In this Issue:

Making Primary Sources More Accessible to All Students

This issue explores how teachers can use instructional strategies and other supports to facilitate the primary source-based learning of students with disabilities.

The Library of Congress Web site now offers more than 16 million digitized items, many of which are primary sources. Primary sources are the raw materials of history— original documents and objects created at the time under study, such as photographs, maps, prints, manuscripts, sound recordings, and motion pictures. Many primary sources are relevant to the learning objectives of curricula across a range of subject areas and grade levels as well as local and state standards. Most importantly, primary sources offer unique learning opportunities for students of all levels, interests and learning styles to connect with   content and develop new understandings.

While the use of primary sources can enhance the learning of all students, manifestations of learning, behavioral and/or physical disabilities can limit some students' ability to benefit from the study of primary sources. In this issue's feature article, the authors present an instructional strategy designed to support students with disabilities and others in their learning with text-based primary sources. Additional ideas, strategies and resources for teaching with primary sources in inclusive classrooms are presented throughout the issue.

Contents

Teaching with Primary Sources

The Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) Program works with universities and educational organizations to offer professional development that helps teachers use the Library's digitized primary sources to deliver effective instruction.

Teaching with Primary Sources Quarterly provides information and materials that support this goal.

For more information about Teaching with Primary Sources or to identify a TPS consortium member in an area near you, please visit the web site at http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps.

DESCRIBE: A Strategy for Making Text-Based Primary Sources More Accessible

by Colleen Reardon, Ed.D., and C. Ben Freville, M.S. Sp. Ed.

Introduction

Integrating primary sources into the K-12 curriculum provides students with exciting learning opportunities and benefits. Using primary sources, however, presents challenges, especially for students with disabilities. In order to address these challenges and make primary sources more accessible to all students, teachers need effective and powerful instructional strategies. This article outlines one such strategy, called DESCRIBE, developed by Dominican University School of Education faculty and tested in inclusive classrooms.

Benefits of Using Primary Sources

Teaching with primary sources in the classroom can bring history alive and increase student interest, motivation and engagement. Available in a variety of formats-manuscripts, maps, photographs, motion pictures, sound recordings, and more- primary sources offer teachers unique possibilities for engaging students of all ability levels, interests and learning styles. Millions of digitized primary sources available online provide teachers with endless opportunities for helping students personally connect with subject-area content while developing critical thinking skills and constructing new knowledge.

For example, through the use of primary sources, students can gain a historical perspective of individuals of a particular region while developing a deeper understanding of a specific time period under study. At the same time, students may begin to perceive the complex nature of problems, decisions, and issues people have faced throughout history. Diaries, letters, photographs, and journals provide opportunities for students to gain a very real sense of what it was like to be alive at a different time.

The use of primary sources offers opportunities for students to build vocabulary, make inferences, and think logically. Students develop the ability to analyze historical evidence and integrate information coming from multiple and often conflicting sources. Primary sources encourage the development of analysis skills, especially when used to explore an authentic real-life problem.

Challenges of Using Primary Sources

Despite these benefits, learning, behavioral and/or physical characteristics of some students can interfere with their ability to benefit from the study of primary sources without instructional support. It is important for teachers to understand challenges that students with disabilities may encounter when using primary sources in order to determine the most effective instructional strategies for helping all students reap the benefits.

One challenge for many students with and without disabilities is that they lack background knowledge or struggle to bring prior knowledge to relate to the study of a particular primary source. This may prevent students from making meaningful connections. For instance, they may not have the necessary knowledge to connect particular events or life histories of individuals with a broader historical context. Lack of background knowledge has been linked with difficulty in making inferences and more generally comprehending expository text (Ehren 2005).

Furthermore, the lack of domain specific background knowledge has been found to lead to misconceptions. For example, in a Westward migration unit, students with disabilities suggested that people traveled west so they could live in better neighborhoods. While they used prior knowledge from their own experiences or others they knew, the lack of domain specific background knowledge led them to inaccurate conclusions regarding the reasons people migrated west in the nineteenth century (Ferretti, MacArthur, and Okolo 2007).

Text-based primary sources, such as letters or diary entries, can prove particularly challenging to students with disabilities and other struggling readers. Limited reading and language skills may interfere with the understanding of primary sources. The vocabulary and style of writing, especially from earlier eras in history, can be unfamiliar even to students with advanced reading skills. Additionally, the small font of some digitized primary sources or script used in letters and other manuscripts may interfere with readability.

