Happy New Year!
I know it’s only September, but to teachers, even those of us who are retired, this late summer/early fall start of the school year marks a new beginning. A good friend who works in the business world once commented to me that he understood the challenge, stress and lack of financial reward teaching provides, but he would love to have the opportunity to restart each year.

I know the beginning of the year can be stressful and busy, but it really does offer that opportunity to begin again. I wish each of you a great start to the school year as you excite and challenge students to think about history, geography, civics, economics, and the other social studies - the world we live in and how we got where we are.

As you will see throughout this Yankee Post, The Connecticut Council for the Social Studies has been busy planning events for the 2013-14 school year and beyond. The Fall Conference Committee has been actively working since last spring to organize a relevant and exciting opportunity for social studies teachers, department chairs and administrators to gain new knowledge and exchange ideas and strategies to more effectively engage students. The conference theme, “C3 – Framework for the Future” will focus on the National Council for the Social Studies’ new document to prepare students for college, career and civic life based on inquiry in social studies. The conference will be held on Friday, October 25th at Central Connecticut State University. Please plan on attending and invite an administrator to register and join you. More information and the conference registration form are available in this issue of Yankee Post.

Past President John Tully, now serving as the CCSS Legislative Liaison, is continuing to lead our outreach efforts to reestablish history/social studies to its proper, prominent

(continued on page 2)
President’s Message continued

place in Connecticut’s schools. We have critical support from the Secretary of the State, a number of state legislators, and members of the State Board of Education. At last year’s CCSS Annual Dinner, Senator Blumenthal sent a representative to present citations to our award winners, recognizing the importance of the social studies in a well-rounded education. Our goal is to build on this important start and continue to make the case for the value of the social studies. Please watch for calls asking you to help us with this outreach effort.

These are exciting times for social studies teachers. Obviously, your excellent work in the classroom each day is the most significant thing you do for our students, tomorrow’s informed citizens. But public advocacy for the importance of the content and skills you teach is also critical. CCSS will lead this effort, but we need the help of every social studies teacher in Connecticut. If you are already a member of CCSS, thank you for your support. If you are not yet a member, please join your professional organization (membership form in this issue) and support the effort to help citizens understand the important work we do every day. We look forward to seeing you at the Fall Conference on October 25th.

Again, Happy New Year,
Dan Coughlin

President’s Message continued

Why is Senator John Larson spending time with Steve and Dave?
Check page 3

Join CCSS - See Membership Form - page 14

(Editors’ Note - continued) Ah, yes – conferences! Please make every effort to attend the CCSS fall conference on Friday, October 25. Registration forms are online at CTSocialStudies.org. It’s an important opportunity to share your ideas, learn from others, “network” and promote your profession. The C3 Standards will have an important place in the program. More information on the conference is available on page 6. And for those of you who plan ahead, NERC is set for Sturbridge on April 7-9.

Finally - and I will never get tired of saying this – CCSS, Social Studies, and Yankee Post need your support. Please do AT LEAST three of the following:
• Read this issue and then share it with a colleague,
• Join/rejoin CCSS and NCSS,
• Convince at least one other colleague to join CCSS and NCSS,
• Register for the Fall Conference,
• Write an article for Yankee Post. (Hey, you often tell your partner, friend, or parent about something neat you did in your classroom. How hard is it to tell your colleagues on these pages?).

And remember: you are the best advocate for the importance of social studies each and every day in your classroom. Have a great start to the year.

Tim thomas.weinland@uconn.edu
Steve Armstrong, President     National Council for the Social Studies

On Constitution Day, September 17 the National Council for the Social Studies will be officially releasing their C3 (College, Career, and Civic Life) national social studies frameworks. These frameworks were designed by representatives from a number of states and professional organizations. Their intent is to help states and districts who are looking to revise their state or district frameworks or curriculum documents. The C3 document maintains that there are four major social studies disciplines (history, geography, government/civics, and economics) and that the inquiry process is absolutely central for all social studies education. This is an exciting document, which has the possibility of greatly changing the teaching of social studies across the nation. If you are interested, the C3 document will be available on the National Council for the Social Studies website (www.socialstudies.org) on September 17.

I am very excited to report that the C3 document is being used to reform social studies instruction in Connecticut. As you know, the social studies frameworks have been in a “draft” form for several years. The state board of education has authorized a group of Connecticut social studies educators to revise the draft frameworks so that they can finally be approved by the Connecticut Board of Education, and this revision will be done through the lens of the C3 document.

