PUTTING THEORY TO PRACTICE: USING TECHNOLOGY TO ADDRESS STATE CONTENT AND ELA STANDARDS THROUGH A STUDENT CENTERED APPROACH

by

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Purpose of the project:

The purpose of this project is to illustrate some ways that technology may be integrated meaningfully into curriculum in light of the current constraints of both the California state and English Language Arts content standards. The technology was meaningfully integrated in that it was utilized not for the purpose of learning the technology but rather as a means of accomplishing a task.

Procedure:

The meaningful integration of technology was illustrated through an example unit plan. The unit plan was based on California State History/Social Studies Standards focusing on substandards 8.2.1-8.2.7. The substandards were addressed in sequential order with the E.L.A. standards addressed throughout the unit. Following the unit plan is an extensive discussion of the ways in which the unit plan integrated technology in a meaningful way as well as the ways in which it addresses the California state and E.L.A. content standards.

Findings:

While the current California state and E.L.A. standards are constraining in that they restrict the content that primary, middle, and secondary teachers may cover in a specific course it is possible for them to integrate technology in a meaningful way.

Conclusions:

The world is rapidly changing and it is important for educators to acknowledge and
adapt their pedagogy so that it provides students with the literacies relevant for life in the twenty first century.

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Chapter One: Introduction

We are in the midst of a social revolution. Technology and new media have transformed American society making their way into nearly every aspect of people's daily lives. In fact, Rushkoff (2010) claims that technology and new media have had such a dramatic impact on humans and society that they have actually reprogrammed our central nervous systems so that many individuals are, essentially, wired into the digital world through their computers or mobile devices, receiving instant Facebook updates, text messages, emails, or Twitter posts that alert users with beeps, vibrations, songs, or rings. The unceasing barrage of updates, posts, and messages is having such a profound affect on individuals that, "For the first time, regular people are beginning to show signs of stress and mental fatigue once exclusive to air traffic controllers" (Rushkoff, 2010, p. 36). Rushkoff (2010) attributes this to, "the random flood of pings... we are[too] slow to adapt to... and our nervous systems are not happy" (p. 36). One manifestation of this is the phantom phone vibration syndrome.

Unfortunately, in spite of the transformative impact that digital technologies and new media have had on individuals and society by changing the way, "people... learn, play, socialize, exercise judgement, and engage in civic life" (Davidson & Goldberg, 2009, p.12), public education in the United States has remained relatively stagnant. Very little change has occurred in regard to the structure of the system, conception of literacy, or integration of technology over the past hundred years as schools maintain a content based, factory model indicative of the early nineteen hundreds. This, however, is not a recent phenomenon as Parker (2009) states, "Historically the education system in the United States has not been prone to change" (p. 3).
Let's face it, aside from the addition of an overhead projector, a television set, and perhaps a color change of the black board, if an educator from the late nineteenth century were to walk into a modern classroom, odds are, they would feel comfortable and, relatively speaking, be able to pick up where they left off using the same teacher centered approach that educators have perpetually fallen back on for generations.

This lack of change is unacceptable and does a disservice to both students and society because, in the rapidly changing, media saturated environment of the Information Age, "a literate citizen must now have a higher level of critical and analytic skills than was true even a decade ago" (Parker, 2009, p. 169). We cannot provide students with the necessary level of critical and analytic skills discussed by Parker (2009) if we continue with the teacher centered, one size fits all curriculum based on the universal standards of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The realities of NCLB, ironically, have very little to do with the child as the name might suggest, but have everything to do with the content, and rote memorization of predetermined "facts" based on the assumption that there is one right answer, "and if you were in any doubt about this, the test answers would set you straight" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2005, p. 4). Knowledge in this form is the antithesis of the critical and analytic skills which a literate citizen must possess today and serves only to maintain the status quo by creating a citizenry who merely accept what is rather than imagine what could be, or better yet, what should be. Education must be understood beyond the acquisition of content knowledge and, "must also entail a form of 'critical framing' to enable the learner to take a theoretical distance from what they have learned, to account for its social and cultural location" (Buckingham, 2007, p. 150). In other words, we must move to an
understanding of literacy that not only includes the ‘facts’ of the text, but also considers the social context and the sociocultural factors which influenced its creation.

If public schools and educators are to remain relevant in the twenty first century, it is imperative for them to broaden their understanding of literacy and learning to include all forms of new media. The need is urgent because, right now, “learning is happening online, all the time, and in numbers far outstripping actual registrants in actual schools” (Davidson & Goldberg, 2009, p. 10). There is a major disconnect between the realities of students lives outside of school and the realities of life on campus where technology continues to be viewed as as an unbiased instrument to deliver content more efficiently.

In order to meet the needs of students today, “we need to take account for the massive technological changes currently taking place... [as] our schools are neither situated in a vacuum nor immune to change and conditions impacting the rest of our lives” (Parker, 2009, p. 3). This means that education can no longer be seen as occurring in the classroom alone, but in nearly every aspect of an individual’s life due in large part to the readily available access to new media and digital technologies. The question remains, however, as to how educators can address these issues in light of the current teacher centered, standards based culture of public education in the United States. To be an effective educator today one must understand that, “learning is complex, and socially constructed, to be open to new understandings of communication, and to appreciate a diverse learning environment” (Parker, p. 168). This can only be achieved if educators let go of antiquated notions of teacher centered, content driven education by, “revisit[ing] and rethink[ing] key educational principles starting with the notions of school-based
learning and literacy and a definition of knowledge as static and unchanging” (Parker, p. 168). Educators must redefine their understanding of and approach to their practice in regard to emerging technologies, digital environments, and participatory culture (Jenkins, 1992) of the Information Age, by including relevant forms of media literacy in order to provide students with the necessary critical and analytic skills necessary for meaningful participation in a globalized digital society. The remainder of this paper will discuss the importance of changing from a content based, teacher centered approach to teaching and learning to a student centered approach. The approach focuses on developing contextual understanding and meaningful learning experiences that integrate technology in a meaningful way while still addressing both the California State Standards and the English Language Arts (ELA) Common Core Standards.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The following is a review of relevant literature on the importance of utilizing a student centered approach to pedagogy in order to meaningfully integrate technology into curriculum with a focus on history. The literature review will cover:

- Teaching with a student centered perspective
- Teaching with technology utilizing a student centered perspective
- Teaching history with technology utilizing a student centered perspective
Teaching With a Student Centered Perspective

It can be challenging to define meaningful learning in light of the rapidly changing realities of life in the Information Age. Traditional, teacher centered, approaches to education, "in which learners attempt to recall and recite the knowledge generated by others" (Ashburn & Floden, 2006, p. 26) treats learners as if they are empty vessels that need to be filled up with the necessary content from the all knowing educator and falls short of fostering meaningful learning for life in the twenty first century. According to Wiske, in Ashburn and Floden (2006), in order to create meaning, "learners must actively construct their own understanding rather than simply absorb what others tell them" (p. 26). In other words educators must create meaningful learning experiences where students can interact with the content in ways that allow them to connect the new information to their prior knowledge and past experiences.

A student centered approach with the goal of creating meaningful learning experiences is theoretically rooted in sociocultural theory. According to Bryman (2001) sociocultural theory is based on the social constructivist paradigm which views knowledge as constructed socially through shared interactions between individuals. This perspective views learning and development as interconnected within social events and happening while individuals interact, "with other people, objects, and events in the collaborative environment" (Li, Bruce, and Hughes, 2011, p. 297). The sociocultural philosophy originated from Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist and educator, who argued for, "the critical importance of social and cultural context to human cognitive development," (Li, Bruce, & Hughes, p. 297). Human cognition
develops through engaging in social activities, and cannot be separated from the sociocultural and historical contexts which spur such development (Johnson, 2009). McLoughlin and Oliver (1998) state that sociocultural theory is characterized, “by collaborative learning using social, interactive, and reflective learning processes” (p. 128).

