

## North Carolina Students Use Visual Learning to Build Research Skills While Exploring Their School's 100-year History

In 1909, Cathedral School in Raleigh, N.C. first opened its doors in a two-room schoolhouse while historic events were unfolding around the globe: the Wright brothers were gaining international celebrity for their flying machines, the United States was signing a treaty with Colombia to build the Panama Canal and the first human was setting foot on the North Pole. In celebration of Cathedral School's centennial, today's students discovered the history that shaped North Carolina, the United States and the world over the past century—using Inspiration® 8, the essential tool to visualize, think, organize and learn from Inspiration Software®, Inc.

In this Catholic school serving 270 students in grades pre-kindergarten through eight, Kim Seder, the director of information and educational technology, in collaboration with classroom teachers and the school principal, created a project where students would construct Inspiration “webs”—or visual maps—to research, organize and evaluate significant events that occurred over the last 100 years. Seder selected templates from Inspiration's expansive selection to use as the framework, and the students were off and running with the project.

“We wanted our kids to understand that Cathedral School students were here and prayed for people serving in the world wars and for the victims of the Titanic,” said Donna Moss, principal. “Inspiration was a

great tool for stepping back and looking at the past in a way that was easy to understand, and the software never got in the way of the creativity.”

The students who were assigned the project—fourth through eighth graders—divided into groups to

address individual decades, and some groups examined individual years. To align the project with diocesan standards, the teachers assigned fourth graders to North Carolina state history, fifth graders to U.S. history and middle school students to world history.

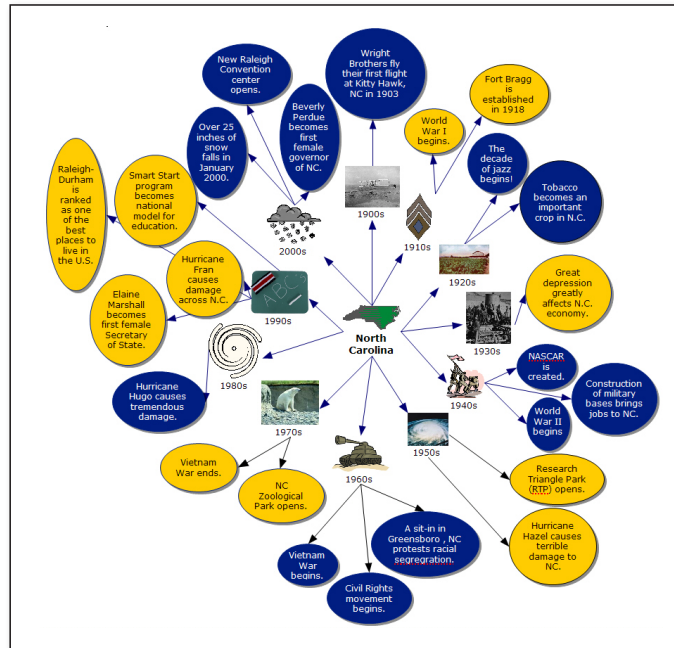
“Inspiration makes it so easy to integrate projects into our curriculum,” said Seder.

Students scoured online resources for events they found noteworthy. Using Inspiration as a brainstorming tool, the students were able to

narrow down the list to the most relevant facts. With the vast library of clip art and photos in Inspiration, students graphically depicted each historical event.

“They loved searching for facts, and it was interesting to see which events caught their attention,” said Seder. “This project gave students an overview of history in an easy way, and Inspiration was the perfect tool. It would have been very difficult to organize the material without Inspiration Software,” she said.

Inspiration is a tool Seder reaches for time and time again, using it to help students visually outline and



*Cathedral School fourth graders used Inspiration® to capture, categorize and organize their research on North Carolina state history.*

organize research papers and to create timelines. She said the classroom teachers often use it to introduce a concept. "Inspiration gives students such an amazing view of the subject. It's a nice alternative to using traditional presentation software," she said.

Working with Seder on the centennial project was Lisa Reidy, the social studies teacher to Cathedral's middle school students. "It was an interesting project from every standpoint," she said. "The students just took off with it, and my role was to coach them as they went along, to help them see what was important."

Reidy's students worked in groups, each looking for one significant event in a particular decade, such as

the invention of the automobile, the Treaty of Versailles or the onset of World War I. "A lot of these events are things that adults take for granted that everyone knows, but they were new to the students. Now they have an overview," she said.

Reidy found the project a valuable way to teach students how to conduct a research project, as well as an opportunity for writing practice. "I can get a lot more out of them with Inspiration because they love the technology," she said. Students appreciate the ability to add elements to their Inspiration projects such as audio, video, pictures, diagrams and presentations, she noted. "The students learn how to organize and put everything together so it makes sense."

When her students completed their sections of the centennial project, Reidy went into Inspiration and checked their work—and was impressed with what she saw, she said. She had asked them for feedback about how they felt about their projects, too. "They gave me a

lot of mature answers—that they learned so much and that they did it for their school. I loved what they had to say."

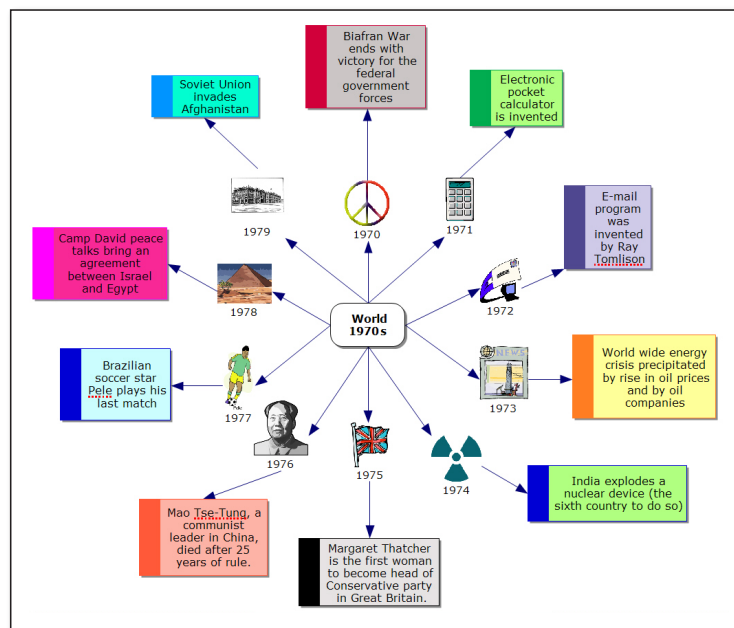
Seder pointed out that a unique aspect of the centennial project was its inclusion of all the students in the school. While the older students created the Inspiration project documenting historical events, Cathedral School's younger students joined in the festivities, too, making centennial art projects. "It was exciting to bring everyone together and work on something as a school," she said. Added Reidy, "The students liked seeing what the other grades were doing and being part of something bigger."

Reidy said the students had much pride in their work throughout the process and excitement that the end result would be on the school web site for all to see—for their families, school alumni, church parish members and others in the community. "I told them it shows people how far we've come with technology in our school," she said.

When the project was complete, Seder entered it in

Inspiration Software's Inspired Visual Learning Awards. Out of more than 200 entries from around the world, the Cathedral School centennial project was selected for one of three Gold Star Awards, the award program's highest level of recognition. "The students were already so excited about the project," said Reidy, "and winning the award was the icing on the cake."

To see the students' centennial project, go to [www.cathedral-school.net/centennialproject/default.htm](http://www.cathedral-school.net/centennialproject/default.htm).



*Inspiration®'s Symbol Library provided Cathedral School middle school students with visual ways to represent historical world facts from the 1970s.*