

The Flow of History:
Adventures of America in the Connecticut River Valley

I. SIGNIFICANCE

America's history is a complex saga of philosophical experimentation, geographic and economic expansion, technological evolution, ethnic conflict and cultural synthesis. At the heart of this history lies the story of American democracy and the changes that we have made as a nation from our birth to the present. The survival of democracy depends on citizens' critical understanding of our history, our public institutions, and the conditions that nurture or threaten it (AETA, 2000). Our Vermont youth do not know this history. They see the story of the past as irrelevant to their lives and unnecessary for creating the future. A recent event reported in a southern Vermont newspaper underscores the public danger that such ignorance breeds. After a racially charged incident of harassment, one of the youths involved explained that he had no idea that his use of "the n-word" was so offensive. "In all my years of social studies, we've never learned about slavery." (Marshall, 2002)

Compounding the ignorance of our youth, is a lack of educator preparedness. Many rural Vermont teachers in grades 4-8 have received little formal training in American history yet are expected to teach it nonetheless. Insufficient content knowledge makes it difficult for these educators to design appropriate curriculum or to use historical processes of investigation that foster in-depth student learning. In addition, in schools where teachers do have content expertise, the instructional methods used often focus on the acquisition of facts in isolation from their larger contexts. This approach too often

creates barriers to discovering the patterns and trends in history that transcend time and place and are so crucial to understanding the present and planning for the future.

Currently, Vermont is at a crossroads. The State developed history and social sciences standards in the mid-1990s as part of its overall Vermont Framework of Standards. By design, the Framework leaves the articulation of detailed curriculum to local school districts. Fifteen years of systemic initiatives in math, science, and writing have left little time and attention to history. In the absence of a State consultant, the Vermont Alliance for Social Studies (VASS) has taken the lead in professional development and in identifying teachers whose work with students highlights the best practices that lead to attainment of the standards. The WEB Project, a technology non-profit in the arts and humanities, is preparing VASS materials for Internet distribution. The Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance (VMGA) is eager to extend these efforts. With Caledonia Central as the lead district, and in conjunction with university professors, *The Flow of History* initiative will use this groundwork to build specific materials and processes that focus specifically on the teaching of traditional American history.

Based on the results of a needs assessment conducted at our initial planning session with twelve constituent representatives, we have built a plan so that by the end of three years, educators involved in this grant will be able to:

1. identify major eras and themes in traditional American history;
2. establish challenging curriculum in American history;
3. interpret local and national primary source materials by understanding their context within and relation to themes/topics in American history;

4. develop a collaborative exchange of practice that improves their work and builds a repertoire of high quality examples and resource materials.

The first three goals identified above are consistent with exemplary history frameworks for student learning, including the one used to develop the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam. These frameworks promote a complex study that includes the learning of events and the analysis and interpretation of those events through a variety of perspectives. To achieve high results, *The Flow of History* proposal has selected a professional development approach that follows current research and stresses the interplay between knowledge and inquiry. (Medina, et al., 2000) (St. John, et al., 1999) (Whelan, 2001) Our approach is also consistent with the NAEP finding that eighth grade students who use primary resources in their American history classes at least once per week achieve at a higher rate than those who do not. (United States Department of Education, 2002)

The primary target group for *The Flow of History* initiative is 4-8 grade teachers in the 32 schools along the Connecticut River Valley, a traditionally under-served area. Additional support will extend to a network of 17 small rural schools who form the Vermont Rural Partnership. While we have targeted a specific geographic location and a network of small schools for follow-up support, *The Flow of History* initiative undertakes activities that have the potential to affect a much larger audience. General services such as attendance at the summer institutes and the use of materials developed under *The Flow of History* initiative will be available to all interested teachers throughout the state and disseminated with the help of the Vermont Department of Education, *Community Works Journal*, and regional teacher resource centers. We expect at least 150 teachers to attend

summer institutes offered through Lyndon State College and the University of Vermont over the course of three years. We will also award mini-grants to 50 teachers from our target groups. Combined, this affects 4,500 students.