A student centered approach based on sociocultural theory creates meaningful learning experiences by allowing students the opportunity to, “connect what they already understand, believe, and know how to do” (Ashburn & Floden, 2006, p. 26), to new information. This allows for cultural contextual development relevant to learners to be integrated to the study of new information therefore creating more meaningful learning experiences for the students. Connecting prior knowledge to new information allows students to develop the contextual knowledge necessary for deep, meaningful learning, and is the first step in equipping students with the necessary critical and analytic skills necessary for participation in society in the twenty first century. If educators are unable or unwilling to make this transition, their students are likely to have a limited understanding of the new information and have difficulty applying the knowledge to new contexts. Meaning is created when the content of what the students are learning is put in a context that is relevant to their lives. Learning specific content should not be the focus of learning, but rather importance must be placed on understanding ways that knowledge is actively constructed. This critical understanding of knowledge construction is a necessary skill for individuals if they are to participate, “in a world that is complex and rapidly changing” (Ashburn & Floden, p. 27), as is the reality of living in the globally connected digital world.
A student centered approach to education based on sociocultural theory with the goal of providing students with meaningful learning experiences focuses on developing an individual's ability, "to think for themselves and make thoughtful decisions about when and how to use their knowledge... how to generate new knowledge and cultivate habits of mind that support continual learning, reflection and responsible action" (Ashburn & Floden, 2006, p. 27). In addition to developing an individual's, "capacity and dispositions to develop and apply knowledge creatively, flexibly, and appropriately in a range of situations" (p. 27), including those related to new technology.
Teaching With Technology Using a Student Centered Perspective

The meaningful introduction of new technologies requires educators to reevaluate and adapt teacher centered practices. According to Collins and Halverson (2010), “information technologies have pushed us to a radical, learner-oriented understanding of knowledge acquisition. Information technologies foster a more hands-on, activity based education” (Collins & Halverson, p. 20). Windschitl and Sahl (2002) claim, “teachers often change instructional practices over time when using technology with students which has suggested that teachers’ use of technology may play a role in their shifting toward more constructivist pedagogies” (p. 165). Although when introducing technology, it is important for educators to maintain focus on the task which the technology is being utilized to undertake rather than shifting focus to learning about the tool. In other words, “the pedagogy should lead the technology, not technology lead the pedagogy” (Hammond & Manfra, 2009, p. 163). When the technology leads the pedagogy it is usually enacted in a behaviorist, teacher centered manner. Sullivan and Czigler (2002) found that, “the behaviorist approach tends to be the one applied, by default, to new technology based learning situations when the developer and the technology rather than the educational outcome dictates the educational use of technology” (p. 336). This occurs because the emphasis remains focused on utilizing the technology as a device for content retention rather than as a platform for communication, collaboration, creation, and investigation. In fact, when the, “drill and practice approach of behaviorism [characterized by drill and practice tutorials, individual instructions, and feedback]” (McLoughlin & Oliver, 1998, p. 128) is applied to the integration of technology
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in a classroom it, "makes the teacher role redundant" (McLoughlin & Oliver, 1998, p. 128) since the computer based tutorials will come preprogrammed with instructions and prompts similar to scripted lesson plans which keep the focus on the content rather than the student. The teacher should, "become a facilitator of the student's engagement with the material instead of a being the central transmitter of knowledge" (Hammond & Manfra, 2009, p. 166). While the behaviorist method might be appropriate for certain learning situations, the decision to use this approach should be done consciously rather than resulting from the introduction of technology.

According to Sullivan and Czigler (2002), "when a sociocultural perspective is taken in regard to the use of new technology in education, it is impossible not to consider the appropriateness of the technology," (p. 336). They argue that a technologically, "supported learning environment should be a conversation based on reciprocity and mutual understanding reached through reflection, discussion and negotiation" (Sullivan & Czigler, p. 336) and therefore, "cannot be achieved through a didactic view of teaching whereby [the teacher], imposes meaning and dominates" (p. 336). Learners must take an active role in the learning process as, "deep, learning requires that the student maintains a certain degree of self-regulating autonomy, and the ability to demonstrate initiative and develop independent thought" (p. 336).

In recent years many schools and districts have had a push to get the newest technology or fastest Internet connection without a clear understanding of what they were going to do with it or what the students might do with it if given the opportunity. Schools that have been able to acquire the newest equipment have maintained what Buckingham (2007) refers to as a protectionist stance toward technology, in part, due to a misunderstanding of the ways in which
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most students use technology and new media as a means of communication, collaboration, and creation. If educators want to provide meaningful education that will equip their students with the skills and critical perspective necessary for navigating the media saturated world of the twenty first century, they must re evaluate and adapt their pedagogical practice in accordance with the particular form of new media technology that they feel will best allow their students to learn, collaborate, and produce meaningful products. This means they must completely understand the framework of their pedagogy and curriculum in relation to the technology.

Koehler and Mishra (2006) refer to this as an educator’s, Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge or TPACK and argue that, “Newer technologies often disrupt the status quo, requiring teachers to reconfigure not just their understanding of technology but of all three components” (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, p. 1030).

According to Beatham (2008), when utilizing a technology it is important for the teachers to, “clearly distinguish the nature of the subjects they teach from the tools used for its inquiry... [or] students will not correctly learn their subjects” (p. 64). For example, history is not the study of names, dates, and places, but rather a way of understanding, “how the past influences the present and future” (Beatham, p. 64). The names, dates, and places are simply a technology developed for the study of the ways in which the past influences the present and future. However, in order for the new information to be understood in a deep and or meaningful way the students must also reflect and compare that which they have just learned to what is happening in the world today and how those events affect their lives. Technology must be viewed as the means rather than the end or risk exacerbating the problem of focusing on
learning about the tool rather than the task. It is the educator's responsibility to, “ensure that they and their students distinguish means and ends all the time” (Beatham, p. 68). In order to remain focused on the task begin by asking questions that will be investigated then select the tool which will be used for its inquiry. Once the tool has been chosen, educators must maintain what Beatham (2008) refers to as, “binocular vision... keeping one eye on the task and the other on the tool” (p. 68), to make sure that the tool is serving the task rather than getting in its way.

Today knowledge is readily available in the form of multimodal texts that, “involve complex relationships between visuals, space and text... designed in a sense... [where] meaning is carried as much visually as it is by words and sentences,” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2005, p. 8), thus requiring technology assisted education to consider the visual designs of texts in addition to what Jhally and Lewis (1998) refer to as, “the circuit of production and reception” (p. 111). The circuit of production and reception includes the context in which the text under consideration was created, distributed, and received rather than simply focusing on literacy that only considers the text as a final product. “To appreciate the significance of contemporary media, we need to know why they are produced, under what constraints and conditions, and by whom” (Jhally & Lewis, 1998, p. 111). This, however, cannot be accomplished by simply relegating media literacy to technology classes, continuing to focus on texts as a final product, or learning how to 'use' the new technological tool. Technological literacy must expand to all areas of learning and recognizing that all knowledge is socially constructed, carries within itself inherent biases, and is relative to time, place, and perspective. Media literacy with an understanding of what Jenkins (1992) refers to as participatory culture is focused on collaboration and
communication and must be meaningfully integrated into the framework of every discipline as, "those [students] coming into our educational system rely on participatory learning for information about virtually everything in their lives" (Jenkins et al., 2006, p. 13), yet have little contextual basis for understanding the sociocultural issues at play in the production and reception of texts and, therefore, creation of knowledge. Jenkins (1992) argues that participatory culture has, "at least five distinct dimensions [including] its relationship to a particular mode of reception; its role in encouraging viewer activism; its function as an interpretive community; particular traditions of cultural production; [and] its status as an alternative social community" (p. 2).

It is argued that the disconnect between the integration of technology in schools and the way students are using it outside of school is due to the fact that, "Outside school, children are engaging with these media not as technologies, but as cultural forms" (Buckingham, 2007, p. 145), while in school technology and new media are still regarded as a neutral tool to deliver more information (Buckingham, 2007). The introduction of new media and technology must be understood with a relational perspective (Beatham, 2008) that acknowledges the ways in which, technological practices are bound to social life and not simply neutral skills. Schools and teachers alike must learn from the ways students are using technology and new media to learn, collaborate, and communicate in their personal lives then extend those principles to the classroom in order to make the integration of technology meaningful. Technology has changed society and in turn will and should change the classroom.
Teaching History with Technology Utilizing a Student Centered Perspective

Today young people are growing up in an environment that has become increasingly saturated with technology, “and technology can serve as a powerful catalyst for fuller student participation in general education classrooms” (Okolo, Englert, Bouck, Heutsche, & Wang 2010, p. 425). When integrated in a meaningful way, “the internet and technology also offer wonderful opportunities for student centered learning” (DenBeste, 2003, p. 492). Okolo et al. (2010) claim that integrating technology might also provide important motivational benefits in content specific instruction. Their study suggested student engagement was higher when certain technology was utilized and that students and teachers alike reported higher levels of engagement. Also, web-based learning environments have the ability to provide educators the opportunity to create meaningful instruction, “to a range of diverse students found in today’s classrooms” (Okolo et al., 2010, p. 425). Instructional practices include the student’s ability to, “design a research project, carry it through, and go public by developing their own website or presentation materials” (DenBeste, 2003, p. 492).

