Interview with Mr. Carothers: April 19, 2001
Current Practices in the History Classroom

What students are currently doing:
- Just finished 1820s-1860s
- Working on getting information before their trip to DC
  - Washington DC
  - Jamestown
  - Williamsburg
  - Gettysburg
- Provides them with research choices within a topic
- Mostly they work in groups

Research: how do you get them started?
- Do you provide students with a process for doing research?
  - Sometimes gives them an outline to work from but rarely. Students organize as they see fit, what works for them
  - Students present reports and provide a lesson to teach the rest of the class; what is the best way to teach it?
  - Students test other classmates and there often is a final assessment in form of test for the whole class
  - I do provide models of organizational structure for presentations, but there is no specific way to organize their research
  - Students are not asked to form research questions – he mentions that this is a weakness in the process they teach.
  - Students are required to assess each other’s presentation and to complete a self-assessment.
  - Carothers teaches kids to be teachers – makes them think about the material in terms of how best to teach it – how kids like to learn.
  - He requires students to teach through interaction and not just presentation.
- How do kids chose research topics?
  - Carothers gives them the area and they chose their subtopic of interest
  - Gives them a list of subtopics under a main topic and they self-select from the list.
  - Carothers makes sure they must cover certain things in their research
  - Usually get general info for background on the topic and then go on from there
  - He uses a combination of lecture and discussion to present a quick overview of the topic to the students.
  - Getting the main point: usually after doing background, students will come to carothers and he will ask: “ok, what do you know?” That is how they determine their main point
- Are they familiar with the concepts of sourcing, contextualization and corroboration?
  - Can’t do it but know what it is
  - Use beyodbooks.com which helps them set up sourcing, they like to have a finite list of sources to go to
• What if students are on the wrong track….with regards to theme, sources, etc.?
  o This doesn’t happen often
  o They come and ask me if they get conflicting source information
  o If students present incorrect information, Carothers and/or other students will interrupt and question or challenge the information.

• Where do you see weakness in student research process? Where could they use help?
  o Student have trouble limiting sources and finding good sources. Too much information, too much of it not very good.
  o They go to the internet first for research, never find anything worthwhile to them in library research, never use books
  o Students want articles instead of books. They look for the quick easy way to get done, not necessarily the way to find the best information.
  o Students give up when they can’t easily find information on a topic. They are not persistent in investigating until they find what they need. They are too quick to say, “There is nothing here”, and give up. It has to be pretty obvious for them to find information.
  o Sourcing, context, corrob. would be helpful to them in working with website information

• Do you teach them or do they know how to highlight and extract important information from the sources they use?
  o Carothers answers question if needed
  o What is important to him is that they get interested in history: organizing it and presenting it is also important
  o Students can’t highlight because they are using books from the library that they cannot write in…. 