

## **Project examples and Curriculum suggestions from our friends at the HISTORY CHANNEL**

### **Save Our History-DeKalb encourages Community Involvement**

*As an extension to Save Our History-DeKalb classroom lesson plans and activities, Landmarks of DeKalb encourages educators to partner with museums, historical societies, historic sites, archives, libraries, and other local history organizations to help make history come alive for students.*

**Hands-on learning experiences can provide students with a whole new way to interpret and understand history. By exploring the places where history happened, speaking to community members who experienced history firsthand, and making discoveries of their own through archaeological digs, research of primary sources or artifacts, or touring buildings or historic places, students develop a real understanding and respect for their past.**

**Save Our History projects are appropriate for elementary and high school students and can be adapted by teachers to suit students' needs. The following How To Project Guides outline projects proven to interest and excite students, increase school attendance and improve performance in class.**

**We encourage you to use these guides as a framework for teaching both local and national history. Your students' interest in their past will be invigorated and they will learn the importance of preserving their history, whether it's recording the memories of a World War II veteran or creating a cookbook of grandma's regional specialties.**

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## **AMERICAN HISTORY CURRICULUM SUPPLEMENT *Documenting History***

### **I. National or Local Site Timeline**

- 1.** Along one wall, using a roll of paper or individual pages taped together, create a simple timeline reflecting the period you will be studying over the course of the unit, semester, or year.
  - 2.** With a black marker, indicate 10-15 well-known historical dates (1776, 1861, 1941, etc.) to provide a framework.
  - 3.** Throughout the unit, semester, or school year, when you touch upon a new topic that you feel is important, make a point of having a student add to the timeline.
- This can serve as an effective tool for teaching to content standards in your state. Use different color markers for different themes such as commerce, transportation, social issues, immigration and migration, politics, etc. Before you begin the timeline, you may ask students to brainstorm the themes most important to the study of history. If you choose, you can use these topics as the basis for your timeline.

## **II. Buildings In Time**

**Introduction:** This is an especially valuable activity for students studying state or local history, but is applicable to any social studies or history class. It can be performed as a simple homework assignment or extended to cover an entire unit.

- 1.** Ask students to select a state or local historical site (you can also use a national site for a broader approach to this activity). Explain that students will research the history of their site, compile information, and make a presentation to the class.
- 2.** Students familiar with PowerPoint may use it to create their presentation. An oral presentation with a supporting poster will also suffice. Student presentations should include important dates (when the site was first explored, built, or preserved) and should add the most significant date associated with their site to the timeline.
- 3.** Presentations should also include the location of the site, why it is important to our national, state, and/or local history, and a historic photograph. If students select local sites, they can take current photographs or make sketches, compare them to historic photographs, and discuss the changes that have taken place over time.
- 4.** Students should also research whether their site is endangered or faces any preservation issues.

Students should make their presentations chronologically, and follow-up discussions can include observations of changes over time.

## **Hands-on Activities**

### **Scrapbook**

**Introduction:** As an additional experience, students who select a state or local historical site may locate a primary source document related to the site, a historic event, or a person with whom the site is associated.

- 1.** The primary source document (a letter, diary entry, bill of sale, birth or death certificate, tax record, etc.) or an excerpt can be placed in a scrapbook along with the photo or sketch of the site and a short descriptive paragraph about the site.
- 2.** The scrapbook students create can be kept in the classroom and supplemented by future students.

## **III. Oral History**

**Introduction:** Oral history is a unique and fun way to get students to think and learn about the past. Family and friends, neighbors, teachers, veterans, and other community members who have lived during important historical events can share their memories and firsthand perspective.

