

# USING THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS ARCHIVES IN STUDENT RESEARCH AND HISTORICAL ARGUMENTATION

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## PROJECT FOCUS

The Rhode Island Historical Society project focus was to conduct teacher professional development sessions. The purpose and goals of the project were to provide teachers with a new skill set in how to use the *Guide to Student Research* published by National History Day, understand how to assist students in using materials from the Library of Congress collections in project-based learning, and pair those materials with local Rhode Island archives and local topics, including archives and topics from historically underrepresented groups such as the Indigenous Narragansett and Black Rhode Islanders.

## STRATEGIES AND METHODS

### Preparation

- The Rhode Island Historical Society (RIHS) has been involved in National History Day (NHD) for many years. We identified the recently published *Guide to Student Research and Historical Argumentation*, developed jointly with NHD and the Library of Congress, as an ideal resource to structure sessions around.
- We reached out to local groups with which we had established relationships, **NHD, the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, the Rhode Island State Archives, the Tomaquag Museum, and the RIHS collections team** to ask them to participate.
- For the later sessions, two education staff participated in **Teaching with Primary Sources Leadership Institute** with The Library of Congress at Waynesburg University to develop skills in instructing educators in utilizing the Library of Congress resources.

### Recruitment

- Recruitment was done predominantly through **current teacher contacts, the Rhode Island Department of Education, and on social media**.
- For the first sessions, of those registered, a little more than 25% were teachers who were planning to have students participate in NHD in 2021. About 34% were not sure yet at the time of registration, and another 34% were not planning on participating. These figures supported our change in approach for the later sessions.
- Offering **teacher stipends** was essential to recruitment and retention of participants in the workshops.
- The most successful recruitment efforts involved **broadening out the goals** of the workshops, to be more inclusive of teachers who do not currently use NHD in their classrooms.

### Implementation

The RIHS offered a total of 9 sessions following three different models:

#### *Guide to Student Research*

- Four sessions in the Fall of 2021 with Lynne O'Hara from National History Day, the Rhode Island State Archives, the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, the Tomaquag Museum, and the RIHS collections staff. Presenters discussed guiding students in selecting topics and building a research plan, using the Library's online archives, walking through primary source analysis (the Observe-Reflect-Question method) by using examples from the Library, and what is available in local RI archives and how students can access materials. Students whose teachers participated in the session and used Primary Sources in their projects had their NHD registration fees covered by grant funds.

#### *National History Day Project Development*

- Three sessions in the fall of 2022 focused more intently on the ways in which teachers could utilize National History Day projects for learning in the classroom. These sessions were offered in a hybrid format, and led by Lynne O'Hara from National History Day, Dr. Thalia Wood, an NHD teacher, and two students who won second place at the National History Day Contest.

#### *Teaching with Primary Sources*

- Two sessions in the Spring of 2023 focused more explicitly and directly on teaching with primary sources. Each session had the same information, but was hosted in two different locations in the state. This allowed us to attract teachers from a wider variety of locations, and who focus on various subjects. These sessions used teaching tools and resources from the Library and contributed to participants level of knowledge of understanding and using primary sources in the classroom (Figure 1).

### Dissemination and Communication

- Communicating about the project and its opportunities has been conducted through the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) newsletter, direct email campaigns to teachers, physical copies of resources were sent out via Google Docs and put on flash drives and mailed to participating teachers.

## TARGET AUDIENCE AND FOCUS TOPICS

### Participant and Educator Audiences

- K-12 classroom educators
- National History Day students

### Curricular Topic and Grade Levels

- Predominantly humanities/social studies
- Predominantly secondary teachers

### Key Partners and Collaborators

- National History Day
- Rhode Island Black Heritage Society
- Rhode Island State Archives
- Tomaquag Museum

### Progress to Date

This project has been completed, all nine professional development sessions were finished in the Spring of 2023.

### Sustainability

- The **recorded virtual sessions** are available at rihs.org, soon after the sessions, the page had 54 page views, and 35 views on the program recordings. Participants received a flash drive with resources and a hard copy of *The Guide to Student Research and Historical Argumentation*
- We have budgeted to offer further "Teaching with Primary Sources" sessions to RI teachers in the coming year and plan to continue to make use of the **TPS Network Albums** to share primary source sets with teachers across the country.

Figure 1: Development of knowledge on "Teaching with Primary Sources" before and after workshop

