

New School Challenge

General

Grade Level

Middle School

Author Info

Monticello

Type of Lesson

Challenge

Type of Project (Individual/Group/Both)

Both

Duration

90-120 minutes

Challenge Question

You get to create a new school! Thomas Jefferson did that when he founded the University of Virginia. Create a promotional poster that answers the following: How is your school inspired, if at all, by Jefferson's and other founding fathers' views on education? How will it be different?

Rationale

This challenge encourages students to examine primary sources in order to learn about views of education in Jefferson's time and learn how the founding fathers viewed education as an important part of self-governance. We selected the topic of "school" or "education" since it is something students are already familiar with and can draw comparisons to their own experience. Asking students to make these comparisons requires them to understand the founder's position in order to make the comparison. For example, students might notice that not everyone was included in the founding father's plans: girls and women were often excluded from public education plans, as were slaves. Recognizing these differences

between then and now will help students better understand the revolutionary and post-revolutionary period's views on education and show the evolution of education's role in society.

As an extension, students could comment on their classmates' posters, noting which points they agree with.

Steps

1. On a piece of paper or on your computer, make a list of questions you have about education in Jefferson's day. For example: Who went to school? What did they study? Where was school?
2. Go to My Collection. Examine the sources provided to learn about education in Jefferson's time. Use the document analysis sheets to record what you learn. Try to find answers to the questions you had about education.

For your school, what ideas do you want to use from the founding fathers? What do you want to be different?

3. Go to Create. Design a promotional poster for your school, explaining how your school is inspired by Jefferson and other founding fathers, if at all, and how it is different. Be sure to include at least three sources in your poster.