Not only will the river serve as the site of the target schools, but also as a setting for our historical studies. The Connecticut River's importance as a site of colonization and cultural clashes, major industrial innovations, and struggles for liberty makes it a vital subject of study for our students. The river, which extends from the Canadian border to the Long Island Sound, is the site of many nationally significant events in American history and was recently designated a National Heritage River. Regional excitement over the designation provides a unique opportunity for educators to draw upon the expertise that is being brought in as planners examine archaeological, historical, and environmental influences of New England's most powerful river.

Gathering information about the Connecticut River Valley adds significant value to the nation as well as to the region. The river itself is a "300-mile-long museum of our earth's history." (UMASS, 2002) History museums that reside along the river represent Paleo-Indian study, early American colonization and settlements, forts of the French and Indian Wars and the Revolutionary War eras, transportation innovations, the history of agriculture from the 1700-1900s, technological advancements from grist mills to precision instrumentation, and colonial to contemporary crafts-making. These museum holdings are further complemented by collections in local historical societies. Combined, this provides *The Flow of History* initiative with the extraordinary opportunity to link local resources with events and themes of national significance so that American history gains relevance to the children and young adults who study it.

Caledonia Central Supervisory Union is submitting *The Flow of History* proposal, with two lead schools, Peacham and Barnet, participating as case studies. Careful documentation of the progress made there will provide examples of the challenges and solutions created by two small schools as they develop and implement high quality curriculum to study traditional American history. Caledonia Central typifies the situation of many rural Vermont districts, with its small schools and small staff who bear the weight of extraordinary curricular responsibilities. Low student population figures (Peacham -- 60 and Barnet -- 176) are comparable to other area schools. Like many Vermont schools they have focused on math and science for the past decade, to the exclusion of history. Their social studies curriculum is integrated into other activities and does not highlight the importance of American history as a separate subject area. Peacham Elementary School, in particular, has not revamped its history/social science curriculum since the Vermont Framework of Standards was adopted in 1994. The teachers, principal, and parents of Peacham are faced with the development of a curriculum at the same time that teachers need to acquire the American history content around which they should form sound judgments.

Given their current state, Peacham and Barnet can benefit significantly from outside resources and expertise. Moreover, like many small schools in Vermont, they cannot build a sustainable system without linking to other schools. As a result of small size, there is rarely more than one teacher per school who teaches American history and so teachers must look outside their individual schools for colleague support and an exchange of ideas. *The Flow of History* will create that opportunity and has selected partners who

will sustain an exchange of practices among teachers, historians, and museum educators beyond the life of this grant.

As they go through three years of development and implementation of a traditional American history program, Peacham and Barnet will design curriculum that address high standards that are congruent with the character of their local communities. Because maintaining a sense of community is one of their highest values, the curriculum materials developed under this grant will have to link a local sense of place to the national story. Peacham and Barnet teachers are prepared to redesign their curriculum so that traditional American history is taught as a separate subject so long as it remains consistent with a strong goal that students know about and care for their local place.

While Peacham and Barnet rest along the Connecticut River Valley, they are also member schools of the Vermont Rural Partnership (VRP), a collaborative network of 17 small schools that was formed with assistance from the Annenberg Foundation. For VRP schools, the notion of connecting local events to American history is both sound educational practice and a requirement of their cultural contexts. By offering mini-grants to VRP schools, we will test the transferability of our project's educational processes and products to other schools beyond the Connecticut River Valley.

The partners in this proposal have the expertise to implement this grant successfully, are in a position to learn from this experience, and can disseminate those lessons to state and national audiences. The University of Vermont and Lyndon State College are state leaders in the preparation of future history teachers. The WEB Project, a United States Department of Education recognized, Promising Technology Program, will use its expertise to create an online environment for collaborative discourse, project

accountability, and information exchange. Additional partners will utilize the knowledge gained from *The Flow of History* initiative to strengthen their networks of colleague support and professional development. The Vermont Rural Partnership is linked to other rural schools across the United States through its active participation in the Rural School and Community Trust. The Vermont Alliance for the Social Studies has an established network that comprises 900 teachers, administrators, and college professors. The Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance represents over 200 museums and local historical societies.