Other challenges relating to the study of primary sources include using evidence to support a historical claim and difficulties with historical reasoning. Understanding of bias and being able to understand a primary source through a lens other that of the 21st century is a challenge for any student.

Instructional Strategies Supporting the Use of Primary Sources
The use of specific instructional strategies can support the learning of students with disabilities in their study of primary sources, helping them to overcome related challenges such as those already described. Teaching strategies provide structure for students and focus them on key understandings. They foster comprehension and vocabulary development and aid in the processing of information to promote deeper understanding. Through the use of specific instructional strategies, teachers can make relationships among pieces of information explicit. These strategies are of added benefit in that they actively involve students in the learning process. Such instructional strategies, including the one outlined in the next section, will support the learning of all students but are of particular benefit to students with disabilities.

The DESCRIBE Strategy
DESCRIBE is an instructional strategy used by teachers to guide students through reading and analyzing text-based primary sources. It is designed to aid students in activating background knowledge, understanding key vocabulary and comprehending text, and it is modeled after the Content Enhancement Routine approach developed by researchers at the Center for Research on Learning at University of Kansas and is based on seven research-based instructional principles:

Letter from Tilton C. Reynolds to Juliana Smith Reynolds, September 21, 1864. Library of Congress. A Civil War Soldier in the Wild Cat Regiment. American Memory

- actively involving students in the learning process;
- presenting abstract information in concrete forms;
- organizing information for students;
- tying new information to previously learned information;
- distinguishing important information from unimportant information;
- making relationships among pieces of information explicit, and;
- explicitly showing students how to learn specific types of content (Bulgren, Schumaker & Deshler 2001).

The DESCRIBE strategy can be helpful to all students, especially those who struggle with reading comprehension, making connections with background knowledge and analyzing and synthesizing content information. Content enhancement routines such as the DESCRIBE strategy are composed of three parts:
1) a teaching device, such as a graphic organizer;
2) a routine or a set of steps that guide students through the thinking processes that enable them to meaningfully access content, and;
3) procedures associated with strategic teaching, i.e. explicitly teaching the routine for completion of the device, actively involving students in the process, using probing and clarifying questions (Bulgren & Lenz 1996).
The teaching routine, represented by the mnemonic device DESCRIBE, and the graphic organizer are presented here. The strategic teaching procedures associated with the DESCRIBE strategy are explained in the paragraphs that follow the graphic organizer.

DESCRIBE STRATEGY STEPS

Describe the document
Explain the concept
State the unit.
Comb through the document for unique features and new vocabulary
Read and as you read ask yourself, "What is this about?"
Indicate your response in the appropriate box.
Bring it all together.

DESCRIBE GRAPHIC ORGANIZER— Visit the online newsletter for a printable copy of the graphic organizer.

DESCRIBE Procedures.

In preparation for using the DESCRIBE strategy with students, the teacher should: select a text-based primary source; divide the document into three equal parts or choose three important paragraphs from it for reading; follow the steps of the DESCRIBE strategy to complete the graphic organizer, and; use the completed graphic organizer as a guide when implementing the strategy in the classroom.

Before starting the activity, the teacher provides students with a copy of the original primary source, including its bibliographic information and a blank graphic organizer. The teacher posts the DESCRIBE strategy steps in the classroom for students to see. To begin, the teacher calls students' attention to three items: the content (i.e., the text-based primary source), the DESCRIBE strategy steps, and the DESCRIBE graphic organizer. The teacher guides students through the strategy steps while completing the graphic organizer. Each step of the DESCRIBE strategy is explained in more detail in the following example using a letter written by Tilton C. Reynolds, a Union soldier, to his mother, Juliana Smith Reynolds, in 1864 during the Civil War.

- **Describe the document.**

The teacher presents the primary source to students and asks for a description of the document. The teacher directs students to read the accompanying bibliographic information. At minimum, this will include the title and a one line summary of the document. The teacher assists students in paraphrasing the information and writes it in the *title and description of document* box (1) on the graphic organizer. Students copy information onto their graphic organizers.

- **Explain the concept,** and **State the unit.**

The teacher briefly explains the current concept being studied and writes it in the top section of the *concept/unit* box (2). Then the teacher states the current unit of study and writes it in the bottom section of the same box (2). Students copy the information on their graphic organizers.