Echoing the definition of the study of history by Beatham (2008) Carretero and Voss (1994) argue that when history is, “considered a necessary and important activity of a society, [it] involves a desire to understand the past, frequently viewing the past in relation to the present” (p. 2). Following with the constructivist philosophical notions of learning inherent in sociocultural theory, the ability to connect the past, present, and future with an individual’s prior knowledge and past experiences is the basis of meaningful learning. Okolo et al. (2010) found
that, "prior knowledge may have helped students better deepen their understanding of a more familiar concept than of a less familiar concept" (p. 424). In other words, students were able to construct deeper and more meaningful learning when they were able to connect what they were learning to their own lives. This approach to pedagogy aligns with the framework of the constructivist philosophy of teaching and learning in which students construct new knowledge through experiences that confirm or disconfirm prior experiences. It is complex, requiring knowledge and skills specific to the discipline some of which are described as a students' ability to,

- locate and analyze relevant and sometimes contradictory information from primary and secondary sources (Carretero & Voss, 1994; VanSledright & Kelly, 1998)
- summarize and synthesize new information then connect what they learned to the conclusions of others and their own past experiences (De La Paz, Morales, & Winston, 2007)
- analyze the multiple perspectives and viewpoints of the central participants (Wineburg, 1991)
- engage in interpretation and inference to explain why historical events and issues occur (Paston, 1999; VanSledright, 2002). (Okolo et al., Englert, Bouck, Heutsche, and Wang, 2010, p. 417)

If a historian wishes his interpretations to stand up to critiques he or she must follow a rigid logical structure and support claims with evidence (Stearns, Seixas, & Wineburg, 2000). History education can be enhanced by integrating new technologies in that they provide an opportunity for individuals to study, "the past using a variety of electronically reproduced primary source texts, images, and artifacts as well as the constructed historical narratives, accounts, or presentations that result from digital historical inquiry" (Okolo et al., p. 424). This
means that today educators can utilize the Internet to access a wide variety of resources
constituting a, “rich and extensive repository of primary and secondary historical sources,
including documents, images, video, music, and oral histories” (Okolo et al., p. 418), which can
be particularly useful when differentiating curriculum for students of varying abilities. The use of
primary documents in K–12 classrooms allows learners to develop historical understanding
through the examination of original evidence as well as considering the creation of historical
accounts (Hammond & Manfra, 2006) and therefore the social construction of knowledge. In
‘History may be better suited to digital technology than any other humanistic discipline (n. p.)’,”
(p. 224).

Not only does the study of history lend itself perfectly to the integration of technology it
also allows for alternatives to text only courses which may be beneficial for students with
disabilities (Okolo et al. 2010). It is also argued that the authenticity of web based resources as
well as the flexibility offered to students to conduct historical inquiry could improve the
motivation of students to engage in and learn history as well as encourage educators to
differentiate their curriculum in ways that can benefit all learners (Okolo et al., 2010). In addition
to providing multiple options for educators to differentiate their curriculum, technology and the
internet could offer educators a way to improve the quality of history education by exhibiting
more effective pedagogical practices in that they make it easier for instructors to supplement
text-based instruction, increase student motivation, and offer differentiated activities (Okolo et
al., 2010).
Chapter Three: Unit Plan

The unit plan has been divided into ten total, ninety minute block schedule classes. Seven cover the California state content standards for eighth grade social studies substandard 8.2, and the final three have been designed so that the eighth class period will wrap up the unit and introduce the culminating assessment, the ninth will be a collaborative work day, then the plan ends with student presentation of final projects. The lessons are intentionally vague in many aspects as the unit was designed with a student centered approach based on sociocultural theory which argues that learning and literacy are culturally relevant and therefore can only be meaningfully enacted when related to learner’s past experiences and prior knowledge. This means that much of the information must be contributed by the students in each class and therefore cannot be predetermined by a curriculum designer. For this reason categories are titled as suggestions (e.g. suggested teaching activities, suggested resources etc.) and should be adapted to each class in the ways that the educator feels will be most effective for their students.

It is important that educators move away from scripted curriculum as it in no way considers the student in relation to the content aside from their retention of predetermined information points illustrated through a multiple choice test. Emphasis is placed on the curriculum alone in a manner which supports the notion that knowledge is universal and constant with one true correct answer which anyone who considers history important knows is completely false. Knowledge and truth are social constructions relevant to time and place and therefore an agreement among human beings rather than universal constants.

Each lesson has been broken down in the same way with categories including the
California state standards addressed in the lesson, the goals of the lesson, key terms, important questions, suggested teaching activities, suggested resources, and additional resources. The state standards are investigated in consecutive order as they appear in the History Social Science Framework for California Public Schools (2005) published by the California Department of Education. The unit plan also addresses California's Common Core Content Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Studies (2010), however, they are not explicitly stated in the beginning of each unit, but rather discussed extensively in the discussion section following the unit plan. The goals of the lesson include the curricular aim of the lesson, or what the students should understand by the end of the lesson. Key terms are listed as important references, phrases, or ideas from each lesson and are intended to be used at the teacher's discretion during discussions and subsequent classroom activity as a means of developing discipline specific language (e.g. jargon). Important questions are designed as the backbone of most lessons in that they provide a critical framing for student's consideration of the content material in relation to their own personal experiences and prior knowledge. Suggested teaching activities consist of the physical activities which one could implement. They are designed with a student centered approach with the assumption that the students are doing the required homework each class period and have a basic understanding of the content which is going to be considered on a particular day. Most class periods are structured in the same way in order to maintain a sense of continuity and routine so that students know what to generally expect in a given class period. Activities include, a quick write to get students thinking about the topics of the day followed by a whole class discussion of the quick
writes and the homework from the night before. This should lead into the small group activities.

The small group activities have been designed so that students can interact with the content in a personal way and develop a deeper understanding of the topic and the ways in which it relates to their lives. Each period ends with another whole class discussion which involves students sharing their results of whatever the small group activity might have entailed (e.g. a pamphlet, mural, etc.) as well as a brief discussion of the homework and the posting to the teacher’s Twitter account. Suggested resources consist of websites, videos, and links to other resources used in the lessons and additional resources are included either for instructional purposes (e.g. Google Docs how to) or for differentiating the curriculum if needed. Additional resources are not considered part of the base unit plan.
Creating the Constitution: Socially Constructing Knowledge

Guiding Questions.

- What does it mean to be an active member in a global society?
- What literacies are important for individuals to possess in the Digital Era?
- How can technology be integrated in a meaningful way and still address the state and E.L.A. standards?
Part One: Leading to the Constitution

Day 1: Influential Documents: Magna Carta, English Bill of Rights, and Mayflower Compact.

Suggested Time: 90 minutes (1 block schedule session).

Standards Addressed: 8.2.1: Discuss the significance of the Magna Carta, the English Bill of Rights, and the Mayflower Compact.

Goals:
- Students will review major ideas of enlightenment, and the origins of self government, employed by the founding fathers to create a government that was neither too strong nor too weak.

Key Terms:
- Monarchy: A form of government where power rests in one individual (e.g. King or queen).
- Dictatorship: A form of government where power rests in one individual without hereditary succession
- Limited Government: A form of government where power is restricted to maintaining personal liberties and the economy, usually expressed in a constitution.
- Representative Democracy: A form of democracy in which the people elect individuals represent them in the government.
• Individual Rights: The notion that all humans are imbued with certain rights (e.g. life, liberty, property.)

• Direct Democracy: A form of democracy in which the people vote directly for laws.

Important Questions:

• Why would citizens want to have limits on the power of their government?

• What are the differences and similarities between a direct democracy and a representative government?

Suggested Teaching Activities:

• Review: Previously assigned homework (read handout regarding The Magna Carta, The English Bill of Rights, and The Mayflower Compact. Read sections titled: The Basics and History at http://www.usconstitution.net/constkids.html. Post reflection on class website to the question: Why would citizens want to have limits on the power of their government?)

• Quick Write: In your opinion, would you rather live in a country where citizens elect representatives to make laws for them, or a country in which the majority of citizen votes decides what will become laws? Why?

• Small Group Discussion: Have students share their responses with a neighbor.

• Class Discussion: Use student responses to quick write and previous posts to lead into a discussion regarding the social significance represented in each document (e.g. The
ways in which The Magna Carta, The English Bill of Rights, and The Mayflower Compact affected the way people were governed). What are the differences and similarities between a Monarchy, direct democracy, and a representative government?

- Small Group Activity: Groups should create a visual representation of one of the key terms with a written component which describes how their drawing reflects the ideas of government associated with the term.

- Class Discussion: Have each group share their work.

- Homework: Read article on The Articles of Confederation at
  
  http://www.ushistory.org/us/14b.asp , watch

  youtube.com/watch?v=nXopINJmxkE&feature=related then post a response to the question: “Why do you think many people believed it was necessary to create a stronger central government?” (Have a student tweet the homework from your Twitter account)

Suggested Resources:

- Google Docs

- http://www.useconstitution.net/constkkids.html The Constitution for Kids

- www.ushistory.org/us/14b.asp Articles of Confederation

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXopINJmxkE&feature=related Bill of Rights Video
Additional Resources:

- http://www.google.com/google-d-s/b1.html Google Docs Tour
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRqUE6IHTEA Google Docs Video
- https://docs.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?answer=49008 Google Docs Overview
- https://docs.google.com/a/seawolf.sonoma.edu/present/view?skipauth=true&id=ddnctv170cbskyf58 Google Docs Power Point
**Day 2: Analyzing the Articles of Confederation.**

**Suggested Time:** 90 minutes (1 block schedule session)

**Standards Addressed:** 8.2.2: Analyze the Articles of Confederation and the ways it was successful in implementing the ideas from the Declaration of Independence and how it fell short.

**Goals:**
- Students will understand the strengths and weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation which ultimately led to its failure and the creation of the Constitution.

**Key Terms:**
- Social Contract Theory: An individual's right to life, liberty, and possessions. Locke

**Important Questions:**
- Why is it important for a nation to have a strong central government?
- What problems could arise if a nation's central government has too much or too little power?

**Suggested Teaching Activities:**
- Quick Write: Should people trust that the government has their best interests at heart? Explain.
- Group Discussion: Review responses to quick write as well as posts from the night.
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before as a way to lead into a discussion of the Articles of Confederation and the reasons for its shortcomings.