Through the efforts of members of the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies, CCSS past-president John Tully, Dave Bosso, and I met last spring with several key members of the Connecticut legislature and with Secretary of the State Denise Merrill on the need for a legitimate social studies frameworks in our state and for the desperate need for a state social studies consultant. The three of us (along with Denise Merrill) gave a presentation to the state Board of Education on the need for a consultant and for the need for state frameworks. As a result of these efforts, the state frameworks committee is beginning their work, with the goal of having “official” social studies frameworks by the end of this academic year.

I am chairing this curriculum process. If you want any additional information about this process or about the C3 document please contact me (Steve_Armstrong@whps.org). I look forward to serving this year as president of the National Council for the Social Studies. I hope to see a number of you at the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies conference on October 25 or at the New England History Teachers Association conference on “Teaching the Vietnam War” on October 4. If you have questions or thoughts on ways that NCSS can better serve social studies teachers, please contact me.

Summer Leadership Conference

This past July, several members of the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies traveled to Washington, DC for the NCSS Summer Leadership Institute. Val McVey, Gene Stec, Carolyn Ivanoff, and David Bosso attended as delegates of CCSS, and Ed Dorgan represented the New England History Teachers Association. Steve Armstrong, President of NCSS, and Susan Griffin, NCSS Executive Director, opened the four-day conference with a session focusing on current issues facing the social studies and resolution writing, followed by a welcome reception. Other workshops included a valuable legislative briefing and Q&A with NCSS legislative expert, Catriona Macdonald, an overview of advocacy efforts in Connecticut, and ideas and strategies for state councils to frame and deliver their vision and concerns to policymakers. The role, importance, and potential of the C3 Frameworks were emphasized throughout, particularly during this time of major educational changes and the implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

The institute culminated with a day on Capitol Hill, where participants met with their respective senators and representatives in Congress. Each member of Connecticut’s delegation had the opportunity to speak with several of his or her representatives on behalf of the state of social studies, ESEA re-authorization, and other pressing concerns that continue to impact social studies education. The Summer Leadership Institute was made possible due to the support of Farmers Insurance, as well as the efforts put forth by NCSS Board members and leadership. For the Connecticut delegates, it was an exceptional opportunity to continue the political advocacy of CCSS, to network with other social studies professionals, and to ensure that our input is considered in the construction of policy that affects our work.

NCSS Summer Leadership Institute participants from CCSS at the Newseum; from L-R: Valerie McVey, Carolyn Ivanoff, Ed Dorgan (representing the New England History Teachers Association), Gene Stec, David Bosso, and Steve Armstrong.
Looking Back 50 Years: The Schempp Case
By Michael Matza, Inquirer Staff Writer Philadelphia Inquirer  POSTED: August 07, 2013

He was a 16-year-old junior at Abington Senior High School, just making a statement, utterly unaware that he was about to make legal history. It was in 1956 that Ellery Schempp staged the classroom protest that yielded Abington v. Schempp, the landmark 1963 U.S. Supreme Court decision banning mandatory Bible readings in public schools.

When Schempp's homeroom teacher read aloud 10 verses from the New Testament at the start of the day, as required by Pennsylvania law, Schempp brazenly paged through a Quran he had borrowed from a friend. When a student read the Lord's Prayer over the public address system, another daily requirement, Schempp refused to stand. Those actions earned him trips to the principal and guidance counselor, and triggered years of litigation over his belief that such readings were unconstitutional. At the time, Pennsylvania was among three dozen states that required such readings in public schools.

"When I started this protest, I had no idea it would lead to court, let alone the Supreme Court," Schempp, 72, a retired physicist now living near Boston, said in a recent interview on the court's decision, handed down on June 17, 1963. He looked back at what his dissent achieved and the price his family paid. "I thought it was pretty clear that the morning devotions were a religious practice" and therefore prohibited by the establishment clause of the First Amendment, which says government should not give preference to any particular religion, Schempp said. "I thought if I simply pointed that out, the grown-ups, they would fix it."

Instead, he incurred the wrath of school administrators. When they failed to act, Schempp, whose family practiced as Unitarian Universalists, sought legal representation by the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania. Along with his letter seeking the group's help, he enclosed a $10 donation. "Ten dollars at that time was probably $100 in today's money," Schempp said. (Actually, it would be $85.85.) "If a kid could save that from his grass-cutting and chores, then he really must be serious. It definitely played a role in getting their attention." The prominent civil-rights attorney Henry Sawyer, of the Drinker Biddle law firm, took the case and stayed with it for years. Like many key figures in the matter, including Abington school principal Eugene Stull, he has died.

