



TECHNOLOGY
RESEARCH
COMMITTEE

2008 – 2009 Grant Project Report

Project Title: History is Primary

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SUMMARY REPORT
“History is Primary”
Cherie Lange
Chenango Valley Middle School – June, 2009

- **A.** The purpose of this project was to incorporate historical primary sources into an inclusion classroom with hands on, interactive tools. In practice, the smart board was extremely effective. One problem encountered in the beginning was actually getting the smart board into my room and installed. The process took until the middle of the first marking period. Once installed, I re-familiarized myself with the use of the smart board, since I had used a portable one previously. So, in reality, the active use of primary sources with the smart board into the classroom did not begin in earnest until after the winter break.

- **B.** The use of primary sources was **extremely easy to integrate** and became second nature in a short period of time. The tools such as the “creative pen” made highlighting/magnifying and isolating particular portions of texts or images very useful and powerful. I also used archival video clips and was able to stop and isolate frames to point out historically significant images that may have been missed without that option. Student participation was fantastic and students enthusiastically came to board or called out as we used this valuable tool on almost a daily basis. Their abilities improved in interpreting, evaluating, and analyzing these sources. Primary sources used included original documents and excerpts, maps, drawings, cartoons, photos, art, music, and journal excerpts. One aspect of the proposal that I did not follow through on was the survey of the students. The reason was the late start that I had with the installation of the smart board. Surveying was moot because I had already introduced and used many examples of sources in the classroom prior to beginning to use the smart board. I plan to use the survey in the fall of 2009 and spring of 2010 to enhance the data of the incredible voice the smart board brings to the classroom.

- **C.** The most intriguing aspect of using a smart board in the classroom this year was the **additional benefits** of this amazing technology. Primary sources help teachers meet important educational objectives as good teaching tools. They give teachers a resource to encourage conceptual learning and higher order thinking skills in students. The smart board as a partner in the classroom, goes way beyond those important goals. The world is literally at the fingertips of the teacher and the students. One example is current events. During the recent presidential election, I was able to use the smart board to incorporate multiple aspects of the social studies curriculum as well as generate excitement in the classroom. We used websites with interactive maps that showed the progression of primaries through out the nomination process. We looked at each candidate’s websites for information about their stance on particular issues. I developed lessons on the electoral college and we staged a mock election, assigning electoral votes based on class size. The math

teacher collaborated with me and helped to develop smart board lessons that enhanced their understanding of a complex election process. Lastly, the students watched the acceptance speech of President elect Obama the morning after. Students were riveted. It was awesome! The uses are limitless and using primary sources is only one, albeit important, aspect.

- **D.** Students' points of reference are diverse, their learning styles vary, and they may be lacking background knowledge and frames of reference from which to draw conclusions. The development of students' intellectual skills and their ability to think reasonably, rationally, logically, and reflectively is central to each of the standards for social studies in the State of New York. Middle school students, according to the Regents Policy Statement on Middle-Level Education, "need a challenging, standards-based course of study that is comprehensive, integrated, and relevant." Additionally, "The educational program [must] also promote[] both an understanding and the use of the concepts of **technology**; [and] teach[] how to access, organize, and apply information using various media and data." The connection between best practice middle level teaching strategies and the fundamental use of primary sources is **fostered** by the integration of smart board technology in the classroom. The smartboard lends itself to continual use in the classroom. The activities that were used during the school year included:

1. Analysis of primary and secondary source documents.
2. The interactive format of the smart board was used for whole/small group discussion, brainstorming, highlighting, underlining, clarifying and creating graphic organizers by the teacher and students.

Students were able to:

- ❖ Rate the reliability of a variety of sources of information
 - ❖ Find examples of stereotyping in historic and current events
 - ❖ Compare different perspectives of the same event using diaries, letters, songs and photos displayed simultaneously through internet connections and various integrated media.
 - ❖ Analyze, for example, the Declaration of Independence, and portions of the U.S. Constitution
 - ❖ Play review games using pertinent vocabulary and concepts
 - ❖ Examine and interact with primary source based websites in a virtual field trip: For example, we visited a virtual "tenement museum" and a "History of Money" web quest embedded with primary sources.
- **E.** I was able to give special need students copies of notes from the smart board. I did experience problems with the compatibility of the districts printer and the smart board software. I did not have time to learn to use the capture tool very effectively, but that is a goal of mine for next year to better serve absent, and special needs students.
 - **F.** Primary sources lend themselves to evaluation, both at the beginning of a unit of study, when they may help a teacher determine what students have already mastered, and at the end of a unit, as a culminating activity.

The mastery of Document-Based Questions (DBQs) is required in social studies for all students by New York State from the elementary years through commencement. DBQ performance evaluations will help determine if objectives for this proposal have been met. Middle Level students write a DBQ essay at the end of their eighth grade year. The DBQ essay is a series of primary sources with interpretive questions, followed by an essay question that must incorporate the primary sources and students' background knowledge. I used the assessment tools as described in the proposal. DBQ assessments were used through out the year and I did see improvement in scores in my 8th grade students after the 30 week DBQ exam. This exam is a parallel assessment of the state exam given in June. The average of this assessment was about a 71% . Obviously, I was not pleased with these results. Students scored the lowest answering questions correctly on the short answer questions that accompany the primary source documents. **I used this to direct my teaching, focusing on primary source images using the smart board and small group analysis.** Students then took a chapter test of only constructed response questions (primary sources and short answer questions). The scores improved to an average of 80.5%. While this is anecdotal, I really feel the use of the smart board as a strategy to re-teach and better expose students to sources cannot be underestimated. Students experienced a myriad of potential types of documents they would be expected to draw conclusions, analyze raw data, and make inferences for later on the state exam. State exam data will be provided by the end of the summer by BOCES which will also help guide my teaching for the 2009-2010 school year.

- **G.** In conclusion, the connection between best practice middle level teaching strategies and the fundamental use of primary sources is enhanced by the integration of smart board technology. I cannot express how much the use of this technology has improved the quality of instruction in my classroom. The tool kit included with the software enables even the most mundane note taking to come alive with interactive timelines, pop up notes, games, colors, sounds and the list goes on. I am grateful to the Broome-Tioga BOCES Technology Research Committee, Roger Zilliox, Janet Gleason, and the Chenango Valley School District for all their support. I cannot thank all of you enough.