- Small group activity: Groups should discuss and formulate answers to the following questions.
  - What does the quote by Locke mean to you? How does it relate to the shortcomings of the Articles of Confederation?
  - In what ways do you believe the government is fulfilling its promise to provide citizens with the basic rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness today? Give an example.
  - In what ways is the government not fulfilling their promise to provide citizens with the basic rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? Give an example.
  - What do you believe the government can do to improve the way individuals are provided with life liberty and the pursuit of happiness? What would it take for the government to implement your ideas?

- Discuss responses as a whole class.

- Homework: Read article on the major debates of the constitution at http://www.ushistory.org/us/15d.asp and post a response to the question: Why is it important for individuals to consider all perspectives and points of view when discussing an issue? What types of personal attributes do you believe are necessary for individuals to have when debating controversial topics? (For example: a person should be patient
so that everyone has an equal opportunity to share their views so that everybody's opinion counts equally.) (Have a student tweet the homework from your Twitter account)

Suggested Resources:


Additional Resources:

- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXopINJmxeE&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXopINJmxeE&feature=related) Bill of Rights Video Remix
- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYG_4-y8-VY&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYG_4-y8-VY&feature=related) Bill of Rights Video
Part Two: Creating the Constitution

Day 3: Debating the Constitution.

Suggested Time: 90 minutes (1 block schedule session)

Standards Addressed: 8.2.3: Evaluate the major debates during the development of the Constitution.

Goals:

- Students will understand that the Constitution was developed as a result of several compromises regarding sociocultural issues such as race, gender, money, and power in relation to rights of the federal government, the state governments, and individuals.

Key Terms:

- Representation: Major debates during the creation of the Constitution including,
  - Shared Power
  - Divided state and federal power
  - Slavery and representation
  - The rights of Individuals
- Compromise: Settling a disagreement by both parties giving up aspects of their argument

Important Questions:

- Should the federal government be able to overturn state laws or enforce federal laws
which go against state laws? Does this still happen today? How?

- When the framers of the Constitution were considering who should have the right to vote for members of the House of Representatives, did they include everyone in the states who was of a certain age? Were there restrictions placed on who could vote? What are some broader social implications of this type of thinking (e.g. The role/rights of women and minorities)?

- When slaves were counted as three-fifths of a human for the purpose of government representation was the elected official representing them? Are minorities equally represented today? How does this align with the Enlightenment ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness described by Locke?

- Why was there a compromise in regard to representation of slaves if many of the people at the time believed that slavery was wrong? What might have happened if slavery was outlawed?

- Based on the compromises agreed upon by the framers of the constitution, would laws and representation be equal for all individuals living in the country at this time? Why?

- Are individual freedoms still debated today? How? What might citizens do when they come across laws which unjustly limit personal freedoms?

Suggested Teaching Activities:

- Quick write: Give an example of a time when you had to work with someone you might not agree with in order to accomplish a common goal (e.g. a school project, at camp,
perhaps with a sibling). Did each of you get everything you wanted or did you work out a way that both of you could use parts of your ideas?

- Class Discussion: Use the quick write and responses to previous post to lead into a class discussion about the various compromises made at the Constitutional Convention and the reasons behind them.

- Small Group Activity: Using ideas gleaned from the class discussion and readings regarding the important questions, have students choose a current issue/law which they feel limits individual freedoms and come up with an argument which supports their claims using information gleaned from the readings and class discussion.

- Class Discussion: Review small group work.

- Homework: Read [http://www.ushistory.org/us/16a.asp](http://www.ushistory.org/us/16a.asp), [http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/abt_fedpapers.html](http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/abt_fedpapers.html) and [http://www.ushistory.org/us/16b.asp](http://www.ushistory.org/us/16b.asp) then respond to at least two classmates posts from the week. (Have a student tweet the homework from your Twitter account)

Suggested resources:


- [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/bdsbib:@field(NUMBER+@od1(bdsdc c@c01a1))](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/bdsbib:@field(NUMBER+@od1(bdsdc c@c01a1))) Documents from the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention, 1774-1789

• http://www.ushistory.org/us/16a.asp  Federalists
Day 4: The Federalist Papers.

Suggested Time: 90 minutes (1 block schedule session)

Standards Addressed: 8.2.4: Describe the political philosophy underpinning the Constitution specified in the Federalist Papers.

Goals:

- Students will understand the differences between Unitary, Confederal, and Federalist political philosophies and the reasons the framers of the Constitution sought a system of government in which power was distributed between multiple institutions.

Key Terms:

- Unitary Government: A form of government in which authority and decision making power lies in the central government
- Confederal Government: A form of government in which power is derived from an alliance between independent states
- Federalism: A form of government in which power is divided between governing authorities such as states
- Federalists: A political party that was active during the late seventeen and early eighteen hundreds who supported a loose central government and the ratification of the Constitution
- Antifederalist: A group of people opposed to the ratification of the Constitution although
not as well organized as the Federalists

- Tyranny: An unjust and severely oppressive form of government.

Important Questions:

- What could result from instituting a government which is either too strong or too weak? Why is it important?

- Why is it important for individuals to share their opinions rather than following along with everyone else?

Suggested Teaching Activities:

- Quick Write: “Describe a time when you took sides on an issue or argument? What types of information did you use to support your position?”

- Group Discussion: Review responses to the quick write as a way to transition into a discussion regarding the opposing political philosophies of the Federalists and Antifederalists.

- Small Group Activity: Have students create a flyer in support of either the Federalists or the Antifederalists along with a brief written description of the ways in which their flyer reflects the philosophical ideals of the group.

- Class Discuss: Have groups present their flyers.

- Homework: Watch the video

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWBG8byqqUI&feature=related Then read:
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http://wadsworth.com/history_d/special_features/ilrn_legacy/waah1c01c/content/amh1/readings/virginia.html and

http://www.virginiamemory.com/online_classroom/shaping_the_constitution/doc/religions_and Freedom
then post a response to the question: “What was Jefferson worried about when he described the need for the separation of church and state?” on the class website. (Have a student tweet the homework from your Twitter account)

Suggested resources:

- http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/abt_fedpapers.html About the Federalist Paper
- http://wadsworth.com/history_d/special_features/ilrn_legacy/waah1c01c/content/amh1/readings/virginia.html Virginia Stature of Religious Freedom

Additional Resources:

- http://www.ushistory.org/gov/3_as Federalism
- http://www.ushistory.org/gov/3a.asp The Founders and Federalism
- http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/abt_fedpapers.html About the Federalist Papers
- http://www.ushistory.org/gov/2d.asp The Bill of Rights

Suggested Time: 90 minutes (1 block schedule session)

Standards Addressed: 8.2.5: Discuss the significance of Jefferson's Statute of Religious Freedoms as a forerunner to the first amendment and the origins, purpose, and differing views of the founding fathers on the issue of separation of church and state.

Goals:

- Students will understand the social significance, origins, and philosophical ideals of Jefferson's Statute of Religious Freedoms and the ways in which it affects our society today.

Key Terms:

- English Act of Toleration: An act passed in Britain in 1689 allowing individuals the right to practice religions other than Catholicism and Unitarianism.

- Separation of church and state: The principle describing the reasoning for keeping religious ideals separate from state laws and policies, a result of Jefferson's Statute of Religious Freedoms, "our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions" Thomas Jefferson

- Theocracy: A form of government in which God is recognized as the supreme ruler whose laws are enacted by a ruler seen as divinely guided

- Fascism: A system of government which is led by a dictator who suppresses all dissent
while emphasizing nationalism.

Important Questions:

- What was Jefferson worried about when he called for a separation of church and state?
- In what ways have religious ideals challenged individual rights in recent years?
- Are there instances today where religious ideals have influenced state law? Do these laws affect the civil rights of specific individuals?
- Should there be a separation of church and state?

Suggested Activities:

- Quick Write: "If a bill is introduced which would limit an individual’s rights or a group of individuals rights based solely on religious ideals should it be allowed to become law? Why?"
- Class Discussion: Watch Obama video then review students’ responses to the quick write and posts from the previous lesson as well as the important questions to introduce a discussion of the readings and the ways in which the idea of separation of church and state is still being debated.
- Small Group Activity: Utilizing any type of expression which the students choose, each group should create something which exhibits the principles of Jefferson’s statute (e.g. draw an image, create a poem/rap/song, a play or monologue). Each submission should be accompanied with a written component explaining the way in which the product
expresses the principles of the statute.

- Class Discussion: Each group should share their work.

- Homework: Students should watch the video

  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuFRqkw5KoI&feature=endscreen&NR=1 read
  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enumerated_powers and watch the video
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8AS177k7hk then respond to the question: “Why do you believe people felt it was important to separate governmental powers? How does this relate to the separation of church and state?” (Have a student tweet the homework from your Twitter account)

Suggested Resources:

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DOwzy-vKaFI Video: President Obama on Separation of Church and State

- http://www.virginiamemory.com/online_classroom/shaping_the_constitution/doc/religious_s_freedoms Act For Establishing Religious Freedom


- http://wadsworth.com/history_d/special_features/lm_legacy/waah1c01c/content/amh1/readings/virginia.html Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom

Additional Resources:

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgh1jDv9b5w&feature=related Video: Principles of
the Constitution

- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDP4qRA8hvg&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDP4qRA8hvg&feature=related) Video: President Kennedy on Separation of Church and State

Suggested Time: 90 minutes (1 block schedule sessions)

Standards Addressed: 8.2.6: Enumerate the powers of Government.

