deep-diving into online databases

building empathy in our students using research and creativity
What is the ONE THING you want MOST for your students?
and now for a gripping tale of motive, miscreants, and magic...
no truly GOOD story is every as simple and straightforward as it seems.
but sometimes it’s the obstacles that make things...
worth it.
Research is frustrating because it seems like some students are just CLUELESS; they don't even know what a bibliography IS-- let alone how to pronounce it!

Research is too time-consuming; I can never get the kids through everything that GOOD research entails while still sticking to my own schedule of lessons.

Research is irritating because it just winds up being another project that students turn in late... and always right on the last day of the quarter!

No problems in sight, Captain. I regularly browse GALE or JSTOR databases on my Sunday mornings over a fresh cup of coffee. Oh, and my students do, too.
but what about control?
(or the lack thereof.)
“Let’s practice this together—”

--by taking the Gapminder test.
a quick note about Gapminder

“Gapminder is an independent Swedish foundation with no political, religious or economic affiliations. Gapminder is a fact tank, not a think tank. Gapminder fights devastating misconceptions about global development. Gapminder produces free teaching resources making the world understandable based on reliable statistics. Gapminder promotes a fact-based worldview everyone can understand. Gapminder collaborates with universities, UN, public agencies and non-governmental organizations.”

helpful sidebubble says...

“We can explore Gapminder more later! It’s a fun tool that makes statistics interesting AND beautiful.”
open

setting the table for great, shared discoveries.

Without lying, denying, or omitting the injustices we see in our world, students must explain why humans are the way we are to an hypothetical alien race...

AN ALIEN QUEEN HAS HEARD SOME DREADFUL THINGS ABOUT HUMANITY AND IS THEREFORE CONSIDERING THE ELIMINATION OF THE HUMAN RACE. BUT SHE IS NOT AN ENTIRELY HEARTLESS QUEEN. HOW WOULD YOU EXPLAIN -- TO THIS ALIEN LIFEFORM -- THE WAY HUMANS TREAT ONE ANOTHER ON EARTH?
What are some words that come to mind when asked to describe human nature?
Humans are:
- Depressed
- Kind
- Happy
- Unhappy
- Sad
- Traded
- Great

Humans are similar to others.
People are more similar to those who support them.
People are more similar to others.
People are more better than others.

People are:
- Kind
- Happy
- Unhappy
- Sad
- Traded
- Great

People want to be perceived more better than others.
People desire to help or be similar to others.

Before finally reacting to them and discussing them with peers:
They start with adjectives...
Then flesh them out into complete sentences...

They are hide their true intentions from others, to avoid judgment...
immerse posing the crucial questions to promote those creative moves.

We start to make use of seminal documents and current events to discover just what decisions about human rights have been made in the past and how those decisions to carry repercussions today.
“How do you, as a concerned citizen, create a piece of work that will compel your audience to address a current human rights violation?”
“How do you, as a concerned citizen, create a piece of work that will compel your audience to address a current human rights violation?”

what will you make that can capitalize on your strengths?

what rhetorical strategies might be available to you?

how can you tailor your work to fit your target audience?

immerse posing the crucial questions to promote the crucial moves.
“How do you, as a concerned citizen, create a piece of work that will compel your audience to address a current human rights violation?”

Students use Karrie Fransen’s “Over Under Sideways Down” graphic novel as a mentor text.
explore
casting the research net
far and wide.

Students will start by honing in on a human right they are particularly passionate about.

You can offer "child-friendly" editions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to assist students who might struggle with its formal language.

Article 3: “Right to life, liberty, and personal security.”

Article 15: “Right to a nationality and the freedom to change it.”

Article 4: “Freedom from slavery.”

Article 5: “Freedom from torture and degrading treatment.”

Article 18: “Freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.”
At this early stage, encourage students to cast a wide net.

A student who wishes to focus on Article 26: “Right to education,” for instance, may play around with approaching the issue from different angles.

"Browse Issues" gives all students-- even those who aren’t very hip to current events-- a jumping point for this project!
Looking back at that driving question, it’s worth reminding students that they’re supposed to compel an audience to address their human rights issue.

But if you’re going to compel an audience to change something?

Students discover quickly: a key to change is empathy.

It’s helpful to know the steps that lead to lasting societal change...
demo time!

1. Open the bags of words at your tables.
2. Using the words, arrows, and your groupmates, arrange the words in a way that makes the most sense to you--just be prepared to explain it when you finish!

helpful sidebubble says...

Want to do this activity with your own students? Use the same words we did here or customize them with your own!
Students use this as an opportunity to pull what they know from history and current events.

Providing students with the language makes visualizing thinking manageable for all students... and provides opportunity for targeted word study as well!
Students need not limit their research solely to academic journals or news articles! Harvard’s Project Zero has great tools to get students generating questions about their research topic. Cornell Notes are a great means of organizing these student-generated questions.
gather
a multi-genre approach to research.

MOTIVE + OBSTACLE = ACTION
Students use real-word organizations and nonprofits to see how professionals are actually putting plans into action to cause change.

Synthesis Essay
Students use their own studies, experiences, and research to answer thoughtful philosophical prompts after a stirring Socratic discussion.

Kami PDF Document Markup
Students can practice annotating with purpose and you can engage with them and their reading of a text through comments.
create using the workshop method to foster camaraderie and creativity with research.

- Workshop setting to brainstorm and revise pieces
- Conference setting to set goals and establish individual calendars and rubrics
the musical stylings of Matthew (Part II).

“But wait, wait, wait. Did this kid even do RESEARCH for that?”

As a matter of fact, he did.
Martin’s continued adventures in filmmaking.
create using the workshop method to foster camaraderie and creativity.
“I’m totally motivated and can’t wait to get my kids researchin’!”

“This is kind of intimidating, but I think it would really benefit my students…”

“I’m going to really want to work closely with my tech team before I dive in.”
and yet:

“the struggle is real...”

identifying and overcoming obstacles in research-based GID.
“Sometimes I think I’m restrained by information—that I’m too focused on the finer points of things, too detail-minded, unable to free myself from the hold of other people’s work.”
— Questlove, Creative Quest
time

- mini-lessons explicitly teaching first-vs-second draft reading skills, reading with a purpose, annotation, Cornell styled note-taking, and author’s purpose

- pair with text sets, allowing for whole-class reads or student-choice reads and close study

- pair with full texts geared towards human rights, such as Persepolis, Kite Runner, March, etc.
doubts

It’s hard not to have them, especially when teaching feels like herding a roomful of kittens into a shoebox.

(And we know adding computers to the mix won’t get the kittens in the box any faster!)

“I want my students to be able to make informed decisions about the world while taking into consideration the well-being of those around them.”
Play around more with beautiful data on Gapminder!

Check out the whole unit on Google Drive!

Read over Karrie Fransen’s graphic novel, “Over Under Sideways Down.”

Kami PDF & Document Markup gives students lots of annotation tools for downloaded PDF articles

Harvard’s Project Zero provides resources for global understanding and exploration as well as tools for promoting academic conversation and global understanding.

Please feel free to use the time remaining to explore and play with some of the tools and resources we discussed this morning!