Schempp, an honors student, was accepted at every college to which he applied. He chose Tufts University in Medford, Mass. But Stull was furious about the lawsuit, Schempp said, and tried to sabotage his applications with letters of "dis-recommendation." Years later, Schempp said, he learned from the dean of admissions at Tufts that Stull also called to express his disapproval. "In 1958 [a long-distance call] was a very big deal. He said Tufts had made a terrible decision and that I was the rotten apple in the barrel," Schempp said.

Schempp's dissent produced an avalanche of mail - about 5,000 letters to the family's house on Susquehanna Road in Roslyn. One-third were supportive, one-third politely argumentative, and one-third vile, including some smeared with excrement. "After I graduated from high school and went on to college, the case was moot in terms of me," he said, so his siblings, Roger, 18 months younger, and Donna, five years younger, were added to the suit as plaintiffs. Schempp said Roger was occasionally bullied in school and Donna was ostracized.

"Donna was particularly affected," Schempp said. "She was 12 or 13, a critical age, and wanted to just belong. Didn't want to be singled out. Some of her parents' friends told them not to play with Donna. Roger got shoved around a fair bit." Roger Schempp, a retired administrator with the nonprofit OIC of America, lives in Pennsauken. "I got a lot of the same treatment my sister got," he said in an interview. "But I quickly recognized that most of what I was getting was from the parents, passed through the kids. 'The school-bus pickup was near our house. When it passed the house, the kids shouted, 'Commie Camp,' everything under the sun. So I started walking to school."

When the Supreme Court finally ruled in 1963, Schempp's case was paired with another lawsuit brought by Madalyn Murray O'Hair, the founder of American Atheists, who objected to similar Bible readings in Maryland schools.

Even if his is not a household name, Ellery Schempp is proud of his legacy. And he chuckles at the fact that, many years later, he was admitted to the Abington alumni hall of fame, not for his stand as a protestor but for his contributions to science as a physicist. Of his choice to use the Quran in his dissent, he said, "It could have been the Bhagavad Gita. I didn't know a damn thing about Islam at the time, nor did anyone I knew. "My point was that the Holy Bible was not the only book of importance," he said. "There were other scriptures of equal importance."

Do our children know how to be citizens?
By Robert Pondiscio, Special to CNN Thu, July 4, 2013

Editor’s note: Robert Pondiscio is a former fifth grade teacher and the executive director of Citizenship First, a civic education organization based at Harlem’s Democracy Prep Public Schools.

(CNN) -- When you’re chowing down on hot dogs and hamburgers on this most patriotic of national holidays, try this experiment: Ask your friends and neighbors across the picnic table why they send their kids to school. Chances are good that nearly everyone you ask will give an answer that reveals a private, dollars-and-cents view of education. We want to see our kids go to college, get good jobs, earn a decent living and make something of themselves.

We send our kids to school and hope they grow up to lead happy, productive lives, and with luck wind up a little better off than their parents. For most of us, education is the engine of upward mobility. These private aspirations are as American as apple pie. But we send kids to school not just to become employees and entrepreneurs, but citizens capable of wise and effective self-government in our democracy. This public dimension of schooling was a founding principle of American education. We have all but forgotten it in the current era of education overhaul.

CIVICS QUIZ
In order to become a naturalized U.S. citizen, you must pass an oral exam on history, civics and geography. Here are some of the hardest questions on the U.S. Citizenship Test -- and the percentage of Americans who know the correct answers.

1. When was the Constitution written?   A: 1787 (9%)
2. The House of Representatives has how many voting members?   A: 435 (16%)
3. What is the rule of law?   Government must obey the law; no one is above the law. (15%)
4. Name two rights in Declaration of Independence.   A: Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (18%)
5. Under the Constitution, some powers belong to the states. What is one power of the states?   Provide schooling and education; provide protection (police) and safety (fire departments) issue driver’s licenses; and approve zoning and land use. (23%)
6. What does the judicial branch do?   Reviews or explains laws, resolves disputes, or decides if a law is unconstitutional (25%)
7. Who is the Chief Justice of the United States right now?   John Roberts (26%)
8. We elect a U.S. senator for how many years?   Six. (29%)
9. What is the supreme law of the land?   The U.S. Constitution. (29%)
10. How many justices are on the Supreme Court?   Nine. (32%)

This would strike our earliest thinkers about education as strange and foolish, even dangerous. Men like Benjamin Rush, Noah Webster and Horace Mann saw citizen-making as the most basic aim of education in our young nation. They understood that democracy is a historical long shot. Every young student used to learn the famous story about Benjamin Franklin leaving the Constitutional Convention in 1787. A woman asked him what kind of government he and the other delegates had decided on. “A republic, madam -- if you can keep it,” he replied.

