

Recalling Caesar and Xerox

Lessons from the 1960s
Meadowbrook Junior High School (now Charles E. Brown)
Newton, Massachusetts

Running into the Xerox representative at the Technology Leadership Council's annual meeting in March when I took advantage of the opportunity to mention GTEC and, unbelievably he followed up with a phone call the next day, reminded me to record the practice I mentioned to him and his colleague and which is referred to in the Step-by-Step Guide, Joan Thormann and I recently published¹.

When I was a young teacher at Meadowbrook Junior High School in Newton, we were the beta site for EDC. One of the first units the organization developed and we piloted was a historiography approach to Caesar's march through Italy to Gaul. Another was the three-way trade in slaves, cotton and rum among Africa, New England and England.

The objective was to have students understand that history is derived from original documents and other sources, and therefore subject to interpretation, contemporary both in the past and the present. Our junior high students read English translations and constructed their individual versions of the events. We then discussed with them the various opinions, referred back to the original sources and attempted to align all the views so we produce one class account.

In order to share the writing of each student with the rest of the class, the library was given a huge and fast Xerox machine (dubbed at the time as a workhorse) to enable the exchange and to advance the learning. We could put a single page on the machine and get a copy for each student in a few minutes while we waited.

It was a heady instructional time in an avant garde school which gave teachers, who were well trained in both academics and pedagogy, the opportunity to create and tailor lessons for our students and to explore new avenues of instruction.

¹ As an aside, when I asked EDC to find the project in its archives so I could provide a reference, they were unable to locate any records.