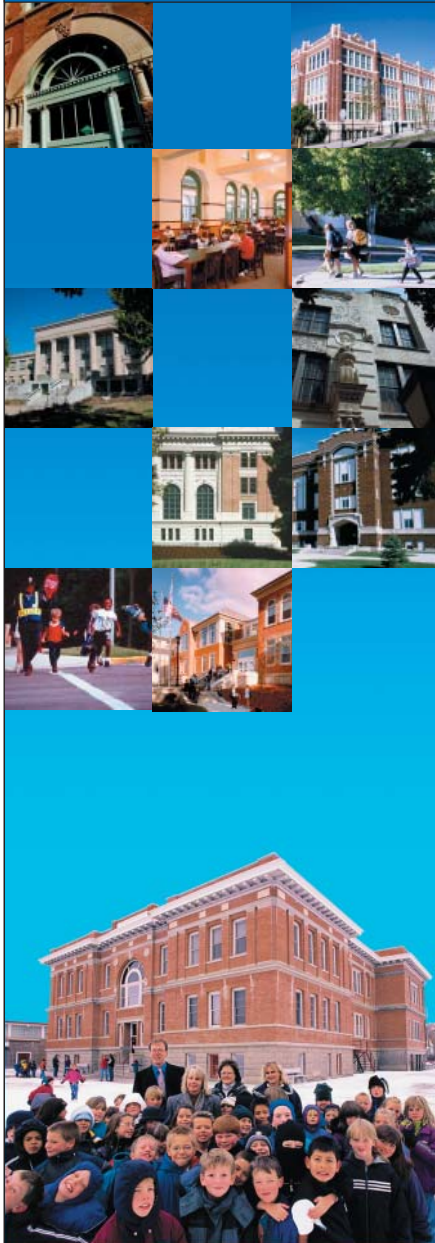




# HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS [TEACHER'S RESOURCE GUIDE]




## HISTORIC SCHOOLS DAY "IF THESE SCHOOLS COULD TALK"

**[RATIONALE]** Students are often less concerned about their school building than about what they are learning and what social activities are occurring. They see the physical school as just a building that exists in isolation. The students do not instinctively seek the broader context in which their educational experience operates. Parents or grandparents who express nostalgic feelings about their childhood schools are viewed as strange or weird. Young people live so much in the present that they fail to perceive their schools as historic places. For them history is something that happened in the past that they learned about from a textbook. However, each of their schools, whether built recently or a century or more ago, has a unique and interesting history that has been made by its students and staff and has been influenced by community and national events. In this historical investigation which is designed to begin on Historic Schools Day, students will create a historic timeline for display in the school and an archive for future student

research. It is hoped that these activities will provide students the opportunity to gain an understanding of the history of their school, to see the connections between their school and the surrounding community, and to determine the impact of major events in U.S. history on their school and former students.


Beginning in the early 19th century schools served not only to educate children but also to symbolize the larger community. The school was a public building that often served as a monument or a memorial to a community hero. As the United States became more diverse, schools acted as gathering places for ethnic communities. The original community centers were often schools. This phenomenon is best observed with parochial schools in cities. In rural America the school was often the only public building and served the local area as government meeting place as well as education center. As one-room schools closed, many became town halls. Not every student in every community

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attended the same schools. Some families chose to send their children to private and parochial schools. In some areas families who wanted to send their children to community schools were dismayed by the fact that their children had to attend segregated schools set aside for African Americans, Asian Americans and Native Americans. It was not until after the Supreme Court ruled in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 that some communities began to integrate their schools.

As students immerse themselves in this historical investigation and uncover the history of their school, they will gain an understanding of why it was built, the many purposes it has served in the community, and how its student body has changed over time. If their school's walls could talk, they would reveal a school history connected to a community history affected by national history.



Introducing students to research and historical analysis focusing on their school and the surrounding community will enable students to see the relevance of history in their lives and to understand the connections to the larger historical picture. Student research will begin with the places and people that they know best: their school, their community and their family members and neigh-

bors. Students will begin to look at history from the middle out rather than from the top down. They will be examining their own history. The history of the school and its surrounding community is far more real than the world of adults and leaders outside. So school history is their history directly — history in the middle of their world, not out there in another world. The focus of their historical study will shift from national figures to ordinary Americans who are also members of their community. As they see how lesser-known persons shaped their school, they will come to understand how these people contributed to the larger cultural life of the U.S. As students relate to the history of their school through families and neighbors, the more interesting, exciting and relevant history will become. Local history links students to their past in a way they can truly understand. Through this project students will analyze and interpret their school's past for those in the present.