1. Since memories are rarely recorded, students have the opportunity to act as preservationists by recording and documenting previously unrecorded local history.
  2. Work with students to determine the subject matter of their oral history project. They can focus on World War II veterans, the impact of changes in transportation, immigration, or commerce on a local community, or the Civil Rights movement.
  3. Students may need help finding a subject to interview. Teachers may wish to send a note home to parents encouraging them to help identify a subject.
  4. Once you have determined a topic, students should set up their interview date and create a list of questions for their subjects. They can use a video or audio tape to record their interviews.
  5. When complete, students can either write a report or prepare an oral presentation about their subject. Either presentation should include direct quotes from their subject.
- For guidelines on oral history technique, please review *How To Guide: Saluting Local Heroes; Collecting Community Members' Oral Histories* on page 38.

#### **IV. Neighborhoods In Time**

**Introduction:** Whether you live in a big city, a small town, or a rural community, there have likely been significant changes to your hometown in the past 300, 200, 100, or even 50 years. Over time, regardless of where students live, the physical structures, demographic makeup, important industries, and methods of transportation and communication have changed.

This activity takes students on a journey through the past and combines in-class and extracurricular research with hands-on exploration of their neighborhoods. You can also apply this activity to the neighborhood surrounding your school, or specific buildings in the community if you would prefer to focus on sites rather than neighborhoods. Local history organizations, including historical societies, museums, archives and libraries can serve as valuable sources of information for these projects.

1. Assign students or have them select two or three eras to focus on. For instance, you could pick 1800 and 1900 or 1775 and 1975. You can also take two important events such as the Civil War and World War II. The eras will depend on where you live, your chosen topic, and what sort of information students have access to.
2. Student research on their neighborhood should include the population of the town, city, and/or state during each era, as well as the important crops, products, or industries that contributed to the local economy. Students should take particular note of immigration, transportation, communication, social developments, political changes, and other major factors that may have affected their neighborhood or community. Maps, photographs, and primary sources can also provide important information and evidence for students.
3. Using a posterboard, students should illustrate their findings about the first chronological era on one side, and the second on the other. In order to ensure that they don't destroy one side while creating the other, students may wish to work on two equal size pieces of board and glue or tape them together when they are finished. The posters should include maps, photographs, or other sources that demonstrate the changes that have occurred over time.

4. Students can cut holes at the top of their posterboards, add string and a hook, and hang their work around the classroom. As the projects swing, students will be able to take a now-and-then glimpse into the history of their local community.

## **V. Adopt a Historic Site**

**Introduction:** By participating in a local service learning project, you may wish to adopt a historic neighborhood, building, or monument in your local community. The historic site could even be your school building.

1. If you need help identifying a local site to adopt, your local historical society or preservation organization can help you find a local building with an interesting past. You may be able to take a tour of a local historic site with a representative from the site or the local history organization you contacted.

## **VI. Clean-Up History**

**Introduction:** Organize a clean-up day for a historic site. Many communities have old cemeteries that are neglected. They provide an excellent service opportunity for an easy and inexpensive preservation project. With lawnmowers, rakes, clippers, and garbage bags, a group of student volunteers can have a big impact.

1. Sometimes a local merchant can donate work gloves or other supplies, especially if students create big signs thanking the donors and display them around the school or community.

2. Historic cemeteries also provide lessons in local history and genealogy. Part of a cemetery clean-up day should include the creation of a report about the history of the cemetery, a representative sampling of the people buried there, and information about particularly interesting epitaphs and tombstones.

Clean-up days for parks, battlefields, and other historic sites or buildings are similar to cemetery clean-up projects. Activities can range from litter removal to working with professional preservationists and restoration experts. Don't ask students to attempt restoration work for which they are not qualified to perform on a historic site.

## **VII. Create a Heritage Tour**

**Introduction:** Teenagers, working with local historical societies, can help create walking tours of their community. Two or three students can be responsible for one specific site. For example, one small group might research a historic church, while another documents the local courthouse. Economic changes may also be studied. Participants will learn about the positive economic impact of heritage tourism. This is a long-term project and requires research, writing, and presentation skills. It can result in a renewed sense of history for an entire community. It can also provide a platform for student-mentoring projects.

