

## Making History: The Tufts Project LOCAL Program

**D**ANIEL COGAN-DREW, DIRECTOR OF THE Curriculum Resource Center (CRC), has seen a little bit of everything. As a humanities instructor for the Navy, he witnessed a group of officers rise to attention each time he entered a room. Through his work with Upward Bound, he observed the determination of students who were the first in their families to attend college. At Tufts, Cogan-Drew has witnessed another unique occurrence—the development of an innovative professional development program, Project LOCAL (Learning Our Community’s American Lore).

“The idea of ‘doing history’ really stems from the way historians approach their craft,” says Cogan-Drew, who is also an education graduate student. “It’s thinking about the practice of historians doing research, analyzing different perspectives, making connections, identifying themes and then presenting that work.” Cogan-Drew and his colleagues hope that students in each of the participating districts will adopt this method when approaching subjects of historical significance. Once they do, the Project LOCAL team believes they will be transformed into active, engaged learners. But first, the project is educating teachers on what “doing history” is and how it can be applied in the classroom.

Last fall, Project LOCAL welcomed its first twenty-five elementary and high school teachers into the program. The teachers were required to attend a series of professional development workshops which gave them a chance to share what they knew about “doing history” and hear what Tufts professors Evan Haefeli and David Guss, of the history and anthropology departments, respectively, had to say about their own process. During the workshops, the attendees visited historical sites, learned more about ongoing history projects (e.g., the “Lost Theatres of Somerville” project), reflected on the local history of their communities, discussed the role of local historians/historical societies, and received feedback from their fellow teachers.

The project’s work continued during the spring. The participating teachers were required to develop their own “doing history” projects to share with their students. During these exercises, the teachers were videotaped and, later, wrote about the experience. Both the video footage and text are currently being combined to form a series of videopapers. “One of the great advantages of the videopaper medium is that you can combine video and text,” says Cogan-Drew. “The teachers, when they convey the classroom reality, can write and reflect on what they see happening with their students’ learning and how this project might work for another teacher. We’ll be creating video-based teaching cases with each of the participating teachers, and as many as seventy-five cases will be produced over the three years of the project.” When the cases are completed, they will be added to the Project LOCAL website and will remain there for the next six years to be viewed by history teachers from the five districts.

Project LOCAL is developing a new set of programs for its fall 2005 class. By the end of the grant, the program will have worked with approximately 75% of the American history teachers in each district, thus impacting the education of an estimated 4,800 students (964 per district).



Daniel Cogan-Drew (left) working with a student at the CRC.

Project LOCAL was created in 2004 with the help of a 3-year, \$914,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education and the input of several education professionals, including Cogan-Drew, Department of Education Lecturer Steve Cohen, former Massachusetts Teacher of the Year Steven Levy, Calvin Carpenter of the Medford Public Schools, Joe Burke of the Somerville Public Schools, Robert McGreevey, a graduate student in American history at Brandeis University, and the Shore Educational Collaborative of Chelsea, MA. Together, this group has worked with school districts in Everett, Medford, Revere, Somerville, and Winthrop to address the teaching of history at the elementary and high school levels.

In many schools across the country, history is taught in the “traditional method.” In short, teachers focus on facts and dates that do little to spark student interest. Project LOCAL hopes to change this educational process by helping teachers and students become connected to the history of their local communities through a process dubbed “doing history.”

*To learn more about Project LOCAL, contact Daniel Cogan-Drew at 617-627-4764 or go to <http://ase.tufts.edu/local/>.*