II. PROJECT DESIGN

It is widely known that schools across the state vary in terms of teacher knowledge and preparation to deliver high quality programs in American history. Some K-6 teachers have had little content preparation while many 7-8 teachers are not well versed in historical investigation, using primary resources. Still others are well prepared and would like to continue learning or simply avail themselves of online resources. Therefore, *The Flow of History* initiative is designed to allow multiple points of entry. To ensure a well-rounded design, we will offer:

1. annual summer institutes with online follow-up throughout the year;
2. museum workshops based on the use of primary resources to investigate major questions in American history;
3. regional study groups concerning major themes and topics in American history;

4. mini-grants to Connecticut River Valley and VRP schools for added onsite assistance to support local efforts inspired by the summer institutes or the museum workshops;
5. an exchange of practices via networking, presentations and materials distribution to statewide audiences through spotlight sessions and workshops at VRP and VASS annual conferences, quarterly newsletter publications, and an annual celebration of *The Flow of History* at selected museums along the Connecticut River Valley;
6. an Internet clearinghouse of information that links to national exemplars and resources for the teaching of American history, that publishes materials created by *The Flow of History*, and that fosters an online collaborative discourse.

A self-assessment will determine whether teachers in the target areas participate in some or all of the activities listed above. To increase our outreach and to maximize the cross-pollination of ideas, summer institutes, workshops, and online materials will be open to all interested teachers regardless of affiliation to VRP or geographic residence. Mini-grant opportunities will remain within the target groups.

Summer Institutes

The summer institutes will provide the framework through which at least 150 teachers gain the basic content knowledge necessary to develop or improve programs related to teaching traditional American history. Annual topics will represent a range of eras, to be determined through consideration of:

1. a needs assessment survey distributed to teachers in the target areas;

2. the informed opinions of participating Higher Education professors;
3. a sense of the field as identified by museum educators and mentor historians.

Elise Guyette, president of VASS and teaching fellow at the University of Vermont; Michele Forman, National Teacher of the Year 2001-2002; Cyndy Bittinger, director of the Calvin Coolidge Foundation; and Allen Yale, Ph.D. professor of American history at Lyndon State College and vice-president of VASS, will design the summer institutes. All four designers have extensive backgrounds in American history. The institutes will place history in the center and examine crucial historical issues and events tied to the history of the Connecticut River, using the lenses of the economist, political scientist and geographer, as well as the historian. To give the reader an idea of possible selections, here is a partial list offered at an upcoming VASS institute: Oral Traditions, Revolution, Reform, Industrialization, Slavery, Civil War, and Immigration.

Selected scholars from the institutes will remain online throughout the year to provide mentoring to all institute participants. Although most historians will rotate depending upon the expertise needed in the field, Michele Forman, National Teacher of the Year 2001-2002 and Dr. Allen Yale will remain online throughout the grant period to maintain a degree of consistency.

Museum Workshops

Three-day workshops will be designed to provide an introductory experience in the use and interpretation of original source materials. These workshops will make use of the museums along the Connecticut River. Through awarding mini-grants to schools in attendance, *The Flow of History* will provide support to replicate the process of investigation modeled at the workshop once educators return to their local communities.

The workshops will be prepared by a cross section of people who carry expertise in American history, place-based education, museum education and the appropriate use of primary source materials to investigate major questions related to the study of American history. The VMGA will use these workshops as a form of professional development for members of the Museum Educators Exchange in order to create a cadre of well-prepared museum educators who know how to link their collections to applicable themes and eras of traditional American history.

The workshops will focus on the use of historical maps, the creation of pertinent time lines, and the examination of primary and secondary source materials to investigate challenging questions. *The Flow of History* initiative will give close attention to placing primary resources into their appropriate historical contexts and to selecting an array of museums to represent an assortment of themes and a range of eras. (*See Appendix III.*) In addition to local study, selected teachers from the target groups will use educational programs offered by the National Archives. At least three educators will travel to Washington, DC each year to attend seminars and gather nationally held resources to enhance classroom studies and/or topics at the summer institutes.