Franklin and the framers of the Constitution knew republics had a nasty habit of being overwhelmed by factions and falling apart. Teaching children to understand, value and peaceably exercise their rights and responsibilities -- to keep the republic -- was indispensable to our democracy and could not be taken for granted. Where were those citizens, those “republican machines” in Benjamin Rush’s phrase, to be created if not in our schools?

We’ve drifted a long way from this view of public education. We typically hear the performance of America’s children in reading, math and science described as a crisis. But these are areas of strength compared with civics and history. One out of

(Continued on Page 6)
three U.S. eighth-graders score “proficient” or higher on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in reading, math and science. But only about one out of five eighth-graders is proficient in civics and history. The U.S. Department of Education is not alarmed. It recently announced future NAEP tests in civics, U.S. history and geography for fourth- and 12th-graders would be postponed indefinitely. A shocking 85% of Americans cannot correctly describe the “rule of law,” as bedrock a principle as we have. A similar percentage cannot identify the Constitution as the “supreme law of the land.”

Students who don’t know their rights don’t recognize when those rights are threatened. Students who don’t know how laws are made will never make or demand changes to them. Those who don’t understand their country’s history and traditions are less than second-class citizens. They are passive bystanders unprepared to participate in our democracy and disinclined to do so. One way or another, schools will shape our children as citizens. The question is whether we want them to do so by accident or neglect, or by thinking carefully about the civic knowledge, skills and republic-keeping mindset our children will need to nurture and maintain our democracy in the 21st century and beyond. There should be room, even in our test-driven, college and career focused classrooms, to cultivate an understanding and appreciation of America’s founding principles and documents, and how our government functions.

A sound, basic education can and should promote national identity, unity and loyalty without indoctrination. Developing pride in America’s history and ideals in no way conflicts with the goal of creating independent, free-thinking citizens in a pluralistic society. If our children are to keep the republic, they must understand and value the thing they are being asked to keep. For good or for ill, the education reform movement of the last few decades has achieved a nearly unquestioned consensus that the big picture goal of K-12 education is to ensure that all of America’s children leave school “college or career ready.” By all means, let’s prime the pump of our economic competitiveness with more college-goers, more science, math and technology graduates. Let’s ensure every child has a shot at a private piece of the American Dream. But let’s also make sure schools still perform the greatest possible public service: preparing our children to be the informed citizens a stable, self-governing country needs.


Dates to Remember

October 25 - CCSS Fall Conference
CCSU - New Britain  (see below)

November 22-24 - NCSS Annual Conference
St Louis

April 7-9, 2014 - NERC
Sturbridge, Mass

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CCSS - ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2013
CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY, NEW BRITAIN, CT

Mark your calendars. Do not miss this year’s Fall Conference. Professor, Kathy Swan, Project Director and Lead Writer of The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards will be the Keynote Speaker. The day will be full of meaningful and relevant workshops, exciting panel discussions, and noteworthy museum and publisher exhibits. Spend the day socializing with your colleagues, renewing old friendships, and learning about what others are doing within the field of Social Studies. Visit www.ctsocialstudies.org for Registration and Conference information.
As history teachers we are all familiar with the big names; the kings, queens, statesmen and warriors who have shaped our past. How many of us though, have considered the roles played and stories revealed by the likes of James Braddock (the Bergen Bulldog), the Mason Brothers of Hampshire, Germany’s Frau Haferkamp or James Maley from Glasgow? Ordinary people, whose lives and stories can open the window to extraordinary events.

The result of ignoring the stories of ordinary people is that pupils can develop a view of the past that is stereotypical and amorphous. We miss the opportunity to present the past in all its diverse complexity. We might miss a chance to create curiosity and allow students to see that the process of history is one in which we can all play a part. I have built historical enquiries around a range of my own personal stories and hope this article might offer other teachers some inspiration to do the same.

