Project Report

Brief Overview of Strategy Implementation

Library of Congress Teaching With Primary Sources Western Region grant funding supported high school teacher engagement in a lesson study cycle deepening their understanding of, and commitment to, guiding student historical inquiry utilizing primary source documents. Teachers attended a training in the use of primary sources in the classroom generally and the loc.gov website specifically on January 12 & 13, 2012. On those days, teacher teams designed lessons utilizing the resources and pedagogical approaches described during the workshop. The resulting lessons were taught as five “demonstration lessons”, observed and discussed by the teams, on February 10, 16, 23, 24, and March 1. On March 7, the teams regrouped to document their lessons, reflect on the process, and discuss next steps with their districts. Following that session, teacher-participants committed to meet with their non-participating colleagues at their schools to discuss the process and resources. The project director is in the process of preparing lesson artifacts (ARS, teaching tools, etc) and protocols for use by the participants and other interested teachers.

The implementation described above is consistent with that articulated in the project proposal.

Experiences and Activities

Educators Reached:

Twenty-nine individuals attended the January 12-13 training. This roster included:

Twenty high school teachers, ten each from the Evergreen and Vancouver school districts, whose substitute teacher fees were provided through grant funding. These teachers represented 11 schools in the 3rd Congressional District of Washington. The teachers’ assignments included US History, World History, Pacific Northwest History and Contemporary World Issues, both general education and Advanced Placement, at the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades.

One additional high school social studies teacher, two teacher-librarians, and one instructional coach, whose substitutes were provided by Evergreen Public Schools.

The four project coordinators:

Matt Karlsen, History Programs Coordinator, Educational Service District 112;
Tony Liberatore, High School Teacher and Administrative Intern, Vancouver Public Schools;

Ryan Theodoriches, Manager of Social Studies, Teacher-Librarians, and World Languages, Evergreen Public Schools; and
Kathy Wolfley, Curriculum Specialist for Secondary Social Studies, Language Arts, World Languages, Advanced Programs, Navigation 101, and Culminating Project, Vancouver Public Schools.

The Project Director of a separate regional grant, Amy Johnson (Grade 4-5 teacher, Longview School District.)

Nineteen of the twenty teachers described above attended one of the demonstration lessons, facilitated by two or more of the project coordinators.

Implementation experiences and impact:

The program coordinators are pleased with the results of this project. As a result of this short cycle, these two districts have a critical cadre of teachers that are more excited about and adept in guiding student historical inquiry through primary sources and in building greater professionalism through collaborative approaches to teaching and learning.

The program coordinators observed five demonstration lessons through which teacher teams encouraged students to view the past as historians do, interrogating primary sources to make inferences, formulate arguments, and generate questions. The lessons were carefully prepared, resulting from the introduction of new resource banks, inquiry models, and collaborative approach to lesson design. The observation and debrief sessions led teachers to approach pedagogical questions through a student-centered lens that will likely continue to impact their professional growth and practices. Teachers were struck by the power of student-driven inquiry and partner work.

Representative comments from the debrief session include the following:

I learned that the kids are able and willing to think for themselves – that they’re willing to jump in and give it a shot. It’s all about getting kids to think... not just compliance.

We just went through the same inquiry process looking at the student work as [the students] went through with the documents.

This was not like a learning walk. I worked on a lesson related to my work, and I’ll use it. This is the way professional development should be.

It was great to work with other teachers who have such expertise. This shows what teachers from different schools can do with each other to benefit kids.

We’re all after the same thing: Seeing kids being able to connect with the material and make their own meaning is the big payoff.

We lit the fuse, and the kids took care of the rest. The collaboration was valuable... Hearing other’s observations reinforces the idea that I can relinquish some control and that the questions are as important as the answers.

The conversations and questions that we had today make me hold off on retirement.

I wonder: How far can this go?

Following the demonstration lesson, teachers completed a brief survey of their impression of the lesson. They were asked to rate the following statements on a four point scale (4 - Strongly Agree; 3 – Agree; 2 – Disagree; 1 – Strongly Disagree.) The general enthusiasm of the participating teachers is reflected in high mean scores.

	Mean Score
The lesson and debrief deepened my understanding of teaching and learning with primary sources.	3.75
Classroom observations indicated that the students were engaged in meaningful historical inquiry using primary sources.	3.58
Student work analysis indicated that the students were engaged in meaningful historical inquiry using primary sources.	3.48
I'm excited to try the revised lesson in my classroom.	3.74
As a result of this process, I'm likely to teach differently.	3.63
I'm looking forward to discussing this work with my Professional Learning Team.	3.71

Lessons Learned

As described above, this Teaching With Primary Sources regional grant project should be viewed as a success story for participating teachers and their districts. The high quality of the initial awareness training coupled with the lesson study collegial approach to guiding classroom experimentation and consideration made for a powerful professional development cycle.

Teachers need considerable time to organize their collection of and approach to implementing a primary source based approach to teaching with primary sources – and students need time to deeply consider them. This project encouraged both in parallel ways. Students and teachers were active participants in the inquiry process, using a range of sources to deepen their learning. Teachers were provided with significant time during the January workshop to collect resources and significant time following the demonstration lessons to discuss student learning and necessary modifications. Within the five demonstration lessons, both teachers and students used collaborative groups to discuss and debate their findings, engaging social learning. Teachers and students both were organized into heterogeneous structures, and learners from across the range of

skill and experiential backgrounds advanced their understandings. The observational protocol led teachers to eagerly consider differentiation based on student needs.

Teacher teams assembled source sets including a range of media. Student interaction with those sets depended on student access to functioning computers. When teachers depended on print media, the expense of copying and the limitations of finding appropriately sized digital images were sometimes inhibiting.

Teachers are challenged to find the time to research historical topics, assemble related source sets, and develop appropriate questions and tools to guide student interaction. The TPS program can help with this by continuing to embed a lesson study approach into its professional development as well as by posting ARS sets linked to compelling historical questions. Finally, teachers need continued support in anticipating student challenges to accessing primary sources and would be aided by guidance in abridging and adapting materials for a wide range of learners.

Future Plans

The project was designed to maximize the likelihood of sustained impact. Teachers from all district high schools were included, typically in pairs. Their professional learning team meetings, which group them with their non-participating colleagues, should continue to be enhanced by this experience. The involvement on the coordinating team of the social studies administrators will result in the experience being built upon in future professional development efforts.

All Evergreen Public Schools participating teachers will facilitate two 2-hour professional development sessions with their schools' entire social studies departments addressing the use of primary sources as well as features of the Library of Congress website. The district plans that next year students will be expected to create written products that take a position on a historical issue and defend it by referring to primary sources.

Vancouver Public School participating teachers will also share the Library of Congress site and pedagogical approaches with their professional learning teams. The district hopes to institute a modified lesson study approach to encourage a productive use of collaborative meeting time.

Both districts are operating with greatly reduced professional development budgets. They are both appreciative of the infusion of capital and resources which made this project possible and would eagerly court continued work with TPS – both to continue work with participating teachers as well as extend to teachers who did not participate in this round. This extension might include teachers at the high school level as well as teachers who work with younger students.