Learning the history of their school is a way for students to gain perspective on broader community and national events. As students evaluate and interpret a variety of sources in school and community history, they will make connections between their local history and central themes in American history.

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**[OBJECTIVES]** This project is designed to begin on Historic Schools Day, but it will take time to research and compile. In fact, we hope this will be an ongoing project that is added to over time as additional photographs and artifacts are collected and more oral history interviews are completed. While this project may be used and modified by teachers at all grade levels, resources may appear to be more abundant for high schools. However, this should not deter teachers of elementary and middle schools from taking up the challenge. Encouraging students to discover the history of their school and its connections to the history of the community and the nation will result in an exciting and rewarding activity for students at any grade level. Students will enjoy discovering what the walls of their schools would say “if these walls could talk.”

**OBJECTIVE 1:** Students will create a photographic historical timeline which shows the relationship between the school, the community and the nation.

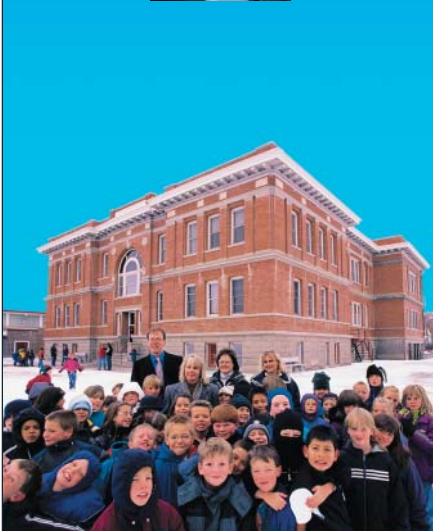
**OBJECTIVE 2:** Students will establish a school archive which will serve as a repository for historical artifacts for future student research

As they attain these objectives students will learn

- the history of their school
- the history of the community in which the school was built
- important events that have taken place in the United States between the opening of their school and the present day

In order to achieve these objectives students will analyze and interpret

- the connections between the school and community, especially the impact of community changes (physical and demographic) on the school and its population
- the impact of major events in U.S. history on the school and the community
- similarities and differences between the present student body and past student bodies
- how societal values at the time the school was designed were reflected in its curriculum, activities and architecture, and the extent to which these values have changed or remained the same over time



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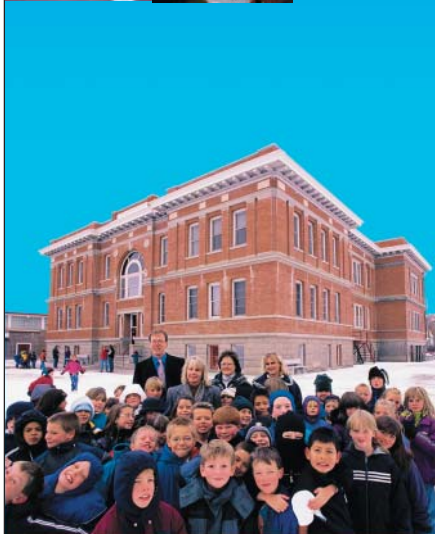
### [WHY IS THIS PROJECT IMPORTANT?]

For many students the school is their world, their neighborhood. An understanding that the school has a variety of relationships with the larger world in all dimensions – geographical, temporal and personal – will lead students to consider their place and roles in society. Students of all ages are in the process of developing a sense of self. To complete their self-portraits they must acquire knowledge of themselves as individuals, members of groups, and citizens of the nation. They must also acquire a sense of their history, a history in which the school plays a large part. Studying their school's history creates a series of links and connections – connections to other students past and present; connections to past generations through their parents and grandparents; connections to the local community and the wider world. Creating a timeline (to be displayed in a prominent place in the school) which shows the historical relationship between the school, the community and the nation will help students create a link with former students and inspire future students to create a link with the students of today.

There are some very important reasons why students should undertake this project. Creating the timeline will enable students to “do history” and to be active rather than

passive learners. It will enable students to be engaged in history, to raise questions and to gather historical evidence in support of their answers. It will give students the opportunity to examine, analyze and interpret primary source documents while conducting their historical research. It will connect students to people in the community and give community members the opportunity to share their stories, experiences and history. Schools hold memories for former students, memories that they would love to share. Kevin Hann, Assistant Superintendent for Public Works for the town of Hampstead, Md., speaking about the historic 1917 Hampstead School building that will now be preserved rather than torn down, said, “I’m so glad they’re saving it. It was great. Some of the fondest memories of my childhood were here.” (*The Sun, January 20, 2004*)