1. Identify organizational and individual resources for your community's history. Some areas have a town or county historian. These professionals are treasure troves of information. Historical societies and the local history section in the library are other excellent places to start. They can help you locate the town records that will be the backbone of much of your research.
  2. Develop a historic overview of your community. What was there before it became a town? When was it incorporated? (And, while you're at it, find out why towns incorporate in the first place!) What changes have occurred over time in terms of population, economy, immigration, buildings, etc? Town maps can be very helpful.
  3. Choose at least three historic sites to serve as the focal points of your heritage tour. Alternatively, if you are working with a small group, you can start with one historic site. It is more important to be thorough and accurate than to try to cover too many places. Ideally the sites should be close together, so that people can easily walk from one to the next.
  4. Divide your group into small teams. Each team will be responsible for researching and compiling notes on the history of one selected site or building. A team also can choose a site of a historical event or place (a battle, a segregated diner, or an orange grove, for example) that has now been built over and modernized. Make sure your information is accurate and not based on folklore or hearsay.
  5. Develop oral presentations on the history of each site. Using notes is okay, especially at first. Always begin with an introduction that sets the parameter of your presentation. Provide dates of the site as well, and remind your audience of some of the larger national events that occurred simultaneously. For example, if you have chosen a building that was erected in 1932, you should mention the Great Depression. Take questions from the group – and don't hesitate to admit when you don't know the answer. Don't be "creative" and make things up – but you can venture an opinion as long as you preface it with, "Here's a guess on how that happened" or something along those lines. Speak clearly and concisely. Once the three historic site presentations are polished, practice them on location at the sites.
  6. Some members of your group should train as tour guides who will lead your visitors from one site to the next. They should have a clear sense of the overall story of your neighborhood's past.
- Now it's time to give your tour. Invite family and community members. You might invite the local fourth grade as your first visitors. Start your tour at the first historic site you have chosen. The presentation should include the important and interesting facts about the site. Personal tidbits of information ("anecdotes") make a nice addition. Keep the presentation brief! Go to the next site. A "tour guide" should accompany the visitors and keep them informed of any significant places they are passing on their way to the next site. Once all the sites have been visited, visitors often appreciate refreshments. You can be as elaborate or simple as you desire.

## **SAVING OUR LOCAL HISTORY**

### **A How-To Guide From Save Our History**

## **HOW TO Oral History**

### **Saluting Local Heroes**

#### **Collecting Community Members' Oral Histories: A Save Our History-Dekalb**

#### **Project Guide**

Landmarks of DeKalb partnered with 35 9th grade students from Crossville High School in Crossville, AL. Students interviewed pilots and crewmen who served in World War II. Using their interviews as source material, students created a video diary of their personal stories. Photos of the veterans from World War II, their hometowns, ranks, years served during the war, a brief description of service, and current pictures were included in the video.

#### **Project Description:**

Students will record, gather, analyze and process information about local World War II war veterans (or other community elders) via recorded oral interviews.

#### **Objective:**

By exploring the memories and experiences of elder community members, students will gain an understanding of changes that have taken place over time, and learn that history can be found in a variety of places.

#### **Time Required:**

1-2 hours

#### **Materials needed:**

Interview questions, video camera and/or audio recorder, microphones, extra video and/or audio tape, batteries, veterans, or other community elders.

#### **Project Guidelines: Preparing for the Interview**

- 1. Create a theme.** You could focus on World War II veterans, alumni from your school, retired employees from a local plant or company, or students' elder family members.
- 2. Contact interview subjects.** Explain your project, invite them to participate, set up a time to interview them.
- 3. Develop a list of questions.** Avoid 'yes' or 'no' questions. Start with general questions and then move on to specific questions. Try to elicit facts, feelings, stories and descriptions.
- 4. Practice!** Make sure students know how to use the equipment then perform practice interviews with classmates.
- 5. Get confirmation.** One day before the interview, confirm interviewer and interviewee's attendance. Ask them to bring any pictures and or journal entries that will help them recall interesting, vital information.