Study Groups

Study groups are quickly becoming recognized as an effective professional development strategy to learn about specific topics through collaborative discourse. This technique is especially beneficial for master teachers for whom graduate credit is non-essential. Historians will lead study groups that relate to American history themes or topics. Teachers willing to use an investigative approach to examine their teaching

practice and resulting student performance, based on the knowledge gained through study group participation, will receive an honorarium for documenting their progress.

Mini-grants

While some offerings are open to all interested teachers, only those educators in schools along the Connecticut River and in the Vermont Rural Partnership will be able to apply for mini-grants. This has been planned so that *The Flow of History* can provide extensive follow-up support to at least 50 teachers in areas of severe need as determined by teacher preparation and willingness to learn. Only teachers having attended a summer institute or three-day museum workshop will be eligible for mini-grant support.

Extending the mini-grant opportunities from the Connecticut River Valley to the VRP schools tests the transferability of our materials and processes to other geographic areas of the state.

Mini-grants will support:

1. onsite consultation in American history and interpretation of primary resources;
2. development of locally based projects related to American history;

Exchanging Practices

Establishing a process for the exchange of practices has already begun through the efforts of the Vermont Rural Partnership and the Vermont Alliance for Social Studies. VRP has made a concerted effort to use peer observations and collaborative critique as central strategies for examining professional practice. At the same time, VASS has gathered video and text examples of best practices in the teaching of history and social sciences and, with the help of the WEB Project, is building a web site to make these materials available to all Vermont teachers. With such important structures already in place, this

grant will tailor ongoing activities to focus on the teaching of traditional American history. In doing so, *The Flow of History* will provide:

1. support for co-developed (teacher plus partner organization) units of study that are refined through a process of critique, using standards for high quality;
2. support for peer observation and classroom visits;
3. support for collaborative discourse about professional practice;
4. quarterly publications that share information about *The Flow of History*
5. conference presentations for VRP, VASS, and the VT Department of Education
6. annual one-day celebrations held at museum sites along the Connecticut River.

An Internet Clearinghouse

Online communication will unify *The Flow of History* activities. In the beginning, resources will be generated through linking to nationally available information and designing a high functioning database and communications system. As the initiative progresses, we will have created significant materials of our own which will be available to anyone through a robust online database. A concrete example will be developed immediately in September 2002 when the first set of annotated lectures from VASS summer institutes will be placed online, with teaching suggestions, references to primary resources, and suggestions for further study (see Appendix IV, *The Teaching of the Journal of American History* initiative). From there, teachers and historians will generate additional possibilities.

III. MANAGEMENT PLAN

This grant requires a highly organized plan that uses flexible strategies to reach the stated goals shown in the *Project Design and Management Plan* chart on pages 12-15. Dr. Fern Tavalin will serve as the project director for *The Flow of History* initiative. Most recently, she guided the WEB Project to national status as a recognized Promising Technology Program. Dr. Tavalin has

a background in research and evaluation and knows how to plan creatively to get results. In addition, she taught American history to eighth graders for five years in a rural Vermont school and understands the challenges teachers face. She will be responsible for overall management, with a special focus on Internet-based materials development and inquiry-based investigations.

An assistant director with expertise in American history will be hired to aid with grant implementation. The assistant director will be housed at Peacham Elementary to provide a natural information flow between the lessons that are being learned on the micro and macro levels of *The Flow of History* initiative. Situated within a school, the assistant director will have a direct view of how students and teachers utilize the services offered through this grant. Together with staff from Caledonia Central, the assistant director and director will form a management team that oversees the project as a whole.

