

Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty.

Anyone who keeps learning stays young.

--Henry Ford

Dear Colonial Williamsburg Teacher Institute participant,

Congratulations and welcome to the CWTI! My name is Brian and I will be your peer facilitator during your stay. Each year Colonial Williamsburg selects peers from around the country to assist and lead the teachers, and I will be yours during the week of July 10-17. Before we meet on July 10, I wanted to touch base with you by introducing myself and offering you any support needed for the trip. My role is to lead application sessions, serve as a liaison between the CW staff and teacher participants, and do anything I can to assist you during this meaningful week.

Having had the opportunity to participate in a summer 2005 CWTI program, please know that I have found the experiences to be some of the most rewarding involvements in my 22-year education career. Therefore, I am hopeful and confident that you, as well, will share in my sentiments.

This letter has three parts: what to bring, what not to bring, and what to expect:

What to Bring

In order to maximize both your comfort and participation, please allow me to offer some suggestions so that your week will be meaningful and as enjoyable as possible.

- Virginia is hot, humid, and *muggy* during the summers [picture having a damp, heavy, thick blanket wrapped around you as you walk out the door--or, better yet, being *thrown* at you like a brick!]. Moreover, we could be subject to sudden bursts of rain (especially when we are far from shelter!). A small umbrella is recommended (as well as a hat). Still, it is best to plan for all types of weather. The classrooms can be cool so a light jacket or sweater may come in handy. Evenings can be cool also.
- Bring sun screen and bug repellent.
- Colonial Williamsburg wants to make sure we get our money's worth so they will keep us busy. You may want to bring your own gum, mints, and snacks as there will be very little time to go and get these things once the week begins. Don't worry--shopping time is built into the schedule. Sometimes there are even teacher discounts.
- We will eat heartily, and many former participants have commented that they have no desire for snacks between meals.
- Bring comfortable walking shoes (sandals may not always be appropriate; i.e. if we walk through fields, etc.). The object is to enjoy yourself and not to impress.
- Bring a backpack that you'll carry everywhere. It will be invaluable for your persona stuff, a journal, photo equipment, a water bottle, your many purchases, and anything else you can fit in there.
- Pack loose-fitting, comfortable clothing. For example, I've taught often in China in similar heat and found 100% cotton to be comfortable. Dinners are not formal, so casual clothing is fine (do, though, pack something nicer for our last dinner at the King's Arms. For the men, I suggest khakis and a nice shirt).
- Don't forget to bring a camera with either plenty of film or extra memory cards.
- An additional small suitcase is handy for extra materials and items you may purchase. We'll have a chance to shop each day at the unique, historical gift stores. You will find a huge variety of rich colonial literature for all ages, as well as great, inexpensive visuals for bringing history alive for your students, such as clay wig curlers, sugar cones, reproductions

of colonial coins, children's games, documents, music, posters, etc. These items enriched my students' understanding of history and made my history lessons "come alive."

- It wouldn't hurt to bring a few art supplies, like color pencils or markers, stickers, etc. We'll present a group project on graduation day that will summarize the historical content we've learned as well as our thoughts and images of what defines the American character as experienced by each of us.
- We have to think of the Colonial Williamsburg people that will make our visit rich and enlightening. On the final day of our week, we'll be creating gift bags to present to our leaders. Think of things to bring from your hometown that are distinctive. It doesn't have to be expensive. Little mementoes that represent you or the area you're from would be great to give. It's a fun way of saying "Thank you for everything!"

What you do not need to bring

We will be staying in 18th century colonial homes. Each is different and unique. Regardless of the room, it is as if you are staying in a five star hotel. Whatever you need, you just simply have to call the front desk and ask. They supply toiletries and those items that you can expect from a very fine hotel.

What to expect

We will be working on a project during the week that revolves around what it means to be an American. It will be presented on graduation day. Do not panic, for our project will be **fun**: a video that you (or a team, or a friend) will produce from the digital pictures that you take during the week. I am a technology resource teacher and will be bringing 20 laptops, along with microphones, from our office with me for your use. The basement of Market Square Tavern will be for us to use—I'll train you. If you are familiar with the Windows XP system, great!

I know I've forgotten something or haven't nearly touched on something else. I'll be gone on a business trip to Atlanta from June 23-27, and as soon as my plane lands in Norfolk, will turn around and head to Ohio for a wedding and family gathering from June 28-July 5. Call me if you want (757) 483-4561, or email me at brian.mckee@pps.k12.va.us. Make sure to put "CWTI," or other recognizable subject heading lest your email get deleted as spam.

This will be a week that you'll never forget. I look forward to meeting you!

Sincerely,

Brian



This is a picture of me working in China last year—these children had never seen themselves on a camera before.