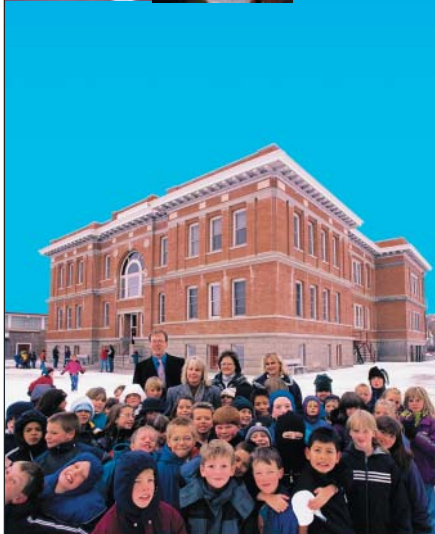
Participation in this project will also hopefully engender in students a strong interest in history and historic preservation efforts, especially when the future of a historic school is at stake. History is more than the story of important national figures whose names have been mentioned or written about in textbooks. History is the story of ordinary Americans who have attended schools, built communities and contributed to the culture of the United States.



## HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS [TEACHER'S RESOURCE GUIDE]

Finally, this project is important because it will stir an interest in the history of the school among those students, not involved in the project, who stop to look at the timeline. Recently I had the opportunity to observe a standard U.S. history class at Catonsville High School studying the nationwide impact of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. While the students were “politely” interested in the topic, it was not until the teacher related this landmark decision directly to Catonsville High School that the students became really excited about learning. When librarian Ralph Doyle visited this class as a guest speaker the following day and presented a PowerPoint program about the desegregation of Catonsville High School that he had assembled from student research into the history of the school, students in this class were mesmerized. They listened so intently

to every word he said and focused so intently on the visuals he presented that one could hear a pin drop. Then the students barraged Mr. Doyle with many higher level questions that revealed a great deal of historical thinking taking place. This Historic Schools Day Project is the perfect place for teachers to make connections between local and national history with the school as the focal point. For instance, a discussion with alumni who are veterans of World War II or the Vietnam War about their personal war experiences can lead to a discussion about the wars in more general terms. Just as “all politics is local,” so all history is also local. This project creates an environment where the students clearly see the connections between school and national history and where the teacher has the opportunity to build upon these connections at various points in the course.



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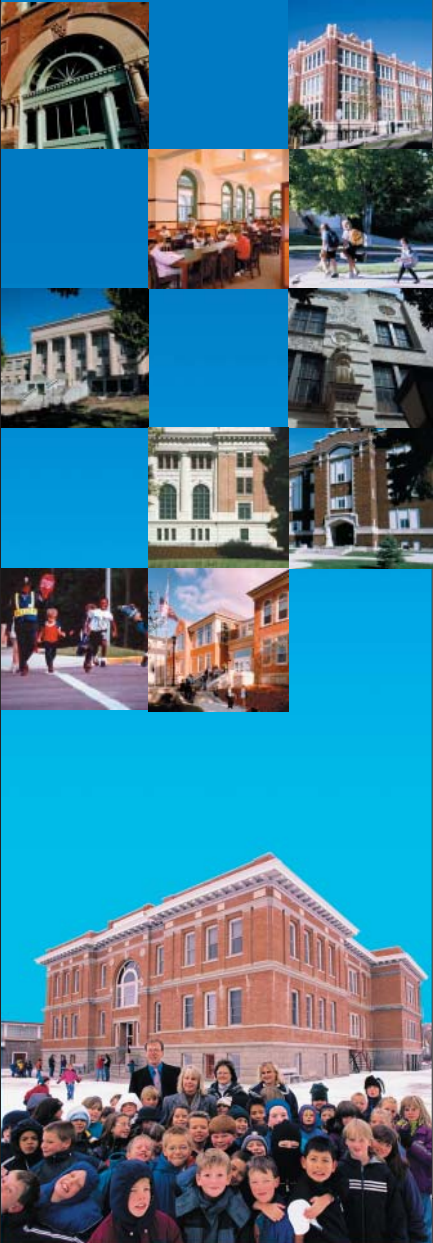
## [MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY]

Prior to Historic Schools Day have students interview their parents, guardians or an adult they know well. The people being interviewed do not have to be alumni of this school, although it would be great if they were. The student taking the survey (the interviewer) must ask the interviewee to relate his/her answers to the interviewer's school level (either elementary, middle or high school). The interviewer could also ask to borrow some school pictures of the interviewee.

Have the students ask the following questions:

- 1) What was the name of the \_\_\_\_\_ you attended and where was it located?
- 2) During what years did you attend \_\_\_\_\_ school?
- 3) What was the most important social event you remember from your \_\_\_\_\_ school days?
- 4) What was the most memorable event that occurred at your \_\_\_\_\_ school while you were a student?
- 5) What was the most important state or national event you remember taking place while you were a student in \_\_\_\_\_ school?
- 6) Do you think your school and the lives of \_\_\_\_\_ school students have changed much from your student days? If your answer is yes, please explain how.