An advisory panel comprised of a cross-section of people representing the different aspects of the grant will convene four times per year to share and critique work. Together with information gained from a project evaluator and documenter, the lessons learned from these sessions will form the basis of plans for project improvement. The panel will include:

1. the project staff (**director** and **assistant director**) and **evaluator**;

2. **Allen Yale**, Ph.D. in American history, professor at Lyndon State College, and vice-president of the Vermont Alliance for Social Studies;
3. **Elise Guyette**, M.A. in American history, president of the Vermont Alliance for Social Studies, and doctoral fellow at the University of Vermont;
4. **Margaret MacLean**, principal of Peacham Elementary and director of the Vermont Rural Partnership;
5. **Kathy Renfrew**, teacher of grades 4-6 at Peacham Elementary;
6. **Sarah Rooker**, A.B.D. in American history and director of the Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance;
7. **Joe Brooks**, executive director of Vermont Community Works whose journal is the dissemination vehicle for Vermont Rural Partnership schools;
8. **Michele Forman**, history teacher & National Teacher of the Year 2001-2002;
9. **Nick Boke**, A.B.D. in Latin American History and specialist in reading across the content areas. Consultant to Vermont Reads Institute.

An interactive web site will be the central information organizer for *The Flow of History* initiative and will display all work to participants and to the United States Department of Education. Data gathering tools will be placed online so that the complexity of assembling information, analyzing it, and reporting to our funders is reduced. The WEB Project has had seven years of experience managing online data gathering with a high degree of success and will oversee the development of the interactive portions of the web site. Payment of all contracts and mini-grants will be generated after online reports have been completed to make sure that accountability requirements are met on time. The interactive web site will also house discussion and critique of work-in-progress so that an archive of grant progress is created.

Work groups will be formed to design, implement, and improve the activities specified in this grant. The groups will be organized around several major events: the summer institutes, preparation of online content materials, design and implementation of museum workshops, and follow-up and support to mini-grant awards and teacher study groups. The project evaluator and documenter will track the progress and effectiveness of each of these work groups, report their observations at the quarterly advisory meetings,

prepare annual interim reports that note areas for project improvements and submit a final report that evaluates project effectiveness. Data will be available to everyone in the initiative "on demand" via a web site where the aggregated results of all surveys, reports, and student performances will be placed.

For specific details about how grant goals will lead to improvement strategies that are anchored by specific milestones, please refer to the table beginning on page 12 entitled *Project Design and Management Plan*. The chart shows a clear integration of goals, project design, management, evaluation, and improvement.

IV. PROJECT EVALUATION

The Flow of History proposal relies heavily on the use of data to improve the delivery of services and the development of the products described herein. Project staff will use systematically collected data to monitor effective implementation. An experienced project documenter will tell the story of the small schools' journey. Finally, an external evaluator will provide technical expertise and an outsider's view.

External evaluator Colleen Orsburn, director of the Vermont Institutes Center for Evaluation, will work with project staff and the project documenter to improve project management tools related to internal data gathering. She will review online forms, surveys, interview questions, and procedures for direct observation to ensure the use of high quality instrumentation that measures effectiveness and indicates directions for improvement of strategies and action steps. See "Improvement Strategies" in the *Project Design and Management Plan*, pages 12-15 for the data collection and quality control procedures built into implementation of each project strategy.

In addition to helping with design and analysis of these tools for implementation evaluation, the project evaluator will have primary responsibility for addressing the larger questions about whether the strategies used "add up" to attainment of the promised goals. The following chart shows an evaluation grid that lists the major questions and methods of outcomes evaluation. These outcomes questions deal with the broader underlying logic: *Does teacher knowledge of content and pedagogy increase, does that lead to development and use of quality curriculum, and does that in turn increase student knowledge?*

We will use NAEP items to measure whether our students' knowledge of American history improves, pre-testing and post-testing participant groups, and post-testing a comparison group in Year One. The NAEP exam has been selected because it is publicly available, without cost, and the design of its assessment framework is consistent with our project design.

