Oral Histories in the Digital Age

StoryCorps

Innovate & communicate in your school libraries!
What is StoryCorps?

*A nonprofit organization that records the oral histories of people all over the country & archives the interviews at the Library of Congress.

-Initiatives: The Great Thanksgiving Listen, One Small Step, Road to Resilience, Military Voices, Outloud,
How did this project originate?

*Observations of Students’ Interactions
-Students lacked effective communication skills.
*Desire to do a StoryCorps project, especially The Great Thanksgiving Listen
How does someone record an interview with StoryCorps?

*StoryCorps Recording Sites, Mobile Booth Tours, Public Library Partnerships, StoryCorps in the Classroom (archive.storycorps.org), StoryCorps App
Who Can Record an Interview?

*Students need to be at least 13 years old to use the StoryCorps app and/or have a StoryCorps account.

-Librarian or teacher can upload interviews from his/her StoryCorps account.

*Recommend sending home permission slips to participate in StoryCorps as names, locations, and photos are shared in interviews.
How can you fund a StoryCorps project?

*Write a project-based grant.

-Received $2,400 from the Cox Communications Innovation Grant to create a recording studio and record interviews with teachers.
Can you do the project without funding?

*YES!!!

-Use a laptop, phone, or tablet to record in the StoryCorps app or website.
Why spend money if the project can be done for free?

*Create buzz about the project.
*Get student and teacher buy-in.
*Better audio quality with professional equipment.
What should I buy?

*A reliable laptop with an app to record and edit interviews.

*Macbook Pro ($1,700)
13-inch MacBook with TouchBar
What should I buy?

*2-3 Studio-quality Headphones
-Headphones ($149 for bundle)

Tascam Over-Ear Headphones

*Headphone Splitter

-Belkin 5-Jack Audio Splitter ($11)

Belkin Rockstar Splitter
What should I buy?

*2 Microphones
- Blue Yeti Microphone Bundle ($149)

Blue Yeti Microphones

Optional - Pop Filters
- Knox Pop Filter ($10/usually in a bundle)
What should I buy?

*Remind others to be quiet.

-Recording in Progress Sign
What should I buy?

*Optional- StoryCorps Books by StoryCorps Creator Dave Isay
- Callings: The Purpose and Passion of Work
- Listening Is An Act of Love: A Celebration Of American Life from the StoryCorps Project
- All There Is: Love Stories from StoryCorps
- Ties that Bind: Stories of Love & Gratitude from the First Ten Years of StoryCorps
What should I buy?

*Optional- CD Burner & Blank CDS (To make copies of interview to share with interview guests) -Version Tech DVD/CD Writer ($30)

CD Burner for Mac or Windows
How do I prepare students?

*StoryCorps in the Classroom Lesson Plans
- Why Do Our Stories Matter?
- Tips for Effective Interviews
- The Power of Active Listening
- Strengths in Our Stories
- Power of People from Our Pasts
What makes a great question?

*List of questions for peers, teachers, and anyone

**The Great Questions List**

-The Big Share: Write a question on your paper and write it down. Find a partner and ask your questions to one another. Trade your paper with your
How do I get my faculty & students involved?

* Share your vision at a faculty meeting.
* Get your principal on board.
* Record an interview and share with teachers.
* Start small and form an instructional partnership with one teacher.
How do I solicit interviews?

* Survey students and find out which teachers or administrators they want to interview.
* Have students compose a formal email to teacher/administrator to request an interview.
* Reach out to multigenerational homes.
What is the recording process like?

* Official StoryCorps interviews are 40 minutes.
* Recommend 20 minutes for student interviews.
* Start interview with name, age, location, and relation to the interviewee.
* Have at least 20 questions prepared for interview.
* Errors are expected and do not need to be edited out.
* Remember that you can pause during an interview!
* Include a photo of participants.

Interviews are screened and only appropriate interviews will be archived with StoryCorps or at the LOC.
How do I protect student privacy?

*Use permission slips with all participants, even if students are over 12 years old.
*Students who cannot be recorded can participate in the writing questions or editing interviews.
*Consider omitting sharing personal information from interviews (last names, location, age, etc.)
*Students can interview each other for practice but refrain from uploading these interviews if privacy is a
How do you upload interviews?

*If using StoryCorps app on a phone or tablet, upload interview from there.
  - Tag your interview with keywords!
*If using a computer, record interview in a recording app (e.g., GarageBand) and upload interview at archive.storycorps.org.
  - Recommend archiving interviews in another place for backup. (Google Sites, Burned CDs, Cloud Storage)
What does a StoryCorps interview look & sound like?

Interview with mother at StoryCorps site in Atlanta, interview with grandmother on a laptop for The Great Thanksgiving Listen, & an interview with my niece on the StoryCorps app.
When should you start your StoryCorps project?

*Creating a studio, acquiring funds, ordering equipment, and getting teacher and student participation takes time!

-Start small and use phone to record interviews now!

*Recording with StoryCorps can be done on a small or large scale at any time during the year.
Growing up in a Library!

Favorite StoryCorps Interview & Animation
“The Temple of Knowledge”

Growing up in a Library!
“Listening involves a certain surrender, a willingness to sit with what one does not already know. Listening requires us to stretch a little beyond what we know or want.”  --Diana Senechal
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