- **Comb through the document for unique features and new vocabulary.**

The teacher models *combing through* the document to identify unique features and new vocabulary. A think-aloud should be used to demonstrate the thought process that the teacher is using to recognize unique features of the document and to identify new vocabulary. As the teacher models, she should underline vocabulary and make notes about unique features on the document. After modeling the process for the first part of the document, the teacher should involve students in this process by asking them to pick up where she left off. The teacher elicits responses from students and underlines and makes notes on the document. When finished with this process, the teacher summarizes the information (margin notes and underlined vocabulary) and writes it in the *unique features* and *new vocabulary* boxes (3); students copy information onto their graphic organizers. The teacher should discuss the unique features and new vocabulary with the students.

- **Read and as you read ask yourself, "What is this about?"** and **Indicate your response in the appropriate box.**

With the first section or paragraph of the document, the teacher models reading this text and asking herself, "What is this paragraph about?" The teacher records the response to the question in the first box under *read-ask-answer* on the graphic organizer (number 4, box 1). The teacher follows the same process with section or paragraph 2, this time eliciting responses from students. **The response to the question, "What is this about?" is recorded on the** graphic organizer (number 4, box 2). The teacher and students do the same with section or paragraph 3 and record the response in the appropriate box (number 4, box 3) on the graphic organizer.

- **Bring it all together**.

The teacher then leads the students in a discussion about the main ideas of the document. Together, the teacher and students develop a list of statements summarizing the main ideas using information from the *unique features, new vocabulary,* and *read-ask a question-answer* boxes of the DESCRIBE graphic organizer. The statements are written in the *bring it all together* box (5).

- **Examine the graphic organizer.**

As the last step, the teacher reviews the completed DESCRIBE graphic organizer with students in an interactive way, asking them questions and requesting further explanation about the information written on the graphic organizer. The teacher should model how to ask a question based on information from the *bring it all together* box and solicit responses, then encourage students to pose their own questions for discussion. The teacher may extend the activity by helping students identify topics for further investigation or using the Library of Congress Teacher's Guide to Analyzing Manuscripts and Analysis Tool to continue studying the primary source.

Conclusion

Integrating primary sources into the curriculum provides teachers and students with many opportunities for extending and deepening learning. Primary sources present particular challenges to students with and without disabilities who struggle with reading comprehension, making connections with background knowledge, and analyzing and synthesizing content information. By using the DESCRIBE strategy to guide instruction, teachers can help all students to experience the benefits of learning with primary sources.
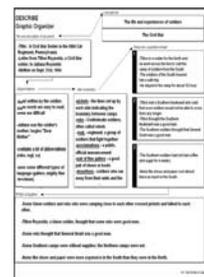
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References

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Research and Current Thinking

For each issue, Teaching with Primary Sources Consortium members submit summaries of and links to online resources—articles, research reports, Web sites, and white papers—that provide research and current thinking relating to the theme. This Research & Current Thinking focuses on supporting all students particularly those with disabilities.

Enhancing the Note-taking Skills of Students with Mild Disabilities J. Boyle (2001) LD OnLine® "Teachers can improve the note-taking skills of students with mild disabilities by either modifying their presentation during lectures or teaching students how to use note-taking techniques. This article begins with a vignette and then describes how teachers can modify their lectures and how they teach note-taking techniques to students. The two note-taking techniques described are strategic note taking and guided notes*."* This article originally appeared in *Intervention in School and Clinic*, Volume 36, pp. 221-224 ©2001 PRO-ED, Inc.

Grammar school children gathered around a table doing woodworking projects while teachers watch nearby in a classroom. Library of Congress. Photographs from the Chicago Daily News, 1902-1933. American Memory.

Graphic Organizers and Implications for Universal Design for Learning: Curriculum Enhancement Report Prepared by N. Strangman, T. Hall and A. Meyer, National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum (NCAC). This paper introduces graphic organizers through a literature review and discusses how their use relates to students with disabilities and their ability to access the general education curriculum. The paper discusses use in support of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), includes guidelines for implementation and a list of additional web-based resources.

Helping Children Learn to Read Texts That Compare or Contrast J. Williams and K. Hall, Teachers College of Columbia University *The Center on Accelerating Student Learning (CASL) News* (2003) This issue features research on an instructional program to improve reading comprehension of expository text, a collaborative effort supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs "*designed to accelerate learning for students with disabilities in the early grades and thereby provide a solid foundation for strong achievement in intermediate grades and beyond*."

How to Adapt Your Teaching Strategies to Student Needs K. Bulloch (2004) Reading Rockets Web Site "Teachers are often asked to modify instruction to accommodate students with learning or other disabilities. This article takes the mystery out of adapting materials and strategies for curriculum areas." The author outlines strategies adapting instruction for students with difficulties in listening, verbal expression, reading written material, writing legibly, written expression or spelling. Article excerpts were adapted from The Mystery of Modifying: Creative Solutions published by the Education Service Center.