Goals:

- Students will contrast two versions of the constitution; George Washington’s annotated copy of the Committee of Style’s draft Constitution, with an earlier draft by the Committee of Detail in order to understand the process of production and reception in regard to producing the final text.

Key Terms:

- Text: A print based document, image, video or multimedia manifestation of information created by an individual or group of individuals to convey a message.
- Author: the creator of a text
- Revise: To amend or alter a text
- Process of production and reception: The process of creating, distributing, and reading of a text
Important Questions:

- What do you consider to be a text?

Suggested Teaching Activities:

- Quick Write: Is there a difference between a document and a text? List as many examples of documents or texts that you can?

- Class Discussion:

  Review responses to the quick write then pass out a copy of the first page of George Washington’s annotated copy of the Committee of Style’s draft Constitution (Link at http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/more-perfect-union/preparation.html). Next, have students investigate the document by asking questions such as:

  - What do you think this document/text is about?
  - Are there any words or phrases which might give you a clue?
  - What about the language, style or tone of the document/text?
  - Why do you think the author created this document/text?
  - Who do you think the author intended to be the readers of the text?
  - What do you know about this document/text?

  Confirm or disclose the identity of the document and ask students why this document/text is socially significant and discuss that there was an earlier version. Then pass out the draft by the Committee of Detail. Ask students how they could determine if changes were made from one draft to the other? How could they determine if changes
were made (e.g. comparing key excerpts). Why might these changes have been made?

- **Small Group Activity**: Using the Constitution: Making Comparisons handout, students should compare and contrast specific excerpt from the various versions of the Constitution. Students should:
  - Identify unfamiliar vocabulary.
  - Compare the wording of each draft.
  - Answering the questions:
    - What is the most significant difference in wording between the two drafts?
    - Why do you think these changes were made?
    - How does the difference in wording change your understanding of the text if at all?

- **Class Discussion**: Discuss group responses. Emphasise the idea that the individuals who created the constitution, just as individuals who create texts today, understood the potential significance of every word they used and how those words would impact their lives as well as the new nation and the rest of the world.

- **Homework**: Students should post the write up they did on the class wiki for that day placing their write up in the appropriate position on the wiki with regard to the order of their topic's position on the Constitution. Then Read:
  
  [http://www.longwoodteachers.com/fassett/seven%20basic.htm](http://www.longwoodteachers.com/fassett/seven%20basic.htm) post a reflection about something they learned during the class project on the Google Doc for the day. (Have a
student tweet the homework from your Twitter account)

Suggested resources:


Additional Resources:

- [http://www.wikispaces.com/ Wikispaces for Teachers](http://www.wikispaces.com/)

Day 7: Principles of the Constitution.

Suggested Time: 90 minutes (1 block schedule session)

Standards Addressed: 8.2.7: Describe the principles of federalism, dual sovereignty, separation of powers, checks and balances, the nature and purpose of majority rule, and the ways in which the American idea of constitutionalism preserves individual rights.

Goals:

- Students will understand the major principles of the Constitution and the ways in which they relate to freedom and the ways in which they are enacted today.

Key Terms:

- Federalism: A form of government in which power is divided between a central government and states
- Dual Sovereignty: The idea that state governments have the power over most domestic issues and the federal government has power over international issues and foreign relations
- Separation of Power: The political idea that governmental power is divided equally among multiple branches.
- Majority Rules: A form of democracy in which the proposed idea with the more than half of the votes is enacted
- Constitutionalism: A system of government which adheres to a constitution
• Hyperlink: An Internet based electronic link between two webpages often underlined and blue in color

• Webquest: An inquiry based lesson from which most if not all of the information comes from the Internet.

• Bias: To exhibit a particular perspective

Important Questions:

• How are the principles of the Constitution being enacted today? How are they being challenged?

• What is bias?

• How is bias exhibited in texts (e.g. writings, images, videos, remixes, etc.)?

Suggested Teaching Activities:

• Quick Write: Play http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RsbmjNLQkc then have students list some ways in which individuals might try to convince others of their ideas through the creation of a text, video, remix, or image? What types of websites, news organizations, publications etc. might be a reliable source to gain information? Why? What are some unreliable sources? Why?

• Whole Class Discussion: Review student responses to quick write activity to lead into a discussion of the Webquest project where students will have to locate, consider, and address the reasons they believe the sources they chose are reliable.
• Computer Lab Project: Creating a Webquest
  
  o In small groups students should choose one of the principles of the Constitution then locate one article, one picture, and one song, video, or remix which illustrates the ways in which the government enacts the specific principle and the ways in which it is currently being enacted and/or challenged.
  
  o Once students locate the resources, they should add the links to a Google Doc along with a written component describing the ways in which the artifacts they found illustrate the principle of the Constitution and the ways in which it is being enacted or challenged today along with a description of what the link is, why they feel it is appropriate for the assignment, and the reason they chose to include it as part of their project.
  
  o Once the groups have the artifacts and the written component completed on their Google Doc, they should transfer it to the Wiki on the class website.
  
• Homework: If groups are unable to complete the assignment during class they should complete it at home and post it to the wiki. Once their information is loaded onto the wiki students should view the work of at least two other groups then post a reflection on the Google Doc for that day. Reflections should cover their feelings about the activity as well as responses to the work that other group members contributed. (Have a student tweet the homework from your Twitter account)
Suggested Resources:

- Computer Lab or Technology Cart

- http://webquest.org/index-create.php Creating a Webquest

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RsbmJNLOkc Bias Song Video
Part Three: Culminating Activity

Day 8: Intro to Culminating Activity.

Suggested Time: 90 minutes (1 block schedule session)

Goals:

- Review webquest activity
- Scaffold culminating project.

Suggested Teaching Activities:

- Class Discussion: Using the projector discuss the webquest activity and student responses. Use the activity discussion to move into a description of the culminating activity.

- Current Event Activity: Individually or in pairs students should locate an article or news clip from a reliable source which relates to one of the concepts they learned about in the previous unit. Once they locate the article they wish to use, students should create a product of some type (e.g. a Youtube video, remix, a song, a picture/poster, dance, write an essay, create or add to a Wikipedia page, etc.) that reflects the ways in which the principles they learned about in the constitution unit are being enacted or restrained today in our society and the ways in which it affects their lives. Each project should include: 1) a written component that includes a summary of the article, 2) the concept from the unit they believe it relates to with rational as to why they feel it reflects the
particular concept with at least one relevant quote from the class material which relates
to one quote from the current event including a page or paragraph number, source
location, and author's name, 3) how the product reflects the article in the case the
student chooses to create something abstract, 4) a personal reflection on the project. All
written components should be done on Google Docs then posted to the class website
before the due date. Each group should also be prepared to present their project to the
class in one way or another (e.g. in person, on video or vocal recording with at least an
inperson lead in/explanation, etc.).

- After the explaining the project, use the remainder of the period to brainstorm possible
ideas for projects as well as reliable sources (should be review from the day before).

- Homework: Students should email the teacher what concept they are going to do their
project on and whether they are going to do it with a friend or by themselves. (Have a
student tweet the homework from your Twitter account)

Suggested Resources:

- http://www.longwoodteachers.com/fasset/seven%20basic.htm

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bs26s0Cq7L8
Day 9: Work time for Current Event Project

Key Terms:

- Collaboration
- Revision

Goals:

- Students should utilize the time in class to work with their partners and the teacher in order to resolve any questions, concerns, or difficulties they are experiencing in completing their culminating project.

Suggested Teaching Activities:

- Class Discussion: Debrief students’ current project progression (e.g. confusion, difficulties, stressors, epiphanies, breakthroughs, etc.).
- Small Group Activity: In small groups students should discuss their projects in more detail. Group members should offer helpful suggestions and insights to assist their peers with their project completion.
- Class Discussion: Discuss any revelations or helpful suggestions which occurred during the small group activity so that others who were not in the small group might benefit as well.
- Homework: Post final draft of the written portion of the project on the class website
before presentation day. (Have a student tweet the homework from your Twitter account)

Suggested Resources:

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bs26s0Cq7L8
Day 10: Project Presentation

- **Group Discussion:** Introduce the project presentations and create a presentation schedule based on the number of individuals and pairs allowing enough time for students to adequately discuss their project and the ways in which it relates to the course material.

