"Teaching With Documents": A Web-Based Resource for Students and Teachers
http://pittsford.monroe.edu/ss99/dbq/

by
Peter Pappas

"*T*eaching With Documents" (TWD) is a website designed to promote document-based instruction and assist teachers, students and administrators in making the transition to new standards, assessments and technologies. I develop the site in response to new social studies assessments recently adopted by New York State.

NYS exams in Global History (10th) and American History and Government (11th) will include a document-based question (DBQ) modeled after the Advanced placement testing in European and American History. The NYS social studies DBQ is designed to assess the ability of each student to work with historical sources in multiple forms. The secondary DBQ will have a maximum of 8 documents; at least 2 of which will be visuals. The fifth and eight grade assessments will have a DBQ with 6 documents (including 2 visuals).

These questions:

- Are based on the NYS Social Studies Learning Standards, themes and concepts.
- Focus on critical thinking skills and ask students to make comparisons, draw analogies, apply knowledge to the given data, and require students to apply historic analysis.
- Ask students to take positions on issues or problems and support their conclusions.
- Require students to look at issues from multiple perspectives.
- Require student to apply skills they use as adults.
- Are criterion referenced and employ a scoring rubric.

I serve as the K-12 Social Studies Coordinator at Pittsford Central Schools, a suburb of Rochester New Work. Our district serves 5900 students in 5 elementary, 2 high schools and a large 4-house middle school. As coordinator, I work with teachers and administrators across the district as mentor, trainer, and program facilitator. I am charged with coordinating the social studies program delivered by 30 secondary social studies teachers, hundreds of elementary teachers, learning specialists and librarians. TWD has proven to be an effective tool to communicate with the school-community and foster a K-12 social studies program that is cohesive, public, dynamic and successful at improving student performance.

The site is based on summaries, excerpts, and direct links to "The Learning Page" / Library of Congress http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/ and "The Digital Classroom" / National Archives and Records Administration http://www.nara.gov/education/classrm.html. My goal was to re-organize material from these document collections to improve their functionality and correlation with New York State standards. TWD also includes original content, best practices from various contributors as well as links to other relevant district and state sites.

I developed TWD using Microsoft FrontPage '98. The site is divided into four sections. **"Basic Resources"** is designed as a quick stop for teachers who are looking for the easy access to teaching materials, lesson and source material.

- Worksheets: gives teachers student assignments ready to be copied and used with students
- Intro Lessons: gives students practice in working with documents
- Links to Sources: explores a variety of fine document collections

"Learn More" offers teachers additional instructional and planning tools.
- Analysis of Sources: introduces tools used by historians
- Types of Sources: examines categories of primary and secondary documents
- Lesson Framework: strategies for incorporating documents into instruction

The **"Standards Section"** provides links to district and state social studies standards.

"State Testing" provides a link to the use of documents in the New York State assessments. The three assessment instruments used in NYS are featured in this section - constructed response, thematic essays and DBQ's. Each section includes:
- Descriptions of the question format and key elements
- Sample questions and rubrics
- Tips on how to develop questions
- Tips on how to prepare students for new assessments

TWD has proven to be an effective tool improve the quality of document-based instruction and it's been a valuable resource throughout our district.

Students: Students have found the site to be an easy reference point for finding links to many interesting and engaging sites on the web. For example, elementary students can link to "Port of Entry" where they can use their detective skills to uncover the stories of immigrants to the United States or click on "The Big Picture" to complete visual jigsaw puzzles. Secondary students can link to scores of interesting sites. Sites such as "US Historic Documents" present valuable reference materials. "Egypt World" allow students to explore a virtual museum on the Ancient Egyptian pyramids. Links to sites such as "The 1968 Oral History Project" serve as a great model for a student-produced oral history project. A new

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resource gallery is being developed to catalogue documents by subject and time period. It will include a new "CyberMuseum " section where students will curate their own galleries of historic source material.

Curriculum and Instruction: One of our program goals is to clearly define more fully the skills and knowledge that students should master at each grade level in our program. Teachers and administrators have developed explicit standards and testing to determine if standards have been met. TWD includes a new sequence in document-based skills with samples of DBQ's and rubrics available at each grade level 6-12.

TWD serves as a reference guide to the many resources on the Internet. It provides teachers with high-quality lesson plans that will enable their students to access effectively and to critically evaluate historic documents. For example, teachers can quickly download worksheets developed by the National Archives and Records Administration formatted for use in the classroom. Teachers who are less adept at using the Internet can find instructions for how to download images and print material from the site.

Staff Development: TWD fosters creativity, initiative and collaboration among teachers. It's difficult to bring us all together at meetings, but the web serves as common a reference point for teachers to showcase different instructional practices and teaching strategies.

This summer I trained over 50 district faculty and staff in web design using FrontPage '98. Many teachers and departments have developed new websites to better utilize the instructional potential of the Internet.

Administrators and Special Areas: Central office administrators and school principals can use the site to stay up to date with new revisions in state standards, district standards and assessments. They can get a quick summary of how document-based instruction is being implemented in the district or download and print specific grade level standards or sample assessments.

The site has proven to be an easy access point for librarians, educational specialists and anyone interested in the many opportunities for interdisciplinary instruction. The site has been especially popular among teachers

interested in integration and project-based instruction. We will be expanding the site to present student projects in a new "Student Showcase" section.

School-Community: We want to involve the community in a dialogue about our program. TWD provides a public showcase and invites collaboration with community partners. One example is our ongoing partnership with the Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester to develop web-based curriculum and reference material based on the museum collection and the combined expertise of the gallery and school district. Visitors to TWD can access the partnership by clicking on "Odyssey Online" to explore ancient Near Eastern, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman cultures.

Parents: The web is an important tool to forge a partnership between teachers, students and their parents. It extends learning beyond the classroom and into the home as more families go on-line and access speed improves. Parents are now able to download sample questions to better understand the structure and process of new state assessments.

Educators have long recognized the value of actively engaging students in the role of historian. Document-based education can provide students with the chance to get "inside" of history, and evaluate the diverse perspectives of primary and secondary sources. It's an opportunity to engage and motivate students and teachers in a collaborative setting.

"Teaching with Documents" is designed to help teachers and students make sense of the vast amount of source material available over the Internet, and effectively bring these resources to their work as historians. It provides easy access to analytic tools, instructional strategies, links to source material, and sample assessments. "Teaching with Documents" is one of many new ways that computer and Internet technology can be harnessed to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Biography

*Peter Pappas is the K-12 Coordinator for Social Studies at Pittsford Central Schools and the director of the district's "Summer Prep School." Peter consults and presents on curriculum, assessment, technology integration and staff development. Readers are invited to communicate with the author at **peterpappas@email.msn.com**. His project Web site is: **http://home.rochester.rr.com/es/***