**Personal stories as a starting point**

When you’re getting started in sourcing your personal stories, my advice is to start close to home with your own family histories. On a basic level, simply creating family timelines which include members of your own or your students’ family can help to plug students in to the notion that the past is not some far off distant realm, but that people alive today are contemporaneous with events our students are studying. An example from my own family is as follows:

- **Myself, Neil:** Born 1970. The year the accused from the My Lai Massacre went on trial
- **Ian, my dad:** Born 1943 when the clearing of the Warsaw ghetto began
- **Irene, my gran:** Born 1923 on the day French and Belgian soldiers began the occupation of the Ruhr
- **James Hall, my great granddad:** Born 1893. The year the Independent Labour Party was launched

By showing students that members of their own families have lives running parallel to the big events, we do much to root our work not only in an historical context but in one which allows students to visualise the passing of time and our own temporal proximity to events. For further examples of this concept take a look at Ian Dawson’s site.

**Personal stories as windows on the past**

We all want our students to study and be curious about the big events of the past. It is my belief that personal stories can act as an effective window into these events. For example, the Spanish Civil War is an often neglected aspect of the rise of the European dictators, ditched in favour of Germany and sometimes fascist Italy. However, the stories of the International Brigades and the characters that fought with them can act as an excellent window into that conflict. My own work in this area was inspired by the song “These Hands” by Glasgow band The Wakes. The song, an integral part of the eventual enquiry, tells the story of Glaswegian James Maley and his part in the battle of Jarama.

By combining material from the song, James’ obituary and material from the International Brigade Memorial Trust, students are able to explore contemporary representations of the past, motives of individuals and the issue of typicality. More importantly, students come to care about the Spanish Civil War because they have come to care about the character and story of James Maley. A brief lesson plan for the enquiry can be found on the Ofsted best practice case study of the Hampshire History networks.

**Personal stories allow for parallels**

Having just completed an arduous trek through revision territory with my GCSE students I can testify that Roosevelt’s New Deal is often lacking in colour and, beyond the character of Roosevelt himself, personality. Once again, however, folk music and film came to the rescue. The story of James Braddock, the Cinderella Man, immortalised by Russell Crowe in the movie of the same name and in song by the Biblecode Sundays allowed me to ask students: “Was James Braddock’s life a metaphor for the US economy in the 1930s?” Having listened to the song and watched a short clip from the film, students are asked to create a timeline of the ups and downs of Braddock’s life. They then create a similar parallel timeline for the American economy in the 1920s and 1930s. By getting them interested in Braddock’s colourful character, students are much more receptive to studying the wider events and legislation of the Roosevelt era.

The personal story does have a genuine capacity to engage students and foster their curiosity about the past. I’ll finish with some words from Charlie Connelly’s excellent book *And Did Those Feet: Walking through 2000 Years of British and Irish History*: “The past is all around us, in the buildings, in the landscape, in the ground we walk on. It’s not in lists of monarchs or dates of battles that it truly comes alive; it’s in people and places. Everyone and everywhere has a story.”

Neil Bates is an Oxford University graduate and an advanced skills teacher with 17 years experience of teaching in Hampshire. He works at Fort Hill Community School. Neil has for the last 10 years been part of the Hampshire History Steering group, providing a range of CPD to teachers across the county.  

http://www.guardian.co.uk/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/jun/17/history-using-personal-stories-teaching-schools
Connecticut Students Win at National History Day

Connecticut’s History Day Coordinator, Rebecca-Taber Conover,

College Park, MD - Sixty-nine middle and high school students made Connecticut history as they represented our state at the prestigious National History Day Contest, which took place at the University of Maryland in College Park from June 10 to June 13. The students, who created exhibits, documentaries, papers, websites and performances showcasing historical research and analysis, competed with more than 2,700 students from across the country and ended the contest with seven awards for excellence. The four-day contest culminatd in a 3-hour Awards Ceremony on June 13. There were several Connecticut winners.

