Fostering Historical Thinking and Imagination

Winona State University College of Education Assistant Professor Dr. James Schul received a grant from the Library of Congress’ Teaching with Primary Sources – Midwest Region. The grant monies were used to bring a group of twenty middle and high school teachers together for four days in June 2015. The teachers were recruited from Minnesota and Wisconsin school districts within a fifty mile radius of Winona State University and were excited to work together and learn from each other. These teachers met at Winona State University to create 25 lesson plans designed to engage students with various types of primary sources that can be easily retrieved on the internet through such websites as the Library of Congress’ Teaching with Primary Sources.

Dr. James Schul created and coordinated the program. The opening presentation was given by Dr. David Staley, Associate Professor of History at Ohio State University. Additionally, Tim Hoogland from the Minnesota Historical Society, introduced the teachers to the National History Day project. Maggie Rolfs, an Early Childhood & Elementary Education major at WSU, helped to coordinate the program as a student assistant.

The project title is “Fostering Historical Thinking and Imagination”. The group created a website for history teachers to use as a resource when designing their lesson plans and units. The lessons intentionally integrate various forms of primary sources such as written documents, political cartoons, images, and sound recordings as a means to foster historical inquiry and imagination. Teachers of history, from elementary through college, must position their instructional practices so that they foster historical thinking and imagination rather than placing too much emphasis on memorization and an accumulation of isolated facts. This new focus encourages students to use and enjoy history for the rest of their lives.

This professional development opportunity that Dr. Schul facilitated is part of the larger vision of the Education Village at Winona State University where college faculty will continue to foster relationships with K-12 teaching faculty and the community. Dr. Schul is a member of the Center for Collaboration, Partnerships, and Professional Development. He has coordinated similar opportunities for teachers in the past and plans to continue this work in the future.

About the Winona State University College of Education

As the first teacher preparation school west of the Mississippi River and the first home of the National Education Association, the Winona State University College of Education has a long and storied history of innovation and leadership. The college enrollment, including all teacher education programs university-wide, is approximately 1,262 undergraduate students and 270 graduate students, supported by 40 full-time professors. With campuses in both Winona and Rochester, the College of Education is divided into seven departments and three centers, ranging from Early Childhood & Elementary Education to Counselor Education and Leadership Education. The college offers 22 Undergraduate Teacher Licensure programs, one Post-Baccalaureate Teacher Licensure program, 12 master's programs, and three additional licensure and certificate programs. Initial licensure and advanced programs are accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Minnesota Board of Teaching (BOT). The Counselor Education programs are accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP) and are recognized for state licensure in both school and community counseling.

The Leadership Education K-12 Principal and Superintendent programs are accredited by the Minnesota Board of School Administrators (BOSA). The WSU Children’s Center is accredited by the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).
As the educational needs of communities throughout Minnesota continue to change, the College of Education will continue to respond. The Teach21 initiative, launched in 2009 and funded through a $4 million grant from the Bush Foundation, aims to transform WSU's teacher preparation programs through a combined approach of targeted recruitment, effective training, specialized placement, and ongoing support. WSU's Education Village initiative, which received initial funding during the 2013-14 Minnesota legislative session, is a bold, responsive plan to renovate existing campus facilities to offer integrated, flexible, state-of-the-art learning and teaching spaces, and provide future teachers with the preparation, support and inspiration they need to be successful in the 21st century classroom.

To learn more about the WSU College of Education visit: http://www.winona.edu/education/.