

Proposal Abstract: History is Alive

The Yonkers Public Schools' proposed 2015-2018 Learning Technology Grant Project, *History is Alive*, captures essential questions of enduring interest to teachers and students alike: How am I connected to people in my community? Why is oral history important to remembering and learning from the past? The project is designed to establish a learning community in which university facilitators and librarians work in collaboration with teachers and students in grades 7 and 8 at Robert C. Dodson (a **Priority school**), **School 16**, and the non-public **Biondi Education Center at Leake and Watts**, to expand students' understanding of where they live and the history around them. **The main objective of this project is to increase students' knowledge and skills in ELA and Social Studies by having students create oral histories of key individuals identified in their community using technology.** This project will also **develop highly effective teachers by supporting school library leadership in educational technology**, and by **building the capacity of educators to design innovative, standards-based learning experiences for students** (aligns to Regents Reform Agenda for CCLS integration and teacher development).

Librarians from the three schools will play a critical role in working with teachers and students to develop oral histories of their community. School librarianship has evolved from emphasis of library skills to teaching inquiry as a way of learning in the 21st Century. Research shows that school librarians, acting as technology and learning consultants, can **create high-tech dynamic centers for learning** (Johnston, 2012; Kuhlthau, 2010). With support from university professional development facilitators, Yonkers librarians will partner with ELA and Social Studies teachers to act as an educational technology resource and to support the development of students' oral history projects using iPads, digital recorders, video editing software, and other appropriate technology. Project implementation will occur in the library media center, across participating classrooms, and through the Yonkers community.

Students will understand that oral history provides rich accounts of experiences of individual people in their community, much of which is potentially lost in secondary sources (Levstik, 2010). This collaborative project between schools and their community will support authentic student exploration through recorded interviews with the public and, through the creation of an electronic oral history, will address writing and communication skills based on the **NYS P-12 Common Core Learning Standards for ELA and Literacy (CCLS)**. Students will initiate collaborative discussions; write narratives to develop real experiences; make strategic use of digital media; and conduct research and synthesize data from multiple sources. The learning experiences provided through this project will also integrate the NYS Learning Standards for Social Studies, focusing on the History of New York, and Civics, Citizenship, and Government.

Onsite facilitators from the **Center for Technology and School Change (CTSC) at Teachers College, Columbia University** will provide a series of workshops to support librarians and teachers as they work together to design authentic, standards-based oral history projects that infuse technology wisely. Using a project-based approach, participants will come to understand their unique role as designers of innovative student learning experiences. CTSC facilitators will follow the workshops with a series of onsite visits to each school to provide in-class modeling and coaching as the participants implement the standards-based oral history projects and reflect on students' understandings.

This project will result in new and innovative experiences for Yonkers students, and enrich their preparation for high school, college and the workplace as they engage in high-level, collaborative projects that are core to learning.