- Sam Porcello won 2nd place in Junior Individual Exhibit with his project *The Hartford Circus Fire: A 10 Minute Turning Point Sparks Lasting Change*. Sam is a student at Sedgwick Middle School in West Hartford.
- Madeline, Claire, and Emma Langdon won 2nd place in Junior Group Exhibit with their project *The Connecticut Effect: How the Hartford Circus Fire Changed the Nation*. They are students at Greenfield Hill Girls School in Fairfield.
- Pierce Barry, Annabel Barry, Quinn Barry, Isabella Altherr and Jaden Esse, won 3rd place for their Senior Group Performance, *The Tet Offensive: Turning Point in Vietnam, Turning Point in Journalism*. They are students at Pequot Home School in Southport.
- Timothy Cohn won the George Washington Leadership in History Prize (sponsored by Mount Vernon) with his exhibit, *Washington and the French: A Turning Point in the American Revolution*. Tim is a student at Pomperaug High School in Southbury.
- Rebecca Hill was awarded a four-year National History Day scholarship to the University of Maryland. She is a junior at Pomperaug High School.
- Nicholas Serrambana received the Senior Prize for Outstanding Connecticut Entry for his performance, *The Precedence of Evidence: Selection Prevails*. He is a student at Classical Magnet School in Hartford.
- Danielle Meyers and Abigail Davis received the Junior Prize for Outstanding Connecticut Entry for *Penicillin: The Miracle Drug of World War II*. They are students at Memorial Middle School in Middlebury.

Additionally, several Connecticut students were recognized as finalists at the National Contest:
- Jenna Fortunati and Margaret Mirabella, from Sacred Heart Academy in Hamden, for their documentary, *Martha Matilda Harper: The Start of Franchising*;
- Jonas Burkhard and Timothy Nolan, from E.O. Smith High School in Storrs, for their documentary, *A Country Held Hostage: The CIA in Iran 1953*;
- Erin McGrath, from Ellington High School, for her performance *Street Smarts: The World Thanks to Sesame Street*;
- Ben Freedman from Turn of River Middle School in Stamford for his paper *Microsoft Windows 95: The Software that Changed Personal Computing*;
- Jessie Xu from Bristow Middle School in West Hartford for her documentary, *Wangari Maathai: Inspiration for the World*.

The Awards Ceremony ended a busy week for students, parents, teachers and Connecticut’s History Day Coordinator, Rebecca-Taber Conover, Head of Public Programs and History Day for Connecticut’s Old State House. According to Taber-Conover, “We’ve had a whirl-wind week filled with great experiences. All of the students who have participated in History Day have worked hard, learned a lot, and made Connecticut proud.”

The students presented their projects to teams of judges, met fellow contestants, and participated in several special activities. U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal, who had attended the State Contest at Central Connecticut State University, met with the students to hear about their projects and experiences. The Connecticut delegation enjoyed private tours of the U.S. Capitol and the National Gallery of Art as well as a special National History Day Night at the Museum of American History. Each state nominated one project for display at the Museum and Sam Porcello’s project on the Hartford Circus Fire represented Connecticut.

The road to National History Day (NHD) usually begins in Connecticut’s classrooms and home schools where well over 2,000 students choose topics reflecting an annual NHD theme, conduct research and analysis and create an exhibit, performance, website, paper or documentary that shares their findings. Of these, 1,250 students competed in this year’s District Contests, with over 400 of winners going on to the State Contest, which sends first and second-place winners on to Nationals. History Day in Connecticut is one of 54 affiliate programs of National History Day, a renowned, year-long, academic program. A recent study by Rockman, et al found students who participate in National History Day develop a range of college and career-ready skills, and outperform their peers on state standardized tests in multiple subjects.

All of this is made possible by a strong collaboration among many of Connecticut’s history organizations who work with dedicated educators to help students develop critical thinking skills and a passion for learning and sharing history. A shared goal is to encourage a life-long interest in Connecticut’s rich stories, archives, historic buildings and museum collections. The collaboration is led by Connecticut’s Old State House and the Connecticut Historical Society, funded by Connecticut Humanities, and supported by the Connecticut League of History Organizations, Central Connecticut State University and scores of historical societies and civic groups who provide special prizes at the state level.
What Do We Mean by ‘Reading’ Maps?

By Phil Gersmehl

There are (at least) two ways to read a paragraph.

One way is to conceive of text as a repository of factual information. For example, if you want the date of an event, you can scan for a plausible four-digit number and write it down, confident that you have found “the answer.”

Try it. Here is a reading, and your challenge: In what year did Columbus sail across the Atlantic?

