

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

The Cumberland River Valley Consortium includes K-12 schools in Bedford, Cannon, Coffee, Marshall, Maury, and Warren counties. Warren County Schools is the lead educational agency for the consortium, which is partnering with the History Department of Middle Tennessee State University to implement this project. The goals of this project are:

- 1) To increase teachers' knowledge of history content, which will build confidence in their ability to teach American History;
- 2) To increase teachers' use of primary materials, local history resources, and technology in history instruction; and,
- 3) To increase students' understanding of and skill level in American history.

Outside evaluators Judy Butler and Susan Kuner of Dragonfly Enterprises prepared Part III, the Project Status evaluation report. Appendices include the evaluation model and plan, evaluation instruments, 2003 summer institute schedules, the curriculum unit template and guidelines, and letters of comment received as of October 30, 2003.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

To meet the project goals, the following activities are available to teachers in the six-county consortium:

- A three-year program of summer institutes at MTSU designed specifically to implement the new American history curriculum standards outlined in the 2001 Tennessee State Curriculum Standards.
- National History Day training workshops. Participating teachers are urged to develop American history projects with their students and to participate in the annual MTSU Regional History Day Competition.
- Special seminars with the authors of books in American history to be held in conjunction with the nationally recognized Southern Festival of Books sponsored by Humanities Tennessee.
- Special access to ongoing lectures and seminars by historians sponsored by educational and cultural institutions throughout middle Tennessee.
- Travel incentives to attend and participate in national and statewide conferences sponsored by professional organizations that promote history.

YEAR ONE ACTIVITIES AND PROJECT PERFORMANCE

During Year One of this grant, the professional development activities were implemented with slight modifications. Four History Day Workshops were offered. Twelve teachers entered 82 students in the MTSU Regional Competition for National History Day. Two week-long summer institutes were held in June 2003. Sixteen teachers participated in the Era 4 Summer Institute (1801-1861), and fourteen teachers participated in the Era 7 Summer Institute (1890-1930). Both institutes included lectures by historians; small group discussions; workshops at the Tennessee State Library and Archives, the MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, and the Albert Gore Research Center (MTSU); and visits to Tennessee historic sites. Other institutional partners during Year One included Tennessee State Parks, the Tennessee Historical Commission, the James K. Polk Historic Home, The Hermitage (Home of President Andrew Jackson), The Parthenon, Rippavilla Historic Plantation, The Athenaeum, Maury County Archives, and the Rhea County Courthouse (Scopes Trial Museum). Appendix C contains the 2003 summer institute schedules.

Significant progress was achieved on the first two project goals during Year One of the grant. Through the professional development activities, teachers increased their knowledge of history content, learned to use primary source materials, local history resources, and technology to improve the way they plan for history instruction. In years two and three of the grant, the transfer of this knowledge to teaching practice will be evaluated through classroom observations.

The overall ratings of the grant activities by participating teachers were positive. The overall rating of the summer institutes was 3.7 on a scale of 1 – 4. The curriculum units created during the institute demonstrated knowledge of primary sources, local history sites, and the integration of technology. Teachers surveyed at the MTSU Regional History Day Competition unanimously agreed that they would recommend the event to other teachers. Qualitative data suggest that teachers increased their content knowledge and are learning to think like historians.

The third goal, to increase student's understanding and skill level of American history, will be evaluated in years two and three through surveys, interviews, pre- and post tests in the history units and TCAP scores. Additional opportunities to attend special seminars, lectures by historians, and statewide conferences will enrich teacher professional development opportunities in years two and three.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The grant application stipulated that the Cumberland River Valley Consortium would form an Advisory Committee to help implement and guide the project. The Academic Director, Graduate Studies Director, and Project Coordinator selected eight individuals for this committee, drawn from among professional historians, academic historians, and K-12 educators. Advisory Committee members were:

Nancy Aldridge, Curriculum Director, Marshall County Schools
Thomas (Tony) Brown, History Teacher, Whitthorne Middle School, Maury County
Paul Fleming, History Teacher, Hume Fogg High School, Nashville
Dr. Reavis Mitchell, Chair, History Department, Fisk University, Nashville
Dr. Wayne Moore, Assistant State Archivist, Tennessee State Library and Archives
Michelle Ungurait, Social Studies Specialist, Tennessee Department of Education
Rebecca Verner, Education Curator, Tennessee State Museum
Dr. Vikki J. Vickers, Assistant Professor of History, Middle Tennessee State University

Seven of the eight members will continue to serve on the Advisory Committee. Paul Fleming resigned at the end of Year One. Marcia Melton, Curriculum Director for Cannon County Schools joined the Committee in October 2003. The Advisory Committee met six times during Year One, with the final meeting of the year devoted to a review of the external evaluation and general planning for Year Two. It is hard to overstate the value of this outstanding group for achieving project goals. The Advisory Committee provided constant support, sound advice, and critical perspective throughout the entire year. Several individual committee members also participated in various project activities and/or arranged services for the summer institutes. Additionally, Dr. Vickers helped coordinate the Regional History Day competition; and Nancy Aldridge and Tony Brown helped evaluate curriculum units.

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION FOR TAH PROJECT

Dissemination of the findings from this grant can be accessed on the TAH website <http://www.mtsu.edu/~tah/>. The website also is a rich curriculum resource for all Tennessee history teachers. Two presentations about the grant were given at state and regional history conferences in September with more presentations scheduled for next year.