### **Project Guidelines: The Day of the Interview**

- 1. Create a brief release form.** Clearly state the purpose of the oral history project. Have interviewees complete and sign the release.
- 2. Check your equipment.** Make sure it is functioning and that extra video tapes and batteries are within reach.
- 3. Do a “run through.”** Ask the subject a few questions before recording the official interview. This could help spark memories, and make the official interview more focused.
- 4. Start the interview.** Clearly state your name, the subject’s name, the time, date and location of the interview.
- 5. Make eye contact.** Listen clearly to his or her answers. Be careful not to ask a question that has already been answered.
- 6. Keep it short.** Try to finish in 30-40 minutes. This can be a tiring process for your subject – and you!
- 7. Improvise.** Feel free to deviate from the list of questions if the interviewee begins to speak about a particularly strong memory. Encourage them in a friendly manner to continue with their story.
- 8. Don’t push.** If the interviewee has trouble remembering a certain topic do not push them, move on to the next question. They may wish to revisit a previous question later in the interview.
- 9. Do not interrupt!** Even if the veteran strays from the question at hand, they may tumble across an unexpected memory that is priceless!
- 10. Say thank you.** When the interview is finished, thank the veteran for their service to their country and for taking the time to share their memories. Clearly restate your name and the interviewee’s name once again, before you stop recording.
- 11. Keep in touch.** Update the interviewee on the progress of your oral history project.

### **Teaching From The Grave: Community History at the Local Cemetery:**

#### **A Save Our History How To Project Guide**

##### **Goal:**

Students will discover that they can learn history through a variety of sources, including their local cemetery. Students will preserve – and perhaps unearth – important information about the history of their community.

##### **Time Required:**

1-2 days spent in a local cemetery; 2 class periods spent organizing data

##### **Materials Needed:**

Data collection sheets, clipboards, pencils, calculators, bags of pebbles, historical texts, computer access.

### **Project Guidelines: Preparing for Your Cemetery Visit**

- 1. Collaborate!** Contact your local historical society and invite a representative to work with your class.

**2. Identify existing resources.** Identify whether the information at the graveyard has already been documented or mapped out. If it has, ask for a copy of the records. If not, plan a field trip with students to collect and record this information. In addition, investigate books they may have to further your inquiry.

**3. Create worksheets.** In preparation for the field trip, create a data collection sheet and practice recording information with students by using gravestone rubbings or photos in class.

### **Project Guidelines: At the Cemetery**

**1. Gather data.** Collect information from gravestones (i.e. day, month, year of birth and death, family name, and gender of individual). Have students work in pairs to ensure information is properly recorded.

**2. Avoid duplicate entries.** Place a rock atop the headstone to indicate that information has been collected.

**3. Enter data into a spreadsheet.** Have students work in pairs on a computer to log the data they collected.

**4. Organize data.** Use the computer spreadsheet program options to configure the data in ascending order by category (i.e. year of death, gender, etc.) and print several copies.

### **Project Guidelines: Follow-Up Research**

**1. Think critically.** Ask students to consider events in history which may have impacted your community. (The introduction of antibiotics in the 1940s may inspire you to separate your data into pre- and post-1940 groups.)

**2. Divide students into groups and assign categories to investigate.** For instance, one group may examine average age of deceased subjects longitudinally, while others may examine percentage of deaths by month.

**3. Graph your findings.**

**4. Make connections.** Examine historically significant occurrences which may have impacted your community.

**5. Present your work to the community.** Correlate your findings and present them to your community. Some suggestions could include creating data-based documents, including the information on the historical society or school's website, or delivering the information via a science-fair-style format.

