

Colonial Williamsburg

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
Office of Communications
Williamsburg, Va. 23187-1776
www.history.org

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Media Contacts:

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation: Barbara Brown
(757) 220-7280, bbrown@cwf.org

WJCC Schools: Greg Davy
(757) 603-6480, davyg@wjcc.k12.va.us

**Williamsburg James City County Schools Becomes First School Division
In Nation To Adopt “The Idea of America,” Colonial Williamsburg’s New
Interactive U.S. History and Citizenship Program**

Internet Brings History Curriculum to Life for High Schoolers



WILLIAMSBURG, Va. – Williamsburg James City County Schools is the first school district in the country to adopt Colonial Williamsburg’s interactive, fully digital, Web-based curriculum “The Idea of America” for implementation in the 2011 – 2012 school year. The announcement was made today by Colin G. Campbell, president and CEO of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation at the annual community leaders breakfast at the Williamsburg Lodge.

“‘The Idea of America’ is the most ambitious educational outreach initiative Colonial Williamsburg has undertaken to date. We couldn’t be more pleased that Williamsburg James

City County Schools is the first school district in the country to implement this program in its classrooms,” said Campbell. “This entirely digitally based secondary school history and civics curriculum ties critical moments in American history to the events of today. As students examine the case studies created by our staff of educators and teachers across the country, they will discover that Americans have been debating fundamental principles for generations.”

“It seems only fitting that our school division, which serves the residents of the area that is such an instrumental part of what this excellent curriculum teaches, is the first public school district to participate in the program,” noted WJCC Superintendent Dr. Steven M. Constantino. “This is another significant step toward our goal of becoming a premier school division as we bring learning further into the 21st century.”

“CW representatives will begin training our staff when the coming school year begins,” said Dr. Dianna Lindsay, WJCC’s assistant superintendent for academic affairs. “We look forward to using it in our classrooms later in the year.”

Through “The Idea of America,” students will learn lessons from history and the principles of American citizenship by exploring 65 individual case studies of the nation’s most important historical events, debating issues that changed America, listening to the perspectives of contemporary historians and accessing primary source documents of enduring significance.

Colonial Williamsburg’s interactive program, “Virtual Republic,” also can be integrated into “The Idea of America,” providing the opportunity for students in one region of the country to discuss and debate their findings and conclusions with students in another region. With social networking tools, students will post their ideas, creating a nationwide discussion forum. During this process, classrooms will work to develop positions and viewpoints that they can carry forward into their community, giving students an opportunity to actively participate in the responsibilities of every citizen.

“The Idea of America” utilizes case studies, each introduced by students, to make the content relevant to today’s learners and to encourage active citizenship. To support the lessons, teachers select from among resources and interactive tools including dramatic readings of key text, documentaries and interviews with contemporary figures. In addition, primary sources such as newspapers, works of art, diaries, journal entries, speeches and wills also are provided.

Four pairs of contrasting American values – unity vs. diversity, private wealth vs. common wealth, law vs. ethics, and freedom vs. equality – are presented to guide the discussion of each case study, with every case study linking to a current event Web site where students can examine the issues in the context of the current political debate.

For example, students might investigate America as a nation of laws, but also grapple with the understanding that laws are not always ethical, as was the case with the Jim Crow laws that discriminated against African Americans. They will learn that lawbreakers like Rosa Parks sparked the Civil Rights movement by challenging the ethics of the law, thereby changing the lives of millions of Americans.

Other case study examples, which are available to review [online](#), include The Great Debate, Jacksonian America, and Reagan and the end of the Cold War.

“The Idea of America” has been in development for more than five years. Significant philanthropic support was provided by the late Frank Batten Sr. and the Batten Foundation,

Virginia Beach, Va.; Sally B. and Theodore W. Brickman, Huntingdon Valley, Pa.; Letitia and the late Edward C. Joullian III, Oklahoma City, Okla.; Marcia H. Randall, Portland, Ore.; Theresa A. and Lawrence C. Salameno, Allendale, N.J.; Lois and the late Richard Vieser, Walpole, N.H.; and Marion and Robert S. Wilson, Rancho Santa Fe, Calif.

To learn more about “The Idea of America,” including sample case studies and author videos, visit www.pearsonschool.com/IdeaofAmerica or follow “Colonial Williamsburg’s The Idea of America” on Facebook.

Established in 1926, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation is the not-for-profit educational institution that preserves, interprets and presents the restored 18th-century Revolutionary capital of Virginia as a town-sized living history museum, telling the inspirational stories of our nation’s founding men and women. Colonial Williamsburg demonstrates its commitment to expanding its thought-provoking programming as well as its dedication to cultural and historical authenticity and education outreach on-site and online. Williamsburg is located in Virginia’s Tidewater region, 20 minutes from Newport News, within an hour’s drive of Richmond and Norfolk, and 150 miles south of Washington, D.C., off Interstate 64. For more information about Colonial Williamsburg, call 1-800-HISTORY or visit Colonial Williamsburg’s website at www.history.org.

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