The Treaty of Granada ended nearly eight centuries of Muslim control of the Iberian Peninsula. After the treaty was signed, the Ottoman sultan recalled the fleet of Kemal Reis, ending the raids on Spanish coastal cities. This, in turn, allowed King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella to consider redeploying ships and soldiers formerly needed to defend coastal ports. It is no coincidence, therefore, that in 1492, shortly after the surrender of the last Muslim stronghold in Spain, they finally agreed to support the expedition proposed by Columbus.

A visual search for a date in this paragraph is easy and fast. There is, however, another way to read the paragraph, namely as an explanation of a causal relationship between geopolitical conditions and trans-Atlantic exploration. This requires the kind of “close reading” emphasized in the Common Core State Standards.

This dual view of reading exposes a serious issue with the common core. With its focus on language arts, its treatment of text is rightly expansive, requiring both simple and sophisticated reading. Its description of communication through charts, graphs, and maps, however, is ambiguous. Try to decide whether these statements from the common core’s English/language arts standards describe a simple (just-the-facts) or close reading of maps:

• Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur). (3rd grade)
• Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, ...); and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears. (4th grade)
• Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts. (6th-8th grades)
• Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text. (9th-10th grades)
• Translate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text into visual form (e.g., a table or chart). (9th-10th grades)
• In addition, the standards say that “historical, scientific, and technical texts” for grades K-5 should include “biographies and autobiographies; books about history, social studies, science, and the arts; technical texts, including directions, forms, and information displayed in graphs, charts, or maps.”

The bullet points above represent all uses of “map” and “chart” in the common-core English/language arts standards. The persistent ambiguity of the wording leaves the door open for either a restrictive or an expansive view of the process of “reading” maps: Is a map simply a repository of factual information about places, or is it a structured means of communicating ideas about spatial relationships?

In at least some cases, the use of maps in state assessments is not reassuring. Consider these examples from recent New York regents’ exams in 5th grade and 8th grade global history and geography:

• [Based on the map] Which product is grown in every Central American country except Belize?
  (A.) Coffee (B.) Cotton (C.) Bananas (D.) Sugar
  According to this map, New York was part of which group of the 13 colonies:
  (A.) New England colonies (B.) Middle Atlantic colonies (C.) Southern colonies
  • What conclusion is supported by the information on this map?
    (A.) Russia is dependent on imported oil. (B.) The United States exports little or no oil. (C.) South America exports more oil than Africa. (D.) Most of the oil from the Middle East goes to Japan.

This information is important, but obtaining it is the equivalent of searching a paragraph to find a date. The overwhelming majority of questions in assessments like the one above focus on facts obtained by decoding colors and symbols. The message of a map, however, is not just the meaning and location of individual symbols, but also their spatial relationships—the distances, directions, and topological relationships among features.

The irony is that recent neuroscience research has shed much light on the complexity of information-processing in the human brain. Rather than a single linear path toward “meaning,” the brain appears to have multiple, somewhat independent, and often parallel ways of making sense out of visual and other sensory input. In this view, there is no such thing as “a” spatial “intelligence.” On the contrary, the brains of expert map readers seem to have multiple and somewhat independent ways of analyzing a map—interpreting proximity, continued on page 10
("Reading Maps" continued from page 9)  

enclosure, position in spatial sequences, spatial associations with other features, and spatial analogies with other places. As with any form of expertise, it is often difficult for experts to explain to novices exactly what they do to perceive and organize information from a map. As a result, the process of gaining expertise can be slow and tortuous.

Map reading, however, is not just hard to teach; it is also important. Make a list of major issues in the world today—issues such as unemployment, racial or gender discrimination, deforestation, political polarization, terrorism, or climate change. Each of these issues has causes operating in some places and effects felt in other places, and those places are often connected in ways that demand a sophisticated spatial understanding to comprehend.

Failure to understand the spatial facets of issues leads to the policy nightmare encapsulated in the bumper sticker of the geographically ignorant: “It works for them, where they are, so it ought to work for us, here.” That ignorance can lead to one-size-fits-all policies that are appropriate in some places, but irrelevant or even counterproductive in others. In short, there is citizenship value in helping students learn how to acquire meaning as well as factual information from all modes of communication. The challenge, therefore, is to ensure that assessments developed for the common core actually require “close reading” of graphs, maps, and diagrams as well as text.

In that context, I suggest that a literal reading of the standards could support a restrictive view of maps and charts as mere repositories of factual information. The first examples of assessments, therefore, will be very important as models, as guides about what should be taught. Will they focus on equipping students to obtain and organize concepts about relationships as well as factual information from a variety of media? Or will schools cripple students by adopting an expansive view of written text as something that requires close reading, while maintaining a restrictive view of graphics as factual storehouses?