On Historic Schools Day students can discuss the answers to their surveys. They can also share the pictures they have borrowed. Students can group the answers to their surveys according to the decades in which their interviewees attended elementary, middle or high school and can look for similarities and differences in the responses from each decade.

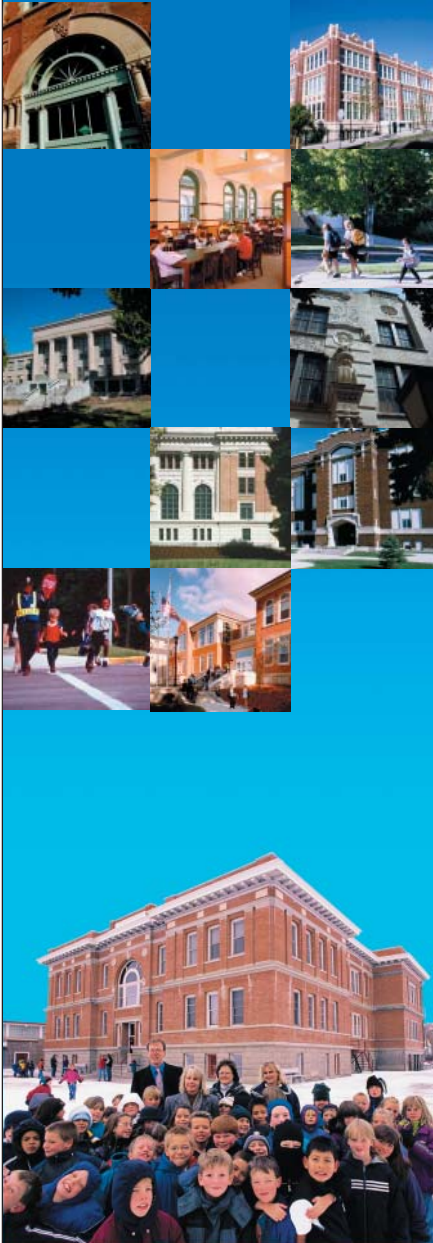


# HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS [TEACHER'S RESOURCE GUIDE]

## [ASK THE STUDENTS]

- 1) Do the experiences of former \_\_\_\_\_ students appear to be similar to or different from what you have experienced since you have been in \_\_\_\_\_ school?
- 2) What might account for these similarities or differences?
- 3) How old do you think our school is? Does anyone know when it was built? How could you find out the year the school was built? (look for the cornerstone of the building or a plaque with the date that the building was begun)
- 4) How different do you think the students were who went to school here when the school was first opened? How might the school building and its curriculum have been different from the way they are now? (If the teacher has a class picture from one of the first graduating classes at the school or one of the early classes of students at the school, he/she can share the photo with the students.)

Explain to the students that if the walls of the school could talk, they would be able to reveal a great deal about the history of the school, the community and our nation. But because walls cannot talk a great deal of what took place at the school remains a mystery. Tell the students that from this point on they are going to take on the role of detectives, and that they are going to help the teacher solve this mystery by beginning an historical investigation into the history of their school. This investigation will help them learn not only about the history of their school and the surrounding community, but also about the impact of national events on school and local history.



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## [STANDARDS OF LEARNING]

This project has been developed according to the Curriculum Standards for Social Studies that were developed by the National Council for the Social Studies.