Teaching History to Support Diverse Learners National Center for Technology Innovation and Center for Implementing Technology in Education (2007) LD OnLine® This approach, often called Doing History, requires students to develop skills historians and other social scientists use to construct an interpretation from multiple and conflicting sources. Positive effects on student learning have been observed in elementary, middle and high school classrooms; however, too little attention is given to making this curriculum accessible to students with learning disabilities, as federally mandated in legislation under Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act 1997 and 2004." This article originally appeared as a "Tech Works" brief from the National Center for Technology Innovation and the Center for Implementing Technology in Education.

Thinking with Language, Images, and Strategies N. Mather, S. Goldstein, K. Lynch, and A. Richards (2001) LD OnLine® Many struggling students do not fall into traditional diagnostic categories. Some are good at decoding but have difficulty comprehending what they read. Some have typical language abilities but struggle with spatial organization. Others seem attentive and motivated but unable to develop or revise plans for completing homework and tests. These students often have weaknesses in conceptual building blocks. This chapter reviews abilities related to thinking with language and images and using strategies. Chapter excerpted from Learning Disabilities and Challenging Behaviors: A Guide to Intervention and Classroom Management (pp. 271-277). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

If you would like to access links to the resources cited above please visit the online version of this edition of the Teaching with Primary Sources Quarterly online at http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/quarterly.

Learning Activity - Elementary Level

LISTEN AND WONDER: IS IT A CHICKEN OR A BOY?

Overview
In this activity, students perform a basic primary source analysis of a 1941 sound recording of a six-year-old mimic imitating different sounds. Intended for use in an inclusive environment, students consider all of the boy's sound impressions to guess when and where he lived and discuss what his life might have been like. Lastly, the class develops a list of familiar sounds and performs a "soundtrack" of their own lives.

Objectives

After completing this learning activity, students will be able to:
- Perform a basic analysis of a primary source
- Speculate about the life of a child in the past based on a primary source
- Identify sounds that represent their lives today
- Work collaboratively to create a "soundtrack" of these familiar sounds

Time Required
One class period

Grade Level
1 - 3

Topic/s
Culture, Folklife

Subject/Sub-subject
Social Studies, Language Arts (Listening and Speaking)

Standards McREL 4th Edition Standards and Benchmarks

Arts and Communication: Role of Culture
Standard 4. Understands ways in which the human experience is transmitted and reflected in the arts and communication.

Grades K-4 History
Standard 1. Understands family life now and in the past, and family life in various place long ago.

Language Arts: Listening and Speaking
Standard 8. Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

Three roosters sitting on cracker box. Penfield, Edward, artist. "Three Roosters Sitting on Cracker Box." Between 1884 and 1925. Cabinet of American Illustration, Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress

View and Print the complete learning activity:
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/quarterly/accessibility/pdf/elementary_activity.pdf

Learning Activity - Secondary Level

PICTURING AMERICAN INDUSTRIALIZATION: THE CHICAGO STOCKYARDS

Overview
In this activity, students use visual literacy strategies to "read" primary source photographs of the meat-packing industry in the Chicago Stockyards and to organize and reflect on their findings. Intended for use within a larger unit of study about the rise of American industrialization, the activity is designed to accommodate different levels of student comprehension and ability.

Objectives
After completing this learning activity, students will be able to:
- Perform a basic primary source analysis
- Generate questions about the Chicago Stockyards and the meatpacking industry for further investigation
- Make historical and personal connections with the content

Time Required
Two class periods

Grade level
6 - 8

Topic/s
Cities, Towns; Technology, Industry

Subject/Sub-subject
Social Studies

In the heart of the Great Union Stock Yards, Chicago, U.S.A. 1909 Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress

Standards McREL 4th Edition Standards and Benchmarks
Historical Understanding
Standard 2. Understands the historical perspective
United States History
Standard 16. Understands how the rise of corporations, heavy industry, and mechanized farming transformed American society.
Language Arts
Standard 7. (Reading) Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts
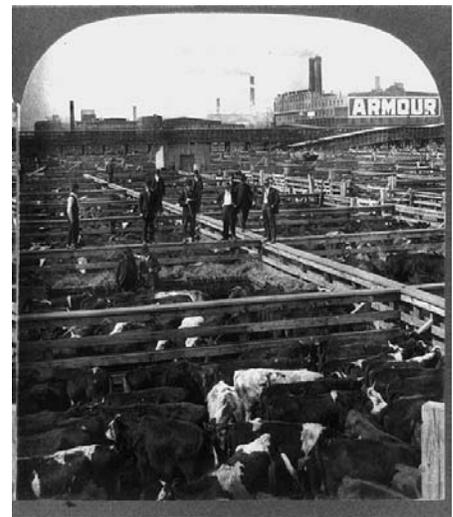Standard 8. (Listening and Speaking) Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes
Standard 9. (Viewing) Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media