By Dr. Frank Turano, President, Three Village Historical Society with Paul Wilgenkamp, Sixth Grade Teacher, Minnesauke Elementary School, Setauket, NY.

1. Cluster the population in 5- or 10-year intervals. If your population is small, use individuals.
2. Compare the community mortality data to the arrival or departure of industry (i.e. immigration and emigration).
3. The U.S. Census is available on the web.

### **Extension Idea:**

Use digital images to record and archive gravestone images and map the graveyard.

**Adaptation for Special Learners:**

Use digital images of headstones from the cemetery to enable students with disabilities to take part in the project back in the classroom.

**HOW TO Preserving Culinary Traditions****A DOLLOP OF HISTORY IN EVERY BITE:****Recording Regional Culinary History:****A Save Our History How To Project Guide****Project Description:**

Students will collect family recipes and compose a “Classroom Cookbook.”

**Goal:**

To preserve local culinary (food) heritage and investigate how immigration and America’s ethnic and cultural diversity affect the students’ community and daily life, including food choices and eating habits.

**Time Required:**

1-3 hours of class time. Students will also keep a seven-day food journal

**Materials needed:**

Notepads for a food journal and family interviews, pens, 5 x 8 index cards, camera or disposable camera(s), video camera and/or audio recorder and extra batteries to record interviews.

**Project Guidelines:**

- 1. Create a “Food Journal.”** For seven consecutive days, ask students to use a notebook to record the foods and/or types of dishes that are served at each of their daily meals, whether at home, school, or dining out.
- 2. Analyze the journal.** Once the journal is complete, have students work with a family member to identify the different ethnicities represented by each meal.
- 3. Interview a family member or adult.**

Arrange a time to ask questions about family food traditions and recipes. Sample interview questions may include:

  - When you were growing up, what types of food did your family eat on a daily basis?
  - Please describe any special dishes or meals that your family ate on special days or holidays.
  - Please discuss food traditions or recipes, written or unwritten, that your family has handed down through the generations.

- Describe any family foods that are no longer eaten or traditions that are no longer followed.
  - What favorite food traditions will you hand down to your children?
  - Are there any other food-related memories that you would like to share with me?
  - In what ways do you think American food traditions have changed over the years?
- 4. Compile and discuss findings. (Class Activity)** Divide the class into groups of 4-5 students. Create a graphic organizer or chart that illustrates the variety of community food traditions each group discovered. Ask each group to use the graphic organizer to write a 1-3 sentence summary describing what they learned about community food traditions. Hold a classroom discussion in which students share their graphic organizers and summaries.
- 5. Supplemental research.** Investigate how recipes with origins in other countries inspire a richness and diversity in the food prepared in your community's kitchens and restaurants. Examine telephone books, newspapers, and restaurant menus and make a list of your community's ethnic restaurants. Invite community chefs to speak to your class about local cuisine and food traditions. Compare and contrast the information gathered during the classroom interviews with local chefs with what your class learned from their family interviews. Use the U.S. Department of Agriculture's "My Pyramid" food guide at [mypyramid.gov](http://mypyramid.gov) to examine the health and nutritional value of each cuisine's signature dishes.
- 6. Create a "Classroom Cookbook."** Use the recipes and research that you and your peers collected to create a classroom or community cookbook of favorite family recipes, including relevant information you unearthed in your research.

By Sue Laudeman, Education Curator for The Historic New Orleans Collection and Memory Seymour, Curriculum Consultant for THNOC.

### **HOW To Preserving Culinary Traditions**

#### **Helpful Tips:**

- If there is time, students should ask a family member or adult if they can observe while (s)he prepares a recipe.
- Write down interview questions ahead of time. Use a notepad to record interview notes.
- Take pictures during the interview and, on the notepad, record the subject of each picture taken.

**Landmarks of DeKalb, Inc** created the Save Our History-DeKalb Awards to recognize the teachers and students from across the county who demonstrate exceptional commitment to history education and/or historic preservation in their communities.

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