I: Culture

II: Time, Continuity and Change

III: People, Places and Environment

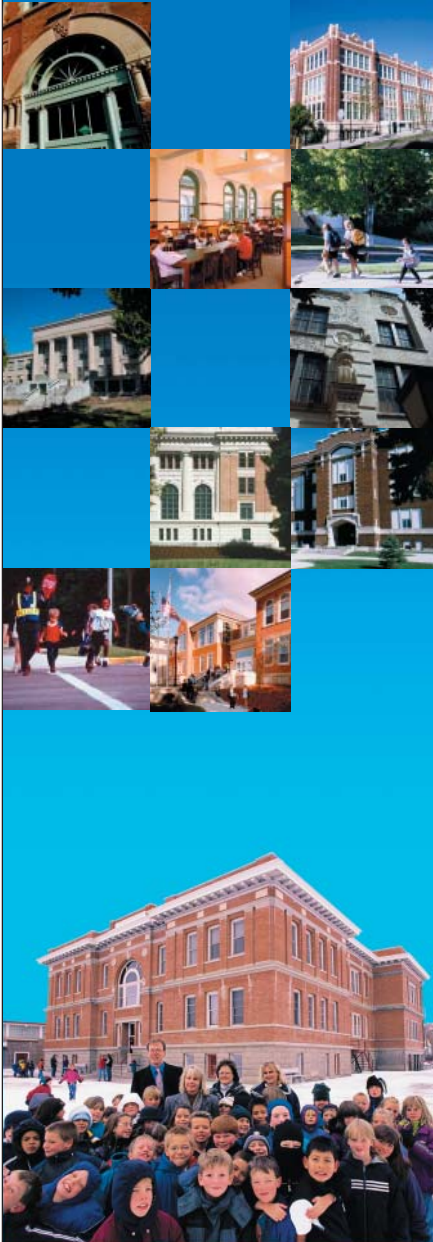
IV: Individual Development and Identity

V: Individuals, Groups and Institutions

VI: Power, Authority and Governance (depending upon the school's history)

IX: Global Connections (depending upon the school's history)

X: Civic Ideals and Practices



# HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS [TEACHER'S RESOURCE GUIDE]

## [OBJECTIVE ONE]

Students will create a photographic timeline to be displayed in a prominent school location. This timeline will make connections and demonstrate the historical relationship between the school, the community and the nation.



ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES AVAILABLE
<p>Step 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Identify a list of the important dates in the history of the school and the community. (Examples: date the school was built; date physical additions were made to the school; date that grades were added to or removed from the school; date school mascot was named; date that the first community center was built)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ School yearbooks and memory books</li> <li>■ Resource rooms at the local library</li> <li>■ Local historical society</li> <li>■ Remembrances of former alumni and teachers</li> <li>■ Community newspapers and community columnists in larger newspapers</li> <li>■ School alumni association members</li> <li>■ Longtime community residents</li> </ul>
<p>Step 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Identify “firsts” in the school’s history. Write summaries for the most important “firsts” to be included on the timeline: first graduating class, first state championship, first African-American graduate</li> </ul>	

## HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS [TEACHER'S RESOURCE GUIDE]

### Step 3:

- Identify important school traditions, when they began, and how they have changed over time.

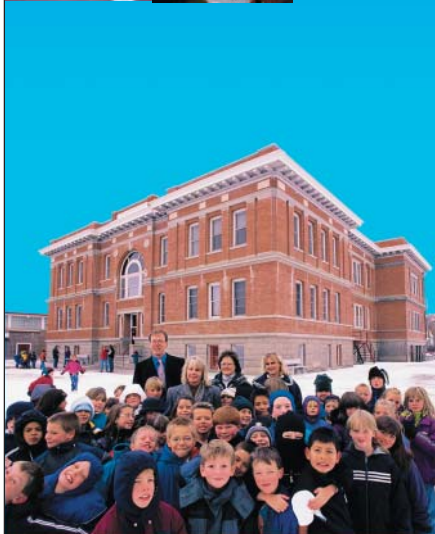
- Parents, grandparents, relatives, neighbors and longtime community residents
- Remembrances of former alumni and former teachers
- Former community residents now in local nursing homes
- School yearbooks and memory books
- Trophy cases at the school
- Resource rooms at the local library
- Local historical society
- Advertisements in community newspapers asking community residents to make donations of school artifacts and memorabilia, especially photographs
- Archives of community newspapers and larger newspapers that have community columns

- Document and artifact analysis forms:

[www.archives.gov/digital\\_classroom/lessons/analysis\\_worksheets](http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/analysis_worksheets)

- Oral history “how to” sites:

[www.wiihistoryclass.com/html/history.html](http://www.wiihistoryclass.com/html/history.html)



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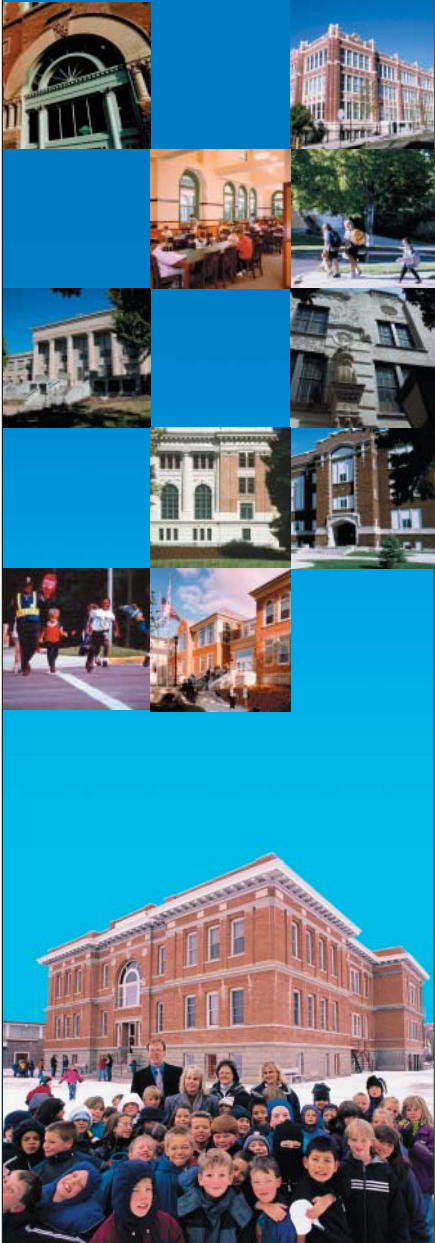
## Step 4:

- Personalize the timelines by gathering photographs, personal remembrances, letters, newspaper articles, artifacts such as graduation programs, prom tickets, etc.
- Analyze and interpret the artifacts using the analysis forms provided by the National Archives and Records Administration
- Conduct oral history interviews with family members, alumni and current and former staff

## Step 5:

- Identify the relationships between the school and the community; conduct and record interviews with longtime residents of the community

- Ask parents and community leaders for the names of longtime community residents who might either speak to groups of students at the school or consent to be interviewed by individual students about connections between the community and the school.
- Direct students to develop a list of questions using the best practices of oral history.

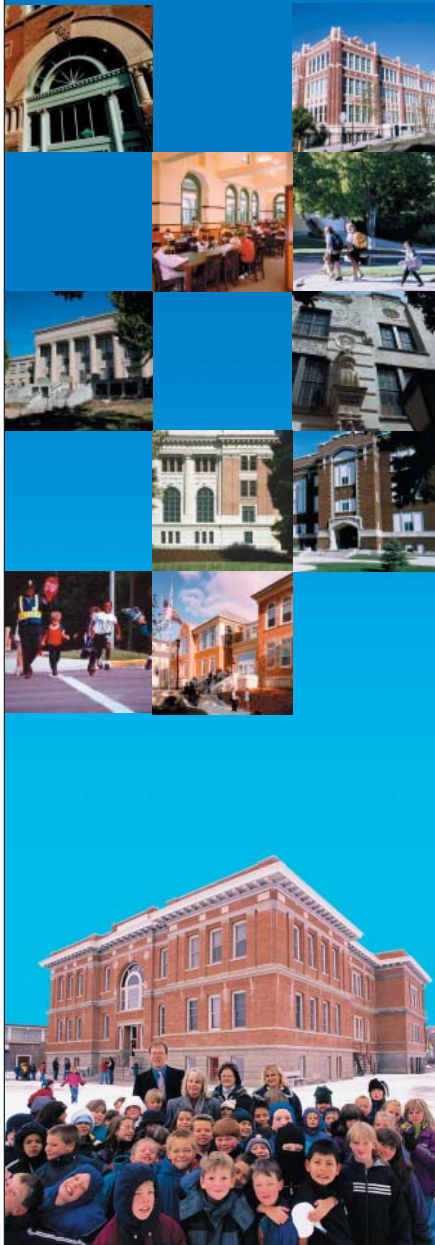


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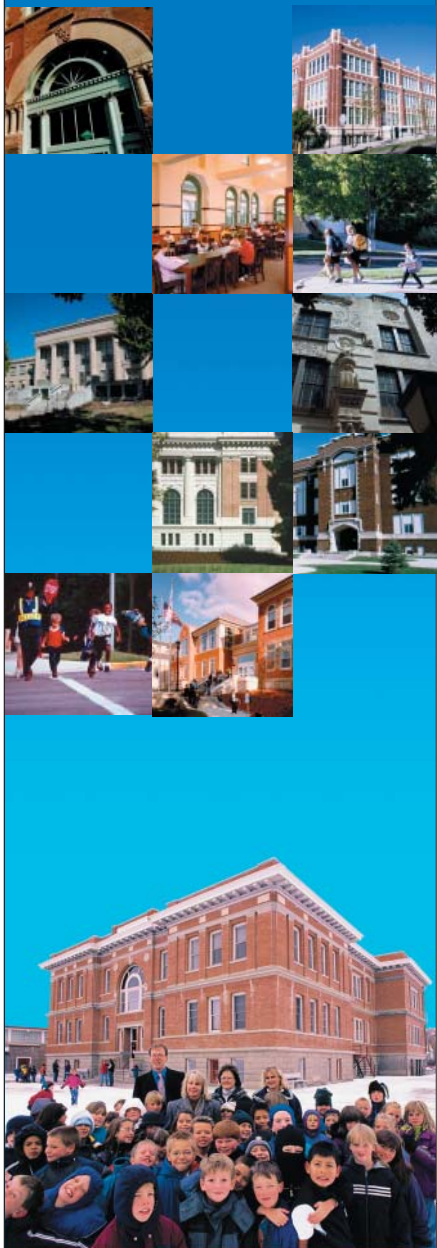
### Step 6:

- Identify major national events that have occurred since the school was built. Research selected time periods or decades in order to gain a perspective on American culture and broader national events. Select significant national events to include on the time line and locate photographs that best portray these national events.
- Compare and contrast the lives of current students and adult Americans with the lives of students and adult Americans when the school was first built.

- McConnell, Tandy (ed.). *American Decades*. Detroit: Gale Group, 2001. This book series consists of ten volumes (one for each decade beginning with the year 1900) which highlight: world events, the arts, business and the economy, education, fashion, government and politics, law and justice, lifestyles and social trends, the media, medicine and health, religion, science and technology, and sports. There are overviews of each decade and many photographs.
- This website provided by the Kingwood College Library provides facts about each decade and an extensive look at American cultural history, decade by decade. The information provided covers art and architecture, books and literature, fads and fashion, historic events and people, music, theater, film, and radio. There are links to other sites for each of these areas as well as an extensive bibliography. (<http://kclibrary.nhmccd.edu>)
- U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *Historical Statistics of the United States Colonial Times to 1970*. New York: Kraus International Publications, 1989.



# HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS [TEACHER'S RESOURCE GUIDE]



- [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)
- Students or teachers should contact the alumni association or school reunion committees and ask for names of people who might wish to share their school experiences with current students.
- Direct students to develop a list of questions to ask alumni

## Step 7:

- Examine the school building in order to determine how its architectural design harmonizes with other buildings in the community; locate the cornerstone(s) of the building; locate additions to the building and determine when they were constructed; locate any historic markers in the building or sites on the campus;
- Determine community values inherent in the design of the building;

- Invite a local architect to speak to the class about the school building, its additions and renovations, and its architectural design.
- Direct students to develop a list of questions to pose to the architect.

# HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS [TEACHER'S RESOURCE GUIDE]

## [OBJECTIVE TWO]

Students will establish a school archive to serve as a repository for historical artifacts for study and interpretation by future students



### ACTIVITY

- Students can begin this activity by making copies of borrowed photographs, asking for donations of artifacts, and cataloging and organizing their oral history collections. They should then refer to the “Building A School Archives” section of the National Archives and Records Administration website.
- Teachers and students can begin looking for grant money and sources of local funding to support their archives. State Councils for History Education that are affiliated with the National Council for History Education ([www.history.org/nche/](http://www.history.org/nche/)) often have small grants available for this type of project.

### RESOURCES AVAILABLE

- The National Archives and Records Administration’s website contains a section entitled “Digital Classroom.” After accessing “Digital Classroom” scroll down to Resources, “Building A School Archives”
- This is an exciting resource that walks teachers and students through the process of acquiring and preserving the rich historical records that schools produce. This resource contains background information, vocabulary, procedures, a connection to technology usage and a bibliography for further research.

[http://www.archives.gov/digital\\_classroom/building\\_an\\_archives/school\\_archives.html](http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/building_an_archives/school_archives.html)

## HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS [TEACHER'S RESOURCE GUIDE]

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Kammen, Carol. *On Doing Local History: Reflections on What Local Historians Do, Why, and What It Means* (American Association for State and Local History). Lanham, MD: Alta Mira Press, 2003.