Expertise does not necessarily transfer to other domains. Indeed, expertise in text reading can actually make us less able to appreciate (or perhaps even conceive of) the way maps, graphs, and charts can communicate ideas that are difficult to express in words. It would be sad, indeed, if only one kind of expertise would be used to design assessments and determine whether curricular materials align with the common core.

Phil Gersmehl is a visiting research professor with the Michigan Geographic Alliance at Central Michigan University, in Mount Pleasant. He is the author of Teaching Geography, which has a third edition scheduled for publication in 2014, from the Guilford Press. He is also the director or co-director of several international curriculum projects, with partners in Russia, South Korea, Japan, Canada, and Brazil, and funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Science Foundation, the Japan-America Foundation, the Fund for Improvement of Postsecondary Education, NASA, and other sources.

http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/07/22/37gersmehl.html?tkn=QQCCsffrjN4HEqzMV3cLjguGQJrBmKGWk2mF&cmp=clp-sb-ascd

**Historians Defend Howard Zinn Against a Former Governor’s Critique**

By JENNIFER SCHUESSLER     The New York Times

JULY 29, 2013 | The historian Howard Zinn won a dubious prize of sorts last year when his best-selling “People’s History of the United States” came in second in an informal online poll to determine the “least credible history book in print.” But now some of Mr. Zinn’s strongest scholarly critics have rushed to his defense, following the revelation that former Gov. Mitch Daniels of Indiana had, while in office, sent e-mails to a state education official asking for assurance that Mr. Zinn’s “truly execrable, antifactual piece of disinformation” was “not in use” in Indiana classrooms.

Mr. Daniels, who is now president of Purdue University, posted a statement on the university’s Web site on July 17 saying that the e-mails, which were first reported by The Associated Press, “infringed on no one’s academic freedom and proposed absolutely no censorship of any person or viewpoint.”

Many scholars, however, were not reassured. The American Historical Association released a statement deploring “the spirit and intent” of the e-mails. An open letter signed by more than 90 Purdue professors criticized Mr. Daniels’s comments about Mr. Zinn (who died in 2010), noting, “Whatever their political stripe, most experts in the field of U.S. history do not take issue with Howard Zinn’s facts, even when they do take issue with his conclusions.”

Meanwhile, some scholars whose critiques of Mr. Zinn were cited by Mr. Daniels defended the historian — sort of. Michael Kazin, a professor at Georgetown University and the author of a blistering 2004 critique of “A People’s History,” posted a statement online saying Mr. Daniels “should be roundly condemned for his attempts to stop students from reading Zinn’s big book and for calling Zinn a liar.” And Sam Wineburg, a Stanford historian and the author of another critique, posted to Twitter calling Mr. Daniels’s e-mails “a shameless attempt to censor free speech.” In an interview with The Indianapolis Star, Mr. Wineburg said that he assigned Mr. Zinn’s book in his own classes. “This is not about Zinn, per se,” he said of the controversy. “This is about whether in an open democratic society we should be exposed — whether you’re in ninth grade or seventh grade or a freshman at Purdue — whether you should be exposed to views that challenge your own cherished view.”

Mr. Zinn appeared to get a vote of confidence from readers. “We typically see a sales increase for ‘A People’s History’ as the school year starts up,” his publisher, HarperCollins, said in a statement, “However, sales of the e-book have doubled in the week following the A.P. story.”

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**Symposium in Burlington, VT, Oct. 26: “The Hispanic Americas in World History”**

NERWA’s one-day fall symposium starts Saturday, 26 October 2013, 8:45 a.m., at Memorial Lounge, Waterman Building, on the Campus Green, the University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont. The symposium features a keynote address and four sessions. The day’s events will end at 5:00 p.m.

The keynote address by Felipe Fernández-Armesto, William P. Reynolds Professor of History, University of Notre Dame, is a special highlight. Anyone conversant with world history knows his rich contributions to the field; he has published thirty-three books and is well known as a stimulating (and entertaining) speaker. His address will focus on his current research and forthcoming book.

A program, a registration form, a downloadable flyer, and other details (including a list of nearby hotels as well as links to maps and directions) are available at <http://www.nerwa.org>. Lunch will be included in the registration fee of $25 for members, $45 for non-members, