

Developing Online Primary Source Specialists
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PROPEL was designed by Adventure of the American Mind (AAM) to provide a *free* professional development framework for schools and school districts to train school librarians and media coordinators to be AAM primary source specialists. PROPEL focuses on collaboration with teachers in using the Library of Congress and other online digital primary sources in the classroom.

Developing Online Primary Source Specialists

This presentation introduced PROPEL, which was designed by AAM to provide a *free* professional development framework for schools and school districts to prepare school librarians and media coordinators to be primary source specialists. PROPEL focuses on collaboration between the media specialists and teachers in using the Library of Congress and other online digital primary sources in the classroom.

AAM, a grant from the Library of Congress, is in its seventh year of working with educators in western North Carolina. The AAM staff at Brevard College, Mars Hill College, Montreat College, Western Carolina University, and the Online Education Program collaborated to design PROPEL as a way to prepare media specialists to support teachers in their efforts to include primary sources in their classroom.

PROPEL: Primary Resources Opening Portals to Enhance Learning

PROPEL is based on the foundational beliefs that the school media center is an essential extension of the classroom in which school librarians and media coordinators are a vital link for teachers in curriculum integration, and that teaching and learning should be inquiry-based and constructive. This is reflected in the content included in each of the workshops. The framework for this specialized training was six five-hour workshops. Each workshop built upon the previous workshop's content and required media specialists to complete homework prior to the next workshop. The six workshops were titled as follows:

- Preview
- Responsibility
- Optimize
- Prototype
- Empower
- Launch

There were ten series of workshops offered during the 2006-2007 academic year, six in the fall semester and four in the spring semester. A brief description of the material presented during each workshop with a sample of some of the activities completed follows.

Preview

Where are we going? Lots of places! This first workshop maps the way to understanding and using primary sources, collaborating with teachers, and connecting with other librarians. Emphasis is placed on understanding what primary sources are and where teachers can locate them. The culminating activity is “Making Connections,” a scenario-based exercise that involves having media specialists connect North Carolina Standard Course of Study objectives with primary source activities that encourage higher order thinking (AAM-PROPEL Preview, 2007). Additional activities shared with participants during the workshop include the following:

- Illustrating the Gettysburg Address Activity and Resource
- It's No Laughing Matter—Political Cartoon Analysis Activity and Resource Guide
- The Art of Persuasion—Propaganda and Advertising Activity and Resource Guide
- Discovery Storytelling Activity and Resource Guide
- Treasure Hunt—Document Analysis Activity and Resource Guide (AAM-PROPEL Preview, 2007)

Responsibility

Where does our responsibility lie? Media specialists are responsible for teaching students and teachers about the educational use of primary sources, how to search for copyright information, and how to properly cite primary sources. Media specialists are also responsible for supporting all curriculum areas and encouraging others to be responsible to copyright holders. A major activity in Responsibility is developing pathfinders. Pathfinders are made in a word processing program and contain information about all primary sources and other sources about a specific theme. A pathfinder could have one to hundreds of entries. Information about these resources includes thumbnail images, item names, web addresses, dates/photographer name/place, and copyright information (AAM-PROPEL Responsibility, 2007).

Optimize

You can match the right resource with the right opportunity at the right time. Increase your effectiveness in helping others locate primary sources. The Big6 Model is used to demonstrate effective methods for planning primary source activities. Media specialists experience a variety of activities that effectively model the utilization of Library of Congress online primary sources (AAM-PROPEL Optimize, 2007).

Prototype

An original design that's all about style—with substance! Prototype helps media specialists connect teaching styles and learning styles with primary sources. By exploring a wide variety of teaching and learning methods, the creation of innovative resources (and other cool stuff) begins. From basic primary source analysis to mirrored writings and thinking outside the box, Prototype sets the stage for new activity creations. Some of the activities included in this workshop are as follows:

- Primary Source Analysis

- Image Puzzle Instructions
- Mirrored Writing: The Great Migration
- Plots and Plans and Travel Writing
- Eyewitness Accounts—San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of 1906
- Thinking Outside the Box (AAM-PROPEL Prototype, 2007)

Empower

Discover the path to using primary sources to help teachers create higher order thinking activities for students. Participants build on previous experiences to create practical, hands-on resources and harness these to enrich learning experiences. Media specialists, in collaboration with classroom teachers, develop activities for use in their schools. The Presidents as Expert Leaders activity is shown as a completed activity including a lesson plan, a teacher's resource guide (with pathfinders), and a graphic organizer (AAM-PROPEL Empower, 2007).

Launch

The Launch workshop served as a showcase for the collaborative projects created during the workshop series. The media specialists invited their principal and other school leaders to view the results of the collaborative efforts between the media specialists and a teacher or teachers at their school. The Impact video, *The Media Coordinator and Collaboration*, was shown during the Launch program (2006). This was shown to the school leaders at the request of the media specialists. In order to utilize the collaboration skills developed through participation in PROPEL, the media specialists need the principal's support.

Tools to assist the media specialists' collaboration with teachers were also distributed at the Launch workshop. One of these tools was the online lesson, Introducing Primary Sources. This lesson was developed and piloted with the media specialists as a part of the curriculum for the PROPEL workshop series.

The piloting resulted in the lesson being divided into two lessons, Introducing Primary Sources and Using Primary Sources in the Classroom. A lesson profile which identifies the features and briefly describes the content covered in the lesson is posted with the online conference materials for each of these lessons (Appendix P). The lessons may be viewed online at <http://www.aamonline.org/primary>.

Findings

Since the workshop series was offered first during the Fall 2006 semester and then in the spring semester, the AAM staff had an opportunity to revise the content to better meet the needs of the media specialists. As a part of the final project for the PROPEL series, the media specialists were required to collaborate with a teacher at their school to complete a poster presentation representative of their final collaborative project. The first time PROPEL was taught, the collaborative project completed by the media specialists required more time than the AAM staff anticipated. Therefore, during the

second round of PROPEL the project was introduced during the first workshop. This worked much better and provided for a more cohesive flow for the final project.

Other major changes included reconstructing each workshop to better build on the previous workshop. This new process provided media specialists with a systematic method for building an activity. Based on media specialists' recommendations and upon completion of the PROPEL professional development workshop series, western North Carolina AAM directors developed a "Make It, Take It, and Use It" two-day workshop. This workshop provides two full workdays for media specialists and a teacher from their school with help and resources to develop additional primary source activities.

Conclusion

During 2006-2007, approximately 150 media specialists throughout western North Carolina completed the PROPEL workshop series and are now recognized as "Adventure of the American Mind Primary Source Specialists." The level of collaboration displayed by the media specialists and their growth in knowledge of their teachers' curriculum requirements was significant.

References

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