Outcomes Evaluation Questions	Evaluation Methods	
	Methods	Project Rationale
1. Are teachers increasing their knowledge about American history?	1. Pre-post tests or performances embedded in professional development activities 2. Review of study group documentation 3. Review of historian reports from site visits and mini-grants 4. Teacher interviews and surveys	Through introduction to information via institutes and workshops and with follow-up support online, onsite, and through study groups, teachers will increase their knowledge about the eras and themes of American history.
2. Are teachers increasing their knowledge about the use of primary resources to teach American history?	1. Expert rating of rigor of activities developed in classroom 2. Review of historian and exemplary teacher reports from site visits and mini-grants. 3. Teacher interviews and surveys	Through attending workshops and receiving follow-up support, teachers will learn to use local and national primary resources to deliver high quality opportunities for primary investigation.

3. Has a challenging curriculum for teaching American history been established?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expert rating of quality of curriculum developed by teachers (rubric scoring) 2. Expert rating of quality of project-wide online curriculum materials 3. Teacher interviews 	Teachers with increased content knowledge; increased familiarity with the tools of historical inquiry; access to national, state, and local resources; and structured development opportunities will produce high quality model curricula, units and classroom activities
4. Do these grant activities lead to increased student performance in American history?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student surveys and interviews 2. Pre- and post-testing using NAEP 2001 American history test. Post-test comparison group, Year 1 only. 3. Teacher-developed tests and student performance tasks 	Students in classrooms with more knowledgeable and skilled teachers of American history and well-structured curriculum materials and activities will learn and understand important themes and content within American history.

V. ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

Models and materials established at the national level by such influential organizations such as History Matters (see Appendix VI), the National Archives (see Appendix VII), and the *Journal of American History* (see Appendix IV) form an important core of resources from which we can draw. We will use these models as a basis for materials production, tailoring materials to the needs of the target populations. Funds will be available to consult with national experts and to travel to the National Archives to research and collect primary materials.

In addition to nationally available resources, the Vermont Department of Education will connect our project activities to its work with teacher professional development across the state. They will provide in-kind technical assistance for assessment and professional development and a statewide venue through which to disseminate our products and discuss our results.

Most importantly, the grant proposal has been designed to draw on the expertise of our partners. A complete budget request, shown by federal cost categories, appears in the Budget Narrative and includes costs related to grant management as well as expenditures

related directly to goal attainment. To give the reader a goal-aligned sense of the budget and our available resource capacity, see the chart below.

GOAL	BUDGET ALLOCATION	RESOURCE CAPACITY
<i>Increase Content Knowledge</i> \$131,600 direct expense \$33,750 share of staff time Total: \$165,350 per year	Summer institutes \$35,000 Annotation of lectures Regional study groups \$7,600 Higher Ed courses \$10,000 Use of National Archives \$5,000 Web-based materials \$35,000 Historian mentors \$8,000 Locally based projects \$30,000 Case study site \$20,000	Fits within the partners' mission Staff time Staff time, paid consultants, teacher stipends Contract to teacher centers Teacher and historian trips Staff time and contracts Contracts to historians Mini-grants to purchase expertise and pay teacher stipends Paid documenter, assistant director's time, stipends to teachers, technical assistance
<i>Establish Challenging Curriculum</i>	No funds allocated. Completed within the context of increasing content knowledge, improved through collaborative critique of work-in-progress according to established criteria	Fits within the partners' missions and schools goals for students. In-kind contributions of time.
<i>Interpret Primary Resources</i> \$34,000 direct expenses \$16,875 share of staff time Total: \$50,875 per year	Museum workshops and mini-grants \$24,000 Materials preparation \$10,000	Contracts to VMGA, partners, staff time, teacher stipends By contract to partner organizations
<i>Exchange Practices</i> \$58,500 direct expenses \$10,000 share of staff time Total: \$68,500 per year	Unit Co-development \$6,000 Peer Observations \$7,500 Collaborative Discourse \$10,000 Evaluation \$20,000 Annual conference \$5,000 Quarterly newsletters \$10,000	Consultants, teacher stipends Release time and sub pay Programming for online conferencing online and ITV Evaluation contract Fits within the partners' mission Community Works Journal

The Flow of History initiative offers a unique opportunity to the state of Vermont. It brings together partners from small schools, museum education, history education, technology integration, and higher education to take a major step toward bringing the teaching of traditional American history into the core curriculum of Vermont schools.