

EDCI Master's Degree Program Culminating Project Proposal

Spring 2006

Introduction & Statement of Purpose

Teachers are responsible for providing their students with a high quality educational experience. The State of California developed Standards frameworks with this goal in mind to guide teachers in their instructional duties. Each grade and subject has specific criteria of teaching subjects. Fourth Grade Social Studies focuses on the historical perspective and events that shaped our great state. A major section of California history centers on the Spanish Missions and their influences.

Most fourth grade students will complete some type of project, usually research-based, on the Missions. Many fourth grade students travel to one of the 21 Spanish Missions to experience first-hand their uniqueness and take a moment to glimpse into our past. Unfortunately, a significant percentage of fourth graders are unable to physically reach a Mission, whether because of financial or physical constraints. Teaching on the campus of Mission San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo (The Carmel Mission) I have a unique perspective on the interaction between students and the living history of the Missions. It is my hope that this project will provide a high-quality source of information for both teachers and students, those capable of visiting a Mission and those who are not, while also discussing the historical and political perspectives of the Mission period.

Statement of Need

Current State enrollment statistics estimate the fourth grade student population at approximately 488,000 students. Each of these students will explore the Mission era as required by State Standards. Much of my teaching tenure has been spent helping students gather research

sources to use, and a Missions research is a perennial project. There are many Missions resource sites currently online, and a number of informative print resources from which students may choose, but a significant proportion of websites are incomplete, with both types of resources often written above a fourth grade reading level, and many provide only limited background information on the importance and effects of the Missions. The majority of websites that are useable do not list their own sources; a prerequisite for any researcher looking for authentic information. Lastly, the use of primary sources is rare.

Teachers are also an important audience in regard to Missions research. Teachers that completed fourth grade in California remember building their Mission from sugar cubes or Popsicle sticks, but may have forgotten the historical importance and impact the Missions had on California and her Native peoples. Teachers new to the State have an even greater challenge as Mission history is a distinctively Californian historical event. Grade level textbooks present only a limited overview of the Missions era and do not provide the historical prospective and complete resources teachers need to be able to provide thorough instruction about the Mission era.

Teachers are always in need of lesson plans that provide unique learning for their students. Many lesson plan sites have interesting Mission project ideas, but are cumbersome to compile, are not standards aligned, and do not provide teachers with the high quality information sources that they need to properly prepare to teach the subject matter. In addition, time pressures in the classroom and the continued push towards standards-based assessment means that teachers must be even more mindful of the instructional time that they spend on this topic.

Design of the Project

My project will contain a website created to meet the dual needs of teachers and students in their journey through the Mission era. The website will be a comprehensive resource site for both audiences with information on all 21 California Missions. Website content will be synthesized from print resources and interviews. Proposed website sections include:

- For Teachers:
 - Facts at a Glance for New Teachers
 - Historical Overview
 - The ‘other’ Missions
 - California Missions Lesson Plans
 - Cross-Curricular Project Ideas
 - Technology Integrated Lesson Plans
 - Web Resources
 - Links to Official Mission Websites
 - Links to Textbook Resource Sites
 - Links to Pertinent Mission Lesson Plans
 - Print/Multimedia Resources

- For Students:
 - General Overview of the Importance of the Missions on California History
 - Discussion of the Historical Reasons for Spanish Colonization
 - Historical Information for Each of the 21 Missions (With Narrative Audio for ELL/below reading level students)
 - Origins
 - Geography, Map, & Climate
 - Architecture & Layout
 - Native Californians/Neophytes
 - Daily Life
 - Art & Music
 - Interesting Facts
 - The End of the Mission Era
 - The Mission Today
 - Bibliography
 - Discussion of Disparate Points of View over treatment of the Native Californians
 - Self-Guided Project Ideas
 - Web Resources