There are many Web 2.0 tools that can aid students in doing research, but along with many great sites are ones that are not as useful or appropriate for students. Teachers rely on LMS/TIs to provide them with guidance on which tools to steer their students towards and this week’s scenario is to provide recommendations on Web 2.0 tools that will help high school students in Contemporary American History and Contemporary American Civics classes to access primary digital resources for research to bring to topics to life and make the learning relevant and enjoyable while still being safe online and accessing only appropriate materials.

My process starts with finding out what material is covered by the classes and how assignments work now. Then, I need to take that information to the internet and search for what is available out there and evaluate resources in terms of student use, system integrity, and teacher connections. Once I narrow it down to several good resources, I would sit down with the teachers and demonstrate what I’d found in terms of their class content and get their feedback on how well (or not) each resource would fit into their teaching expectations. Once I get the end user clarifications then I would discuss with the IT administrator whether there were any issues from the past with any of my resources. After ironing out any issues, I would produce a recommendation for the IT department to allow access by students to recommended resources and then provide training to teachers which could be very rudimentary or as extensive as team-teaching while classes are using the resources. I would always have a hand in the use of the resources – checking to see if they are meeting the needs, looking for ways to increase their value, and searching for other resources to fill any gaps that may become apparent when put into use in the classroom.

The first point of collaboration is to sit down with the teachers and see what topics/events they cover, what they currently do in terms of student projects and where they envision the project assignments to go if appropriate tools are available and utilized. After highlighting several tools that I feel would work well, I would go back to the teachers and get their feedback as they try to make their vision more concrete. Taking their feedback and checking on any prior issues with the IT department, I would create a recommendation and submit it through the appropriate channels. With approval, I would then schedule trainings with the teachers to familiarize them with the resources as well as offering my services to team-teach the use of the resources with the students. I would check in frequently with the teachers to see how the resources work for them and try to find additional resources should there be an gaps that need to be filled. I would continue to be on the lookout for new resources coming online that may be valuable to the teachers. Depending on the resource and how learning to research is handled in the school already, I may take time to do a little pre-teaching of researching (in general) on the internet stressing the skills of evaluating the information and the information sources which is always a good thing to do with every student every year!

The Digital History website provides good coverage of history from pre-1492 through 2012 with primary source documents complete with citation information. Each date range/topic has numerous areas of information including: overview, textbook, events, people, documents, links, music, film, images, and multimedia subtopics. It is organized in a way that students should be able to complete their research using primary documents successfully with few issues.

Completing this assignment, I have really pulled everything I know together. I am considered (by my friends) to be the queen of internet research and I think that goes back to my first college IT course that really worked on teaching us to view everything with a critical eye analyzing who is putting the information out there and what their stake in the website’s information is. I didn’t like the tools in the cooltools wikispace for research because they were too general and allowed the students to wander way off track so I went to Google and did a search for “American history primary sources” and proceeded to evaluate websites from that search list. Had I had a more definite topic in American history to search, my results may have been somewhat different but I believe the tool I recommended would have been in the top of any similar search. I looked at how easy the site was to navigate and if I got confused then I got out and that was dropped off my list. Teacher resources were also a big thing for me because if the kids see the teacher using the site as well then they: 1) know the teacher understands what they (the students) are going through to use the site, and 2) can see how what the teacher is teaching is related to what they are finding in research. I love doing research on websites and information sources and routinely will find activities for other staff members in the afterschool program or in scouting to use based on desires or ideas they have expressed.