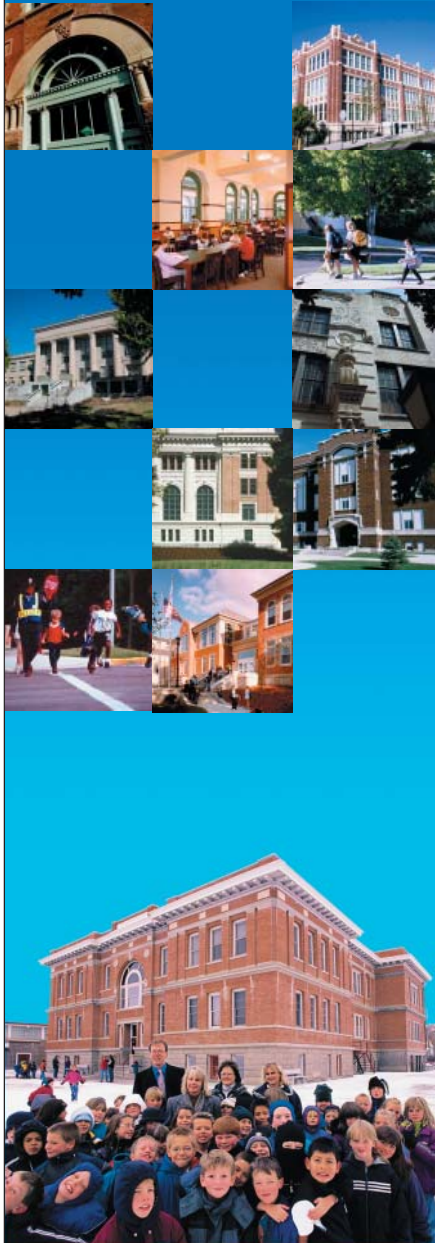
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Sommer, Barbara W. and Quinlan, Mary Kay. *The Oral History Manual* (American Association for State and Local History). Lanham, MD: Alta Mira Press, 2003

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## [WEB SITES]

<http://dewey.chs.chico.k12.ca.us/decs.html>

General 20th Century Resources Covering Multiple Decades

<http://kclibrary.nhmccd.edu/decades.html>

Kingwood College Library Decade Research

<http://www.aaslh.org>

American Association for State and Local History

[http://www.archives.gov/digital\\_classroom](http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom)

National Archives and Records Administration

<http://www.census.gov>

U.S. Census Bureau

<http://www.history.org/nche/>

National Council for History Education

<http://www.ncss.org>

National Council for Social Studies Education

<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/nchs/standards>

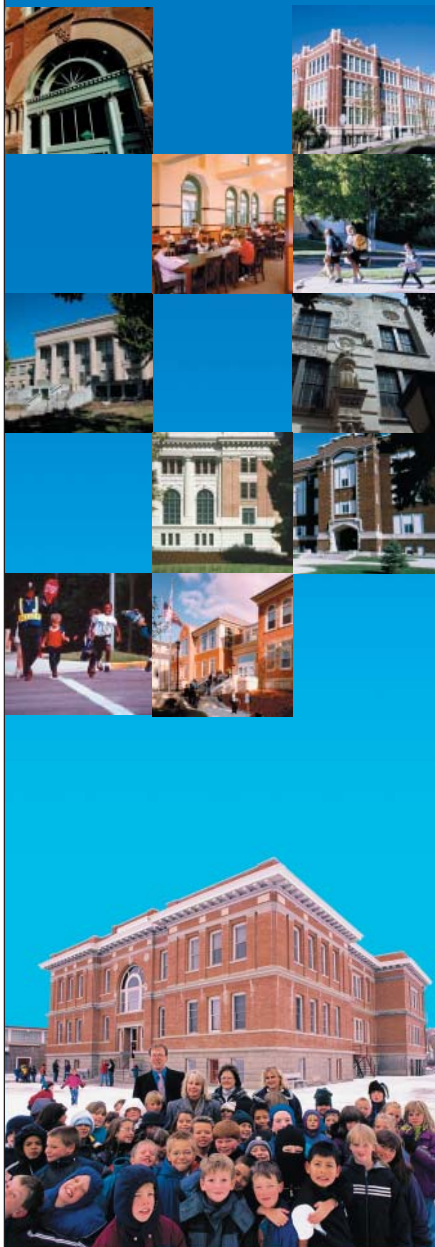
National History Standards

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/index.htm>

National Park Service, Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plans

<http://www.historychannel.com/classroom/classroom.html>

History Channel Classroom resources



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### [ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS]

This project was written by Geraldine H. Hastings with Ralph Doyle. Dr. Kurt Leichtle of the University of Wisconsin, River Falls, reviewed the project. Ms. Hastings is a high school social studies teacher at Catonsville High School in Baltimore, Maryland. She was named the Maryland Social Studies Educator of the Year in 2002-2003 and National Secondary Social Studies Teacher of the Year by the National Council for the Social Studies in 2003-2004. The project was written with support from the National Trust for Historic Preservation in conjunction with the Council of Educational Facility Planners International as a part of Historic Schools Day and School Building Week.

### [ABOUT THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION]

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a private, nonprofit membership organization dedicated to protecting the irreplaceable. Recipient of the National Humanities Medal, the National Trust provides leadership, education and advocacy to save America's diverse historic places and revitalize communities. Its Washington DC headquarters staff, six regional offices and 25 historic sites work with the Trust's 200,000 members and thousands of local community groups in all 50 states. For more information, visit [www.nationaltrust.org](http://www.nationaltrust.org).