Credits
Xiuwen Wu, Associate Professor, Special Education, Diversity in Learning and Teaching Department, National-Louis University, Skokie, Illinois

View and Print the complete learning activity:
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/quarterly/accessibility/pdf/secondary_activity.pdf

Teacher Spotlight

Vicki Martinez

In each issue, we introduce a teacher who participated in Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) professional develop-ment and successfully uses Library of Congress primary sources to support effective instructional practices.

This Teacher Spotlight features Vicki Martinez, a 15-year veteran teacher at Jefferson Elementary School in Charleston, Illinois. Vicki began her career teaching students with special needs in a self-contained classroom; she now co-teaches learning disabled fourth grade students within an immer-sion program. The Eastern Illinois University TPS program nominated Vicki for her effective classroom use of primary sources with all learners, particularly students with disabilities. In this interview, Vicki discusses teaching strategies and favorite Library of Congress online resources.

How did you learn about the Library of Congress TPS Program?
Eastern Illinois University TPS offered a professional development workshop series at school to learn about accessing and incorporating Library of Congress digitized primary sources into curriculum.

What motivated you to partici-pate in the TPS program?
The content sounded interesting; I'm always looking for new ways to reach students. As a teacher of students with special needs, I present material in multiple ways to engage each learner and help process information. I hoped to learn about diverse resources (audio, video, maps, documents, etc.) to offer students learning about a topic. Workshops in our building were appealing because it is good to know that what we learn will work in my classroom.

Tell us about the first time you tried using primary sources in the classroom.
I began using primary sources through TPS. The first primary source-based lesson I created and implemented was part of a slavery unit. Students listened to excerpts of former slave interviews from the collection "Voices from the Days of Slavery". Pairs discussed what they heard and created questions to ask the speaker. This encouraged the use of critical thinking skills developing ques-tions answered in the interview. Based on ability levels, questions varied from information such as age or location, to organizing events and timelines, to synthesis questions about cause and effect. Students heard the excerpt again while reading a transcript and identified answers to questions they wrote. Each pair chose how to share with peers: recording themselves asking questions with answers from the audio, writing articles, creating presentations or scripting dramas.

How do you make primary sources accessible to all learners?
Each year I find that I use primary sources more often. Because we co-teach, the class consists of students with learning disabilities and others with a range of ability levels. We analyze primary sources to engage learners. On a printed copy, students are encouraged to circle, highlight, write notes and draw to physically interact with material and demon-strate understanding. I sometimes use primary sources as support materials, playing background music of particular time periods while reading a story or hanging images and maps to help students feel they are in a different place or time. This is especially beneficial to students who face challenges because primary sources physically prompt students to recall back-ground knowledge they possess and help them focus by connecting to a topic.

The digital files are easy to access at www.loc.gov at no cost to me or our school. At first overwhelming, the site is easier to navigate with regular use and guidance from the Teacher Page. Increases in differentiation with special needs students encourages me to use primary sources often to meet diverse needs and learning styles. Primary sources offer opportunities for all learners to experience classroom success.

What resources available on the Library of Congress Web site are your favorite? Why?
One of the first things I visit is the Teacher Page. Resources are organized to easily locate tools, such as the Teacher's Guides and Primary Source Analysis Tools. Looking at materials usually results in a new activity idea or makes me think of a specific student who I know will respond to an item.

What advice do you have for teachers who have never tried teaching with primary sources?
We want tools to help us engage each student. Diverse primary sources allow varied backgrounds and strengths to connect with a topic. A student hoping to be a nurse may not show interest in the Civil War, but photos of medical tents or wounded soldier diaries may spark curiosity. The Dust Bowl may not intrigue an auto-enthusiast, but images of migrant workers living in cars may place them in a time period indicated by vehicle models and makes.

Teachers should allow themselves to "play" at www.loc.gov. Start a search of personally interests and browse. Don't be surprised to find that you spent hours looking at treasures; finding one page that leads to another item and another. Trust me, you will be inspired!