

**SEPTEMBER 2012**

Overview

In 2007, the U.S. Department of Education awarded the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media (CHNM) at George Mason University a contract (ED-07-CO-0088) to create the National History Education Clearinghouse (*Teachinghistory.org*).

From 2007 – 2012, CHNM built the leading online resource for improving K-12 U.S. history education. In the past two years, more than 1.5 million visitors turned to *Teachinghistory.org* for free, quality history content, teaching strategies, best practices, and digital tools designed to improve K-12 history education in the classroom.

Key accomplishments:

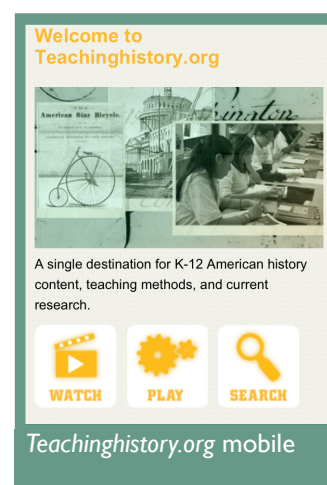
- Doubled visitor traffic each year, reaching millions of history educators, curriculum coordinators, administrators, media and technology specialists, teacher educators, homeschoolers, public historians, and policy makers from all 50 states and more than 150 countries;
- Improved effective history teaching with technology in *Digital Classroom*;
- Launched mobile version of *Teachinghistory.org*;
- Produced significant multimedia and interactive content, with more than 7 terabytes of bandwidth usage annually;
- Established robust social media presence on Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest, attracting new and existing followers;
- Developed new content such as *English Language Learners*, *Quick Links* for elementary, middle, and high school, and *Spotlights* on holidays;
- Convened DC Museum Collaborative and produced *Visiting History*, a guide to quality teacher professional development;
- Designed and distributed 200,000 Historical Thinking and Civil War posters to classrooms nationwide;
- Presented *Teachinghistory.org* to more than 100 audiences; and
- Received national recognition from education and history education organizations.

Teachinghistory.org has changed the landscape for history education. Unparalleled in the depth and breadth of quality resources, the project has remained on the cutting edge of digital and pedagogical innovation, adapting to new and emerging technologies, research, curricular demands, and educator needs. *Teachinghistory.org* has effectively built a strong community across traditional lines, reached new audiences, and modeled effective classroom strategies, helping teachers everywhere improve the teaching and learning of history.

Audience and Outreach: Building a Learning Community

Teachinghistory.org's website traffic has doubled each year. Last year alone, visitors viewed more than 3.5 million pages to locate quality history education resources. Effective outreach has led to a strong, ever-expanding user base, including elementary, middle, and high school teachers, technology and media specialists, curriculum coordinators and administrators, TAH Project Directors, and teacher educators.

The site really is what I call "non-negotiable" – a tool so valuable that no history teacher should try teaching without it. – Glenn Wiebe, History Tech Blog



98% of Teachinghistory.org users find what they are looking for and 41% find more than expected. – Goodman Research Group survey



This audience serves a diverse student population. According to a 2011 external evaluation by the Goodman Research Group, 70% of *Teachinghistory.org* users are K-12 classroom teachers. Of these, 58% teach children with learning disabilities, 46% work with English Language Learners, and 41% teach traditionally underserved youth. K-12 teachers who visit the site teach in urban, suburban, and rural schools and almost half work in schools where the majority of students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

The survey also revealed that word of mouth is a powerful means of outreach. One-third of users learned about *Teachinghistory.org* through a friend or colleague. Most importantly, 88% are very or extremely likely to recommend the website to a friend.

To ensure that the website meets the needs of educators, *Teachinghistory.org* enlisted Teacher Representatives to provide feedback, content, and outreach. This geographically diverse group of teachers represented different grade levels, subject areas, and types of schools. Teacher Representatives contributed content and made presentations about the site throughout the country.

One of the most successful methods for reaching educators at all levels has been the Historical Thinking and Civil War posters. Designed for elementary and secondary classrooms, these posters introduce students to the process of thinking like a historian and to teaching the Civil War with primary sources. These posters (200,000 copies) are displayed in classrooms in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and Department of Defense schools worldwide.

Educators engage with *Teachinghistory.org* through traditional and new media. Monthly e-newsletters, press releases, and semi-annual print newsletters have introduced teachers to new content or addressed themes such as founding documents, teaching with maps, social issues in the history classroom, and literature in the history classroom.

Educators also engage with *Teachinghistory.org* via social media. *Teachinghistory.org* established an active presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest to expand outreach, reach tech-savvy educators, and allow

The website provides both quality historical scholarship and evidence-based pedagogical strategies without sacrificing one for the sake of the other. – William Obrachta, Virginia Historical Society



for easy sharing of favorite resources. Followers regularly share *Teachinghistory.org* posts with their own networks. Blogs, websites, and Twitter groups by teachers, schools, districts, and organizations recommend *Teachinghistory.org* resources to their audiences, including the *Internet Scout Report*, *Clickschooling*, *History Tech*, *#SSChat*, and *Education World*.

Teachinghistory.org has also been featured in national print publications such as *American Teacher* (American Federation of Teachers), *Essence* magazine, *Idea Book for Educators* (History Channel), *Social Education* (National Council of the Social Studies), *The NSSSA Leader* (National Social Studies Supervisor Association), *Perspectives* (American Historical Association), and *California Social Studies Review*.

Teachinghistory.org staff have presented to more than 100 audiences from Maine to California, including local, regional, state, and national conferences. Educators have welcomed the opportunity to learn about *Teachinghistory.org* and its many free resources. National presentations include:

- National Council for the Social Studies (2009, 2010, 2011)
- International Society for Technology in Education (2011, 2012)
- American Historical Association (2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012)
- Organization of American Historians (2010, 2012)
- National Council for History Education (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012)
- National Social Studies Supervisors Association (2011)
- Teaching American History (TAH) Project Director Meetings (2007, 2009, 2011)

Digital Innovation

The *Teachinghistory.org* team has responded proactively to the rising demand for interactivity and mobile use. *Teachinghistory.org* visitors can watch hundreds of videos featuring teachers in the classroom, professional development workshops, scholars modeling historical thinking, and TAH grant participants sharing lessons learned.

Teachinghistory.org offers more than 120 history quizzes for teachers and students featuring tablet-friendly features such as sorting and drag-and-drop. Interactive versions of Historical Thinking and Civil War posters offer additional resources. Viewed online, educators can follow built-in links to explore the ideas and related primary sources.

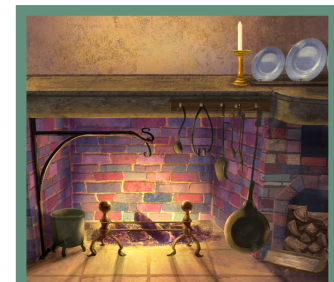
Teachinghistory.org's most recent innovative project, *Hungry for History*, is an online game on historical cooking and foodways that invites teachers and students to explore the differences between daily life past and present and learn about cultural contact interactively.

Content and historical thinking remain at the core of good history teaching and *Teachinghistory.org* leverages technology to facilitate both. *Digital Classroom*, created in response to changing technologies, focuses on tools and best practices while modeling effective teaching with digital tools, from microblogging, assistive technology, and digital storytelling to translation tools for English Language Learners.

@teachinghistory does it again. Sent their last post to my entire department.
— Twitter user 365history, high school history teacher

It is helping history educators transform their work, making historical learning more engaging, relevant, and powerful. — Linda Sargent Wood, history professor, Northern Arizona University

I love your website and resources, and appreciate all the ideas and authentic classroom examples you provide! — Elizabeth O. Crawford, education professor, University of North Carolina Wilmington



Hungry for History



Digital Classroom video

Content

Outreach efforts attract visitors, but the breadth and depth of *Teachinghistory.org*'s content keeps them returning. According to the Goodman survey, 98% of users find what they are looking for when they visit *Teachinghistory.org* and 41% find more than expected.

Sample content includes:

- Engaging videos of successful *Teaching in Action*, featuring award-winning teachers Stacy Hoeflich (National History Teacher of the Year, 2011) and Jennifer Orr (Kay L. Bitter Vision Award for Excellence in Technology-Based PreK–2 Education)
- *Teaching Guides* on topics such as analyzing political cartoons, developing thesis statements, and teaching with timelines;
- Over 120 quizzes on topics as varied as the history of the U.S. Constitution, the 54th Massachusetts regiment (featured in the movie *Glory*), and the women's suffrage movement;
- More than 1,100 *Website Reviews* that help visitors quickly locate reliable exhibits and primary-source archives on any topic;
- *Visiting History*, an online guide to quality professional development at museums, parks, libraries, archives, and historic sites (teachinghistory.org/visiting-history) created in partnership with the DC Museum Collaborative;
- Blog posts on current issues (Common Core) and from guest celebrities Valerie Tripp, American Girl author, and Michael Yell, past-president of National Council for the Social Studies;
- In-depth answers to real-world questions about teaching and history in *Ask a Master Teacher*, *Ask a Historian*, and *Ask a Digital Historian*;
- *Project Spotlights* and *Lessons Learned* from more than 1,000 Teaching American History (TAH) projects about improving history education and creating effective teacher professional development;
- A *Report on the State of History Education* providing a comprehensive overview of U.S. and world history standards and class requirements by state; and
- The only free database of all state standards, searchable by grade level or state.

Every social studies teacher and librarian – in fact, every educator – needs to follow you! – Mary J. Johnson, library media specialist and technology coordinator (CO)

Impact and Future

Teachinghistory.org has made a significant impact inside and outside the K-12 classroom. Survey respondents reported using *Teachinghistory.org* for teaching preparation (90%), in the classroom (75%), and in their own professional development (55%). In a 2012 survey of university methods instructors by Goodman Research Group all participants said that they planned to use *Teachinghistory.org* for their own benefit and/or with pre-service students.

Teachinghistory.org is increasing the use of primary sources in U.S. history teaching. Website visitors reported substantive increases in their knowledge of strategies for teaching history with different kinds of primary sources and for locating and using reliable history websites, as well as increases in strategies for teaching history with technology, evaluating the effectiveness of lessons plans, and best practices for teaching historical thinking and history content.

We are currently seeking funding to maintain *Teachinghistory.org* as a lasting, free, high quality website. With additional resources, we plan to focus on adding world history content, expanding materials on teaching history with technology, and developing quality history education games.

With its emphasis on both quality history content and teaching methods, *Teachinghistory.org* is helping educators everywhere improve their practice, learn new ideas, and connect with the larger historical community.