Teaching with Primary Sources—MTSU

Lesson Plan:
Education Reform During the Progressive Era and
the Rosenwald Schools of the American South

Grades: 9-12
Subjects: African American History
Time Required: 1 class period (50-60 minutes)
Author: Katie Sutton Randall, Teaching with Primary Sources—MTSU

OVERVIEW
In this lesson, students will learn about the Julius Rosenwald Fund and study images and drawings of the Cadentown Rosenwald School in Lexington, Kentucky. The school was constructed in 1922-23, and the images were created after 1933 as part of the Library of Congress’s Historic American Building Survey. Students will analyze these sources to identify defining physical features of Rosenwald schools, develop historical research questions, and learn about the private-public partnerships that funded many Progressive Era reform efforts.

UNDERSTANDING GOALS
Students will analyze photographs and drawings of a Rosenwald school in addition to secondary source material to gain a better understanding of reform efforts made in education during the Progressive Era.

OBJECTIVES
Students will learn to evaluate primary source materials as artifacts, develop an understanding of the importance of historical inquiry based on primary sources, gain a better understanding that political, economic, and social history are connected, and recognize that private-public partnerships often funded reform efforts during the Progressive Era.

INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS
How can buildings be used as primary sources? What kind of relationship model did the Rosenwald initiative create for Progressive reform efforts?

MATERIALS USED
- Primary Source Analysis Tool
- Analyzing Photographs and Prints Teachers Guide
- Rosenwald Schools videos, courtesy of the University of Alabama Center for Public Television
- Video Discussion Questions Handout (page 5)

CURRICULUM STANDARDS
High School African American History
AAH.25 Describe the progress of African American institutions, such as religion, education, and benevolent organizations, during this era.

English Language Arts
Literature
11-12.RL.1.7 Evaluate the topic, subject, and/or theme in multiple diverse formats and media, including how the version interprets the source text.

Writing
11-12.W.1.7 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning supported by relevant and sufficient evidence.
RESOURCES USED:

Library of Congress Primary Sources:
- Cadentown Rosenwald School, Lexington, KY, https://www.loc.gov/item/ky0414/
- [School house in Kirkland. Been used for several years and actually falling to pieces. Many rural schools in Georgia are in this condition.] Location: [Kirkland, Georgia], https://www.loc.gov/item/ncl2004000346/PP/
- Newspaper article in the Salt Lake City, Utah, Broad Ax http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024055/1922-08-05/ed-1/seq-3/

Secondary Sources:
Encyclopedia of Alabama
- “Rosenwald Schools,” a two-part video series produced by the University of Alabama Center for Public Television on the Julius Rosenwald fund and the philanthropic building program that began in the South in 1913 to provide better educational facilities and opportunities for African Americans
  Video 1 http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/m-4126
  Video 2 http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/m-4127

Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture
- “Julius Rosenwald Fund,” an article by Mary S. Hoffschwelle summarizing the history of the program http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=728

Step 1 Connect Before beginning the lesson, students should have some contextual knowledge of the Progressive Movement and reform efforts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Have students research these topics in the school library or on the Internet. What factors led to the Progressive Movement? (i.e. industrialization, urbanization, and influx of immigrant workers) Give examples of Progressive reform efforts.

Step 2 Connect Have students read the Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture article on the Julius Rosenwald Fund, a philanthropic building fund for African American schools across the South between 1913 and 1920. Allow students time to ask questions about the article.

Step 3 Connect Hand out the discussion questions that correspond with the University of Alabama Center for Public Television Rosenwald Schools video series. Play Video 1 of 2 and ask students to follow along, answering the questions as they watch the video. At the end of Video 1, take time to discuss answers to Video 1, answering any additional questions the students might have.

Step 4 Connect Play Video 2 of the University of Alabama Center for Public Television Rosenwald Schools video series and ask students to follow along, answering the questions as they watch the video. At the end of Video 2, take time to discuss answers to Video 2, answering any additional questions the students might have.
PROCEDURE

Step 5  Connect  Have students search the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) collection (keyword: Cadentown Rosenwald) for the file documenting the Cadentown Rosenwald School in Lexington, Kentucky. Have each student fill out the Primary Source Analysis Tool to help them analyze the set of images. Teachers should refer to the Teacher’s Guide, Analyzing Photographs and Prints to prompt discussion and help students critically examine the source material.

Step 6  Wonder  An article from an African American Salt Lake City, Utah, newspaper, The Broad Ax, published August 5, 1922, refers to Rosenwald schools as “modern rural schools for Negroes.” Have students compare the images they saw in the videos and the images and drawings they studied in the HABS/HAER collection with the image of an early twentieth-century rural schoolhouse found on the Library’s Web site (https://www.loc.gov/item/ncl2004000346/PP/). Have them note differences in construction and building materials used.

Step 7  Wonder  Divide students into groups and have each group develop a list of three possible research questions that do more than prompt simple “yes” or “no” answers based on this set of images. (i.e. What character defining features distinguish a Rosenwald School? How did building plans for Rosenwald schools use natural light? What do these buildings convey about the era in which they were built? Were Rosenwald schools truly “modern” for their day?)

Step 8  Investigate  Have students explore possible answers to their group’s set of research questions.

STEP 9  Express  Have the groups present their questions and possible answers to the class.

STEP 10 Reflect  For homework, have students write an essay answering the following questions: How did the Rosenwald school building program change the lives of southern African American students? Considering all that you have learned today and previously about the Progressive Era and reform movements of the early twentieth century, how did Rosenwald schools fit the goals of Progressives? Use the rubric at the end of this lesson to evaluate the students’ essays.
EVALUATION

Use the following rubric to evaluate student essays:

90-100  Essay has 5 to 6 paragraphs, uses descriptive language and details from class discussion and correct grammar.

80-89   Essay has 4 to 5 paragraphs, uses some descriptive language and some details from class discussion and mostly correct grammar.

70-79   Essay has 3 to 4 paragraphs, uses little descriptive language or few details from class discussion and incorrect grammar.

EXTENSIONS

- Have students conduct additional research using the Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database to see if there was at one time or is at present an existing Rosenwald school in their community, http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/
- Have students research and map out Rosenwald Schools across their county or state.
- Have students learn more about historic preservation efforts to save and restore Rosenwald schools by going online at https://savingplaces.org/places/rosenwald-schools.
- Have students research Rosenwald school floor plans further at https://www.historysouth.org/rosenwaldhome/. 
Teaching with Primary Sources—MTSU

Video Worksheet:
Education Reform During the Progressive Era and the Rosenwald Schools of the American South

Student Name: _____________________________________________

Directions: Watch the videos and follow along, answering questions along the way.

Video 1:
1. Describe rural schoolhouses for African Americans in the early twentieth century.

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

2. What U.S. city was Julius Rosenwald from?

_________________________________________________________________________

3. What company was Rosenwald president of?

_________________________________________________________________________

4. Who did Rosenwald form a partnership with in Alabama?

_________________________________________________________________________

5. How much money was needed to construct the typical Rosenwald school?

_________________________________________________________________________

Video 2:
1. Who was Jim Crow?

_________________________________________________________________________

2. What was the Great Migration?

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

3. How were Rosenwald schools funded?

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

4. Based on the images in the video, how would you describe Rosenwald schools?

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________