

He and I had talked for years about how he has always taught in the antithesis of his learning style and has been very frustrated. I felt if we didn't get him to change, he would leave teaching. I didn't have a clue about what computer backgrounds either one had," Dr. McKenzie said.

When the program started, Dr. McKenzie's expectation was "just to see what happened." She spent a lot of time reassuring Beeler and Lickteig that it was okay not to do every lesson and every spelling word, and to just give the new program a chance. She asked Beeler what he wanted the students to know about America and its culture when they left middle school. His answer was to have students who want to be good citizens, who want to understand the law, who respect each other, and who have respect for where they came from and where other people came from. "To me that's a much more outstanding goal than memorizing the presidents," Dr. McKenzie said.

"When I walk into a classroom, it appears somewhat chaotic; everybody is doing different things. But the students know what they are doing. I ask the students to tell me what is going on. They explain how their team is working on a problem, and how one team member is going to the library

because she knows somebody at UT who could provide a needed answer. When I ask them how this program is different from that of previous history classes, they say, 'This is more fun.' Then I ask if they are actually learning anything. 'Oh, you wouldn't believe,' they'd say. 'You just can't use encyclopedias when you do this kind of research. They are really lame. They're just too general, and

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they're not primary sources.'"

"Primary research—I learned that in graduate school! So I asked them how they got primary sources."

"We're researching whether or not a man who came to America in the 1780s could support himself by being a cobbler in Virginia," the students told me. I then asked if they just couldn't look up the word 'cobbler' to find out. "That's just a

definition,' they said, 'and it wouldn't give us what we need. We have to look through all our different resources, and sometimes we even have to call people who are experts in the field.' And I thought to myself, what a novel idea."

Another outcome that Dr. McKenzie and her teachers liked was that the students could critique each other. "Middle school is the age of criticism," Dr. McKenzie said, "and they're challenging themselves and their own values. They can be very nasty to each other. But the students began to use this developmental ability to critique in a nice way. As they typed up their work, they would ask each other questions. Sometimes, since they were working on teams, they would tell each other about finding something that might help another team. I got a really eerie feeling as I sat in their classroom that we were definitely on to something here!"

"MacCSILE facilitates that. It allows 120—200 or even 800 students to access a comprehensive data base simultaneously. It allows me, teachers, parents, or whomever, to look in to it at any time and either edit the data base or help them (students). The teachers were getting impatient to see a product result from all of this, so I asked them what they wanted.