

Proposal Abstract: The Islands of Enlightenment

The Islands of Enlightenment Project is designed to give teachers an innovative way to help students learn Common Core and subject specific learning standards. This project builds teacher professional development skills in technology use, as well as, gives students an engaging way to learn. Our staff will assist teachers in using this technology and then provide in school support with their students. We have several different project options that allow teachers the ability to tailor the project to meet their student/ teacher technology skill, content objectives, and assessment targets. This project is targeting students in grades 6-10 and primarily in content specialties of social studies and ELA

Presently, we have a Virtual Environment that is housed at our Erie 1 BOCES Server. This is a system of digital "islands" that can be accessed across the internet using a free viewing program called, Imprudence. Schools may set up the program on their school computers that will be given access to our server system. Students and teachers will be given avatars- (digitally created people) that can walk, interact, and build within the environment.

The most developed offering is the Understanding the Holocaust Project. This unit accompanies the reading or listening of the classic tale, *Diary of a Young Girl- Anne Frank*, and the content of the world tragedy, the Holocaust. This corresponds often with Grade 7-8 ELA and/ or Grade 10 Global Studies. Using their historically clad avatars, students are transported into 1944 Amsterdam where they can walk the streets, take pictures, interact with primary source documents (Provided by PBS) and get a first person view of the Secret Annex described in Anne's Diary. They are then directed to complete 10 Common Core based assignments using their digital avatar with the help of other technologies from imaging software to publishing software such as Microsoft Word and/ or PowerPoint. This unit is also aligned with the present New York State Standards for Social Studies. The students' final project is to create a digital museum "exhibit" that represents what they learned during their study around the Holocaust. Also currently available is a Medieval Roleplay (Heir to the King) that allows students to not only learn about this history but has extensive ELA journal activities (Grade 6 and or Global 9). Another island is currently under construction based on the Titanic. The Islands of Enlightenment allows teachers to develop their own islands and topic areas as they become more proficient with the technology over the three year period.

The project involves 4 days of teacher professional development that engages them in the technology and content understandings,. Additionally, we will offer access to online support.

Regents Reform Agenda Goals (RRAG):

1. Improving teacher and school leader preparation and effectiveness by emphasizing content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and measurable, performance based evaluations.
2. Raising graduation rates for at-risk students by increasing student engagement and ensure college and career readiness;
3. Building a statewide curriculum and associated professional development to every student with a world class, rigorous curriculum and train teachers to use it effectively

Overall Project Objectives:

- ▲ Goal 1: To develop teachers ability to adopt effective technology integration and 21st Century school methodologies to address RRAG 1 & 2 above
- ▲ Goal 2: To build the capacity of teachers to create high quality learning experiences aligned with New York State Standards, Common Core Standards, and 21st Century skills to address RRAG 1 & 2 above
- ▲ Goal 3: To build pedagogical capacity of teacher to address RRAG 1, 2, & 3