Even More Resources:


- [http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_are_the_basic_principles_of_the_Constitution#ixzz1sQszck5t](http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_are_the_basic_principles_of_the_Constitution#ixzz1sQszck5t) Overview of United States Government and Politics Foundation and Principles

- [http://www.wikispaces.com/content/teacher](http://www.wikispaces.com/content/teacher) Wikispaces for teachers

- [http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/teachers/](http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/teachers/) Historical Thinking Matters
Discussion: How the Unit Plan Reflects a Student Centered Approach and Addresses the Standards

The example curriculum I chose to create is focused on students’ understanding of the creation of the Constitution. A unit which, in many cases, is considered one of the more arduous or boring of the eighth grade U.S. History standards and for good reason. When the Constitution is taught straightforward as an exercise in memorization alone it can be taxing and intimidating. Consisting of vaguely worded, theoretical concepts, written in eighteenth century English it can be very difficult for young people to learn in a meaningful way without first being related back to a student’s prior knowledge and past experiences. For this reason it is important to utilize a student centered approach drawing from current, real world examples as well as students’ personal experiences in ways which allow students to develop a deeper understanding of the material. The following is a discussion of the ways in which the Constitution unit plan expresses the technologically supported, student centered approach to instructional practices, argued for in the introduction and literature review with sections on, student centered pedagogy and sociocultural theory in the unit plan, talking about technology: meaningful integration by focusing on the task not the tool, and addressing the standards: meeting California and Common Core standards with technology and a student centered approach.

Student Centered Pedagogy and Sociocultural Theory in the Unit Plan

Sociocultural theory is based on the social constructivist paradigm which views knowledge as constructed socially through shared interactions between individuals. This
perspective views learning and development as interconnected within social events and occurring while individuals interact, "with other people, objects, and events in the collaborative environment," (Li, Bruce, & Hughes, 2011, p. 297). The entire unit plan has been designed to emphasize collaboration between students not only in the classroom, but in the digital environments as well with a focus on relating the content to social situations or events which affect the students. Sociocultural theory is enacted in the unit plan through instructional strategies that differ from the curriculum driven, teacher centered approach based on behaviorist pedagogical strategies such as, the use of in class time for discussion and collaboration rather than content retention or book work which has been relegated to homework. By flipping the standard teacher centered, behaviorist, approach on its head and using in class time not for reading the book and answering questions on worksheets, but for discussion and deeper learning through collaborative activities geared toward connecting the student's prior knowledge and past experiences to the new information, the importance shifts from that of consuming content to considering the broader contextual relationship that the content has to the students' lives and to that which they already know.

The process of content acquisition has been manipulated in a way where students are actively engaged with both the technology and the content. For example, the spectrum of literacies involved in an average homework assignment go far beyond the text based literacies of reading a textbook and filling out a worksheet by integrating various forms of technological literacies that are important for individuals to possess in the twenty first century. Some of these important literacies include accessing and understanding the class Twitter feed and or class
website, both of which should contain the information about assignments, understanding how to use hyperlinks, and utilizing their Gmail accounts where the Google Docs program is located. The technology is integrated in a way where the focus remains on accomplishing the task at hand rather than on learning the tool. The technological literacy development happens as a result of integrating the technology as a means of accomplishing the task. This adheres to the claims by Windschitl and Sahl (2002) who state that, “teachers often change instructional practices over time when using technology with students which has suggested that teachers' use of technology may play a role in their shifting toward more constructivist pedagogies” (p. 165). The technology has been integrated in a student centered manner. The class time can be used for deeper, more meaningful learning experiences based on student discussion and collaboration rather than spending class time learning about how to use the technology or reading out of the book thus shifting the pedagogical approach from a teacher centered, behaviorist method to a more constructivist style as argued by Windschitl and Sahl (2002).

The use of constructivist, sociocultural theory also has a major impact on the nature of the classroom itself because the focus shifts from a student’s ability to, retain predetermined content information, follow directions, and sit still, to discussion and collaboration. This allows the teacher to become an agent of student self-actualization rather than police officer as is the case when utilizing a teacher centered approach based on behaviorist principles.

Students’ ability to relate new information to their past experiences and prior knowledge is a critical aspect of developing meaningful learning experiences since encouraging students to discuss and debate opinions and viewpoints breathes life into the curriculum. A constructivist
approach can also eliminate behavioral problems by transitioning from a classroom culture
where student contributions, insights, and reflections are the ultimate aim rather than retention of
predetermined content. When this transition occurs it shifts the notion of “good” behavior from
student’s ability to essentially sit still and retain content, to a student’s ability to internalize
information, relate it to their past experiences and prior knowledge, then share the new
knowledge they developed with the group.

Another, more specific way student centered sociocultural theory has been employed in
the unit plan is through the structure of questions which allow students to develop deeper,
meaningful learning by asking the students to relate the new information to their past experiences
rather than the teacher imposing meaning and telling them why something is the way it is.
Questions such as,

- What do you believe the government can do to improve the way individuals are
  provided with life, liberty, and the pursuit of unhappiness?

- What would it take for the government to implement your ideas?

- In what ways do you believe the government is fulfilling its promise to provide citizens
  with the basic rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness today? Give an example.

- In what ways is the government not fulfilling their promise to provide citizens with the
  basic rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? Give an example.

By designing questions that ask students to relate the content to their own experiences and
prior knowledge where there is no right or wrong answer the focus shifts from content retention
to the deep, critical thinking and the broader contextual understanding referred to by Hammond
and Manfra (2009). This shift in focus emphasizes, "creative thinking rather than memorization" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 24), and focuses on reflection which, along with collaborative social and interactive learning processes, form the basis of the sociocultural theory of teaching and learning (McLoughlin & Oliver, 1998). Discussion based class time, questions with no right or wrong answer designed to engage students in critical thinking, and meaning making, and student generated small group activities are major ways in which the social and interactive learning processes of sociocultural theory are present in the unit plan.

**Talking About Technology: Meaningful Integration by Focusing on the Task Not the Tool**

The unit plan was created so that it may be implemented regardless of the level of technological integration available at a particular school site. Instead, technology is utilized, for the most part, outside of school. Aside from the use of one computer and digital projector for displaying responses, readings, and supplementary videos as well as student projects, computer based technologies are only required for lesson seven when the use of either a computer cart or computer lab for students to begin researching for the webquest activity is needed. If access to multiple computers is not an option this lesson can be adapted to a group discussion followed by a whole class activity in which students take turns typing in keywords and researching various aspects of their topic in order for everyone to get some experience with the teacher to facilitate and assist if needed. The unit plan does require that students have regular access to technology outside of school, but any form of technology that affords them access to the
Internet should suffice. There is no need to buy any specific form of technology (e.g. ipad, smartphone) because of the ways in which it has been integrated into the unit.

Technology is integrated with the focus remaining on the task at hand rather than how to learn a new technology following the claims by Hammond and Manfra (2009) that, “the pedagogy should lead the technology, not technology lead the pedagogy” (p. 163). Technology is integrated most often as it is utilized in the students’ lives, what Buckingham (2007) refers to as cultural forms rather than as a way to get through more information faster. For example, the use of Twitter to post homework assignments is used as it would commonly be used in society as a way to convey short bursts of information, but in the context of the unit plan it is utilized to convey educational information that is relevant to the students specifically in the class. One might ask how this is any more beneficial than creating a calendar or sending out emails? The answer is because Twitter, like Google Docs, is a “cloud” based program which eliminates the need to send out an individual calendar to every student and hope it makes it to the parent or guardian of each child or emails to everyone and hope they aren’t sent to a spam folder or accidentally deleted. A “cloud” is nothing more than space reserved on the servers of the cloud provider, in this case Twitter, for a specific user which allows universal access to information saved on the cloud regardless of the user’s location as long as an internet connection is available. Since all homework assignments, assessments, or anything the teacher might want to make known to students or parents will be posted to the teacher’s Twitter feed the only thing students and parents would need to do is create a Twitter account then “follow” the teacher’s feed. Following means that an individual can access the information in a feed if that feed/account is set
to “private” as one for a junior high class would most likely be. Once they are following said feed, they will receive updates each time a new post is added. This not only provides transparency for parents to know exactly what is going on, but it also allows for universal access to the information regardless of time or place as long as an internet connection is available. So, while the students will essentially be learning how to use Twitter the integration of the program was not done for the purpose of teaching the students how to use it, but rather as a way to provide students and parents access to important information as well as a way to provide transparency for parents or guardians. Now parents and guardians can more actively participate in their child’s education in addition to learning that programs such as Twitter have the possibility to be utilized in a meaningful way in an educational setting. Both cloud based programs of Google Docs and Wikispaces were also integrated in a meaningful way which allowed the focus to remain on the task at hand rather than on learning how to use the tool. Google Docs and Wikispaces were used as a platform for reflection, creation, and collaboration. For example, Google Docs main function was essentially as the student’s notebook at home used for recording their reflections and opinions about daily readings and video related to the content as a way for them to connect personally with the material by relating their past experiences and prior knowledge to the new information. Google Docs was also used as a means for building a deeper level of student’s tolerance and open mindedness toward the views and opinions of others through peer responses to the reflections of their classmates. Tolerance of differing views on subjects is not only an essential aspect of life in a global society, but also a key theme of the unit plan in that the Constitution was created as a result of
compromises by individuals with differing views coming together for a common purpose much as individuals in our global society come together for common purposes in digital spaces today in what Jenkins (1992) refers to as participatory culture. Google Docs was used as a means of collaboration as well in several cases including the webquest activity when students were able to collaborate with their partner on their selected principle of the Constitution then each group collaborated on the final document in order to complete the assignment. Wikispaces was used in much the same way in the adapted lesson regarding the powers of government when students worked in small groups in class to compare and contrast the two versions of the Constitution then, for homework, students post their comparison on the wiki in the correct order that their assigned section was in the original document. Both programs allow for full collaboration from multiple users regardless of time or place and each program has been used not as an exercise in learning technology, but as a technologically supported means of engaging in learning.

