

2009 GRAND PRIZE WINNER: OVER 20,000 ENROLLMENT

The Rest Is History

Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation, Evansville, Ind.



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SUPERINTENDENT

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PROGRAM NAME

Feel the History

DISTRICT DILEMMA

The Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation teachers and administrators were searching for ways to integrate core curriculum, technology, and community involvement. They sought to address problems related to a lack of student interest in U.S. history and a lack of involvement of young people in the local history community. They wanted to motivate students to become real historians, integrating 21st century technology—digital video, still photography, and digital editing—and bringing the history community into the classroom.

SOLUTION

In Feel the History classes at F.J. Reitz High School, students create local history documentaries that are broadcast on a local station and hosted as podcasts on the local library website. The documentaries are entirely student-produced, from topic selection, historical research, video and audiotaping, scanning, and editing to post-production.

What began as one class offered for one year now has become two classes, taught over two years, with the chance to earn college



Students set up for a videotaping session at Abraham Lincoln's National Memorial in Indiana.

credit in the second year. Local historians enter the classroom as mentors and as members of review teams. Projects undergo critical review for technical and historic merit before they are released to the public. Students create their projects using the Adobe Production Suites used by professional filmmakers. They spend their class time researching at local libraries and interviewing experts and participants in local history.

Partners include the mayor's office of the City of Evansville, the University of Southern Indiana, the WNIN public broadcasting station, the Evansville Museum of Arts, History, and Science, the Evansville-Vanderburgh Public Libraries, Willard Library, the Vanderburgh County Historical Society, and the Southwestern Indiana Historical Society.

BOARD INVOLVEMENT

Dana Willett, school board president at the time, served on the



A student searches for photos in a historical postcard collection.

committee that created Feel the History. Willett also was present for preliminary discussions with the University of Southern Indiana to create a university course based on Feel the History, and to collaborate on a Teaching American History grant with the program's concepts at its core. The school board approved the creation of the class and has been supportive since then. Board members attend special "premiere" screenings of Feel the History episodes. In addition, Feel the History students have made special presentations at public meetings of the board. Board support also extends to approving staffing and the purchasing of equipment, and in allowing school personnel time to serve on review teams.

RESULTS

Feel the History has created student historians with the technological and historical research skills necessary for success in the 21st century. To date, students have created nine half-hour programs for broadcast, and they



Students examine a historical map under glass at Evansville's Willard Library.

have 15 segments under way for this year. In addition to their regular segments, students created special veterans interviews to accompany Ken Burns' documentary, *The War*. WNIN aired the interviews before and after each episode. Students have created history segments on topics such as a local courthouse, the deadly 1977 plane crash that killed the University of Evansville basketball team, the 1937 Flood, the community's one-of-a-kind Greyhound bus station, and Evansville's World War II industry.

Feel the History students present annually during Preservation Week Activities sponsored by the city. The class has taken on partnerships with other local schools including Glenwood Middle School, which assists with music, and the Career and Technical Center, which provides 3-D animation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Terry Hughes, integrating curriculum and technology specialist, at terry.hughes@evsc.k12.in.us. The district's website is at www.evscschools.com. The program's website is at www.feelthehistory.com.

FEEL THE HISTORY HAS CREATED STUDENT HISTORIANS WITH THE TECHNOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH SKILLS NECESSARY FOR SUCCESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY.



Stones River National Battlefield Park is the scene of this videotaping.