Addressing the Standards: California State and Common Core Content Standards

Today, the realm of public education is based on the notion that what every individual in our country needs to learn in order to be successful in life has already been imagined, recorded, and packaged into neat, year long chunks of excruciatingly specific information points at the end of which every student's level of learning is measured through a multiple choice, standardized test given in English. In order to address each of the California state substandards for eighth grade social science standard 8.2 the unit plan was designed to address one substandard per class period with one period at the end of the unit to tie up loose ends (e.g. finish the student
Putting Theoty to Practice

webquest quest activity) and introduce the assessment, followed by one class period devoted to
working on projects face to face, and culminating with student project presentations. That said,
the state standards have been created in such a way that if one were to try and design an entire
course in this fashion it would not be possible because there are simply more standards than
there are months in a school year.

English Language Arts Common Core Standards. Unlike the California state
standards which have been addressed individually, the California’s Common Core Content
Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies are woven
throughout the unit plan. For clarity purposes I will discuss the ways in which they were met in
the unit plan. All quotations retrieved from Common Core Content Standards (2010). A free
PDF version of the Common Core Standards can be downloaded at

Standard One. Reading standard one described as a student’s ability to, “Cite specific
textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources” (p. 50), manifests itself
in the unit plan in lesson six titled, “The Powers of Government,” which was adapted from the
consisted of students considering two different versions of the constitution, George
Washington’s annotated copy of the Committee of Style’s draft Constitution and an earlier draft
by the Committee of Detail aligning with the claim by Okolo et al. (2010), that history education
can be enhanced by integrating new technologies in that they provide an opportunity for individuals to study, “the past using a variety of electronically reproduced primary source texts, images, and artifacts” (p.424).

Writing standard one described as a student’s ability to, “Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content” (p. 64) is also satisfied by lesson six in the unit plan in that the primary focus is on students consideration of and reflecting on questions such as, what is the most significant difference in wording between the two drafts? Why do you think these changes were made? How does the difference in wording change your understanding of the text if at all? Each question is designed to push students to consider the process of creating a text, as well as to create an argument as to why this was done in relation to the creation of the Constitution.

Students’ ability to write discipline specific arguments is also apparent in several of the quick write activities such as in lesson two when students are asked to respond to the question, should people trust that the government has their best interests at heart? Explain. Designed in a student centered manner, the question is not phrased to test student’s ability to give the correct answer, but rather to prompt the student to reflect on their feelings regarding the subject then support their claims with an explanation thus writing an argument on content specific information, but in a way which accesses the students prior knowledge in order to create deeper meaning making for the student. Students ability to write arguments with discipline specific content was also in many small group activities including in lesson two when student were asked to use ideas gleaned from the class discussion and readings and choose a current issue or law which they feel limits individual freedoms then come up with an argument which supports their claims using the
Standard Two. Reading standard two described as a student’s ability to, “Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge” (p. 65), is present in the unit plan in many of the small group activities such as in lesson four when students were asked to create a flyer in support of either the Federalists or the Antifederalists along with a brief written description of the ways in which their flyer reflects the philosophical ideals of the group. This activity requires students to exhibit their understanding of the central ideas in two forms (e.g. written and illustrated). While student’s influence will be present in both the illustration and the written explanation, the core of the activity is centered around student’s ability to synthesize the central idea present in the secondary sources used for the day’s lesson, in this case the philosophical ideals of either the Federalists or the Antifederalists. An accurate summary is also required for the culminating activity in which students are required to include, a written component that includes a summary of an article which expresses the ways in which one of the principles of the constitution that they learned about is either being enacted or restrained today.

Writing standard two described as a student’s ability to, “Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events” (p. 55), is evident in the unit plan in the culminating assessment as well, specifically lesson eight when students are asked to locate a current event article or news clip that reflects the ways in which one of the principles they learned about in the Constitution unit are being enacted or restrained today in our society and
the ways in which it affects their lives. The written component which includes a summary of the article, the concept from the unit they believe it relates to with rationale as to why they feel it reflects the particular concept, and how the product reflects the article is essentially asking the students to produce that which the standard is asking using wording specific to the activity.

*Standard Three.* Reading standard three described as a student’s ability to, “Identify key steps in a text’s description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered)” is evident in the unit plan in several lessons including lessons three, four, six, and seven all of which describe the process of proposing, debating, creating, and editing of the constitution itself. Specifically lesson three considers the importance of civil debate in the process of creating a text such as the Constitution. Lesson four considers the role of social activism in relation to the process of debating important issues. Lesson six, illustrates the process of revision and the ways in which wording affects an individual’s reception of a text and the reasons behind a creators ultimate decision to use one over another.

Writing standard three is not actually a standard in and of itself but rather an end note stating that, “Students must be able to incorporate narrative accounts into their analyses of individuals or events of historical importance” (p 65). It is, however, apparent in the culminating assessment lessons when students are required to locate a current event article or news clip that reflects the ways in which one of the principles they learned about in the Constitution unit are being enacted or restrained today in our society and the ways in which it affects their lives. This
activity is not required to be a structured essay style writing and will likely manifest as a
descriptive narrative relating the current event to the ideas from the unit.

**Standard Four.** Reading standard four is described as a student’s ability to,
“Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary
specific to domains related to history/social studies” (p. 50) is practiced in lesson six which was
adapted from the Library of Congress Website when students were to compare and contrast
the two different versions of the constitution, George Washington’s annotated copy of the
Committee of Style’s draft Constitution and an earlier draft by the Committee of Detail. Written
in two drastically different styles the exercise required students to determine the central idea
from corresponding sections in each document.

Writing standard four described as a student’s ability to, “Produce clear and coherent
writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and
audience” (p. 66), appears in the unit plan in every lesson through quick write activities, small
group activities, homework reflections, and the culminating assessment all of which require
students to write in various styles from comparing, contrasting, and synthesizing primary
documents in lesson six, to responding to readings through personal reflections which allow
students to develop deeper understanding by relating the new information to their own prior
knowledge and past experiences in both homework and quick write sections of nearly every
lesson in the unit.
**Standard Five.** Reading standard five described as a student’s ability to, “Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally)” (p. 50), is not explicitly enacted in the sense that each of the three categories described in standard were not discussed out right, however, texts of various forms were considered throughout the unit plan which go beyond written forms including images and videos which deliver information in the way described in the standard. For example, the reading from lesson five on Jefferson’s Statute of Religious Freedom was sequential, the articles in lesson plan four about the Federalist papers were comparative articles on the philosophical differences between the Federalists and Antifederalists, and several of the videos were casual in nature.

Writing standard five described as a student’s ability to, “With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed” (p.66), was evident in the unit plan in the culminating assessment during which time students were given an entire class period to revise and strengthen their writing through teacher and peer support. In addition to the class period students are encouraged to utilize the collaborative aspects of Google Docs in order to work together to complete the assignment.

**Standard Six.** Reading standard six describes a student’s ability to, “Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts)” (p. 50), is satisfied by the unit plan in lesson three when students considered the ways in which the various ideas were debated during the creation of the
Constitution, lesson four which covered the importance of the Federalist papers, in lesson five when considering Jefferson’s Statute of Religious Freedom, lesson six when comparing and contrasting the two versions of the Constitution, as well as in lesson seven in the student generated webquest activity which was focused on student understanding of bias and reliability in regard to texts. In lesson six the focus of the activity is on development of student understanding of the bias and reliability of various texts (e.g. written, video, image, etc.) during which an author’s use of loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts should be discussed in relation to the creation of texts and the author’s desire to portray a specific point of view through said text. The same idea is threaded through lesson four as well when students consider the differing viewpoints of the Federalists and Antifederalists and the ways they utilized texts to push their ideals during the creation of the Constitution.

Writing standard six consists of a student’s ability to, “Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas clearly and efficiently” (p. 66), and is evident throughout the unit plan. For example, each reflective response students wrote for homework was an example of utilizing technology and the Internet to produce writing that illustrates the relationship between information and ideas. The notions of efficiency and clarity are relevant terms which should only be considered on a case by case basis in relation to the individual student and their abilities. In other words, one cannot necessarily expect the same performance (e.g. clarity and efficiency) from a nonnative English speaking student who recently immigrated to the United States as they would from a native English speaking student. Also, the concept of publication was not enacted in the way one might
commonly think about publishing a document, however, the use of Google Docs and Wikispaces to post reflection responses and peer feedback exhibits the same principles as publishing in that students are writing for a larger audience than just their teacher. Because students are writing with the understanding that others will be reading and responding to their work and they are not simply doing it for a grade that the teacher is going to bestow based on the level of correctness that their writing reflects in regard to the prompt, students should take more ownership of their work and in effect be more thoughtful and conscientious. The same idea is evident in the other writing intensive tasks such as the contrasting of the two versions of the Constitution, the webquest, and the final project all of which will be uploaded to class website.

*Standard Seven.* Both reading standard seven which states that students should be able to, “Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts” (p. 50), and writing standard seven which indicates that students should be able to, “Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration” (p. 66), are satisfied by the webquest activity. In the webquest activity students are asked to choose one of the principles of the Constitution then locate one article, one picture, and one song, video, or remix which illustrates the ways in which the government enacts the specific principle and the ways in which it is currently being enacted and/or challenged. Not only does this lesson require that
students be able to integrate visual information with print and understand the relationship
between the two, it takes the concept a step further in that the students are the ones responsible
for the creation of the document. The creation of the document (e.g. webquest activity) is
essentially a research project which has been tweaked from the standard of finding articles,
comparing and contrasting them, then writing a paper based on the information to include
images and videos, as well as a written component explaining how the information they
researched describes how the principle of the Constitution they chose to investigate is currently
being enacted or restrained.

**Standard Eight.** Reading standard eight states that students should be able to,
"Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text" (p. 50), is exemplified in
lesson seven during the webquest activity as well as the culminating assessment. Lesson seven is
designed as a means for students to investigate the idea of bias and reliability directly and builds
on the notions of activism and debate from previous lessons when students considered the ways
in which Federalists and Antifederalists wrote about and argued with one another in support of
their opposing ideas. The notion of bias is also delved into deeper by way of the song on the
various forms of bias illustrated in the Youtube video in lesson seven. The concept of reasoned
judgement was addressed in lesson six when students contrasted the two versions of the
Constitution and discussed the reasoning one might have for entertaining the proposed changes
to the document.

Writing standard eight describes students’ ability to, “Gather relevant information from
multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation" (p. 66), is again evident in both lesson six and seven. Lesson six, the webquest activity, exemplifies the goals of writing standard eight in that it was specifically designed so that students would have to gather information from multiple sources, both print and digital, by effectively using search terms and assessing the credibility of their sources based on the understanding developed during the class discussion regarding bias and reliability. I would like to add a side note to the wording of this standard in that it differentiates print from digital sources, however the entire unit plan was designed so that all resources were digital and speaks to the notion that we must broaden our understanding of texts and literacy in ways which acknowledge that digital texts carry with them the same inherent characteristics as print based texts which students must understand apply to all forms of text including images and videos as well. Student’s ability to quote and cite sources is evident in the requirements for the culminating assessment in the written component which requires all current event projects contain at least two quotes with citations including one from the information in the unit as well as one from the source the student will use for the current event (e.g. news article).

*Standard Nine.* Reading standard nine describes a student’s ability to, “Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic” (p. 50), is evident in lesson five when students investigate the significance of Jefferson’s Statute of Religious Freedom. Although the primary source document is not utilized per se, one of the readings is a
verbatim copy of the statute which is contrasted with a secondary source document which
discusses the statute and its importance. While the main document is technically a secondary
source in that it is not the primary source but rather a copy of the primary document rewritten
on a website, the text itself contains the statute in its original wording so I will argue that its use
satisfies this standard.

Writing standard nine described as a students ability to, “Draw evidence from
informational texts to support analysis reflection, and research” (p. 66), is woven throughout the
unit plan. Analysis reflection is required in several of the homework assignments when students
are asked to reflect on a prompt that has been designed to have students respond to the
information from the assigned readings or videos as well as in the webquest activity and
culminating assessment when students are required to find sources which reflect various aspects
of the unit, then describe the ways in which the information they researched reflects their analysis
of the chosen topic. This concept is also apparent in several of the in class activities which have
been designed to create deeper and more meaningful learning experiences for students by
allowing them to express their understanding of the subject matter in various ways such as
drawing pictures all of which require a written component explaining the way their image reflects
the information from the text.

**Standard ten.** Reading standard ten is described as a student’s ability to, “By the end
of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6–8 text complexity
band independently and proficiently” (p. 51). By integrating multiple forms of reading and
comprehension tasks throughout the unit students should be able to understand social studies
texts independently and proficiently in relation to their particular situation (e.g. a recent
immigrant might not perform on the same level as a native English speaker). It is when we begin
to assume that all students should be able to perform at a specific level based solely on their
grade level regardless of sociocultural factors that standardized curriculum becomes the
detriment it has become today by labeling some students as failing simply because they do not
achieve a specific score on an assessment.

Writing standard ten described as a student’s ability to, “Write routinely over extended
time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or
two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences” (p. 66), is applied to
each lesson in the unit through student reflections and peer responses to group work and
culminating projects. The reflections, small group activities, and quick writes exhibit student’s
capacity to write in short time frames and the larger projects such as the webquest activity and
the culminating project show the student’s ability to write over an extended period of time.
Chapter Five: Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to reveal some ways in which educators can meaningfully integrate technology into their pedagogy while still satisfying the ironically content driven mandates of No Child Left Behind.

Unfortunately, technology continues to be viewed as anything but an unbiased tool to be used for little more than imparting more content through a different medium rather than a platform, or catalyst for changing the way people communicate, collaborate, learn, and form identities. The lack of understanding regarding ways to meaningfully integrate technology into classrooms or schools and educators refusal to adapt to the changing nature of human interaction and social construction of knowledge in, not only American society, but the emerging global society will, eventually, be the undoing of public education and the meaningful role of the teacher in the process. Education and literacy must be considered more than an individual's ability to regurgitate a series of information points on a standardized test which means that it is time to radically reconceptualize the role of technology in public education and our understanding of what it means for an individual to be literate in the twenty first century.

In order to truly prepare students for the realities of living in a digital world, we must turn away from the teacher centered, content based notion of education and embrace a student centered approach to education emphasizing a deeper contextual understanding of education and literacy in the twenty first century and its relation to the social construction of knowledge in a participatory culture (Jenkins, 1992). These new possibilities have been made possible by the communicative nature of new media and technology. Education must view literacy in a way
which acknowledges that learning occurs everywhere and in many forms in a digital society and that learning is in no way relegated to the school alone particularly when considering the level of informational access individuals are privileged to in the twenty first century. It is time to rethink education and literacy in light of the digital revolution and adapt teaching practice and the educational system alike in ways that integrate technology as a platform to research, collaborate, reflect, create, and recreate knowledge in ways which are meaningful to them. Today, information points can be uncovered with a few keystrokes and should, therefore, no longer be the focus of education. Instead education must focus on developing students' critical and analytic skills that are necessary for life in the twenty first century.
References


http://freedownload.is/pdf/common-core-state-standards-for-english-language-a-55830


Appendix A
Syllabus

Mr. or Mrs.
Middle School
Eighth Grade U.S. History
Email:
Phone:

Grading Policy:

- Projects and papers (30% of your final grade)- Each unit will end with a culminating assessment.
- Class Participation/Class Work (30% of your final grade)- Class participation will be graded on a day by day basis.
- Homework (30% of your final grade)- Homework will be assigned every night with the expectation that it will be completed before the next class meeting unless otherwise specified.

Grades percentages will be translated to the corresponding letter grade as follows:
- (A's)- 100%- 90%
- (B's)- 89%- 80%
- (C's)- 79%- 70%
- (D's)- 69%- 60%
- (F) - 59% and below

Class Description:

The course focuses on students understanding of American History from the founding of the colonies to the turn of the twentieth century. Rather than focusing on student’s level of content retention, this course will focus on students developing a deeper contextual understanding of the sociocultural factors which influenced the events of the past and the ways in
which those events relate not only to events in the world today, but the ways they relate to the
student's own past experiences and prior knowledge. Deeper learning and meaning making will
occur as a result of students interacting with the material in both digital and classroom settings
which have been integrated in ways which develop students critical, digital literacies while still
focusing on the task at hand.

Student Technological Access:

The course will require students to have access to the internet in one form or another on
a regular basis as all of the assignments and class materials will be web based. For students
requiring additional resources or access to technology the following should be made available.

- Teachers classroom during tutorial or per appointment
- The computer lab at school
- The public library- need a library card to access the Internet. Link to
  public library website. Link to teens page with resources, technical
  assistance, and events for teens.
- Local university or junior college library.
- Utilize a family smartphone if available with web access

Letter to Parents About Technological Integration:

In the twenty first century it is important that individuals possess a certain level of
technological skills and knowledge in order to fully participate on our digital society. This course
will focus on integrating technology as a platform for student communication, reflection, and
collaboration. It is important that we expose students to the academic possibilities afforded them by new information and communication technologies. The technology will not, however, be integrated for the students alone, but for the parents and guardians as well. For example, the class will maintain a website with all of the upcoming assignments and relevant information in addition to the Twitter feed which parents will be encouraged to follow as a way to receive up-to-date notification about assignments and other important information. If you have any questions or concerns please give me a call or send me an email.

Thank you,

Parent signature:
Appendix B
Examining a Primary Documents

In an audio podcast at http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/why/ Professor Sam Wineberg discusses important steps for educators to consider when utilizing primary documents as way to illustrate historical thinking (e.g. asking questions, not memorizing a sequence of events and dates). The steps discussed by Wineburg include:

- Sourcing- “considering a document’s author and its creation” (n.p.).
- Contextualizing- “situating the document and its creation in place and time” (n.p.)
- Close Reading- “Reading carefully to consider what a source says and the language used to say it” (n.p.).
- Corroborating- “Checking important details across multiple sources to determine points of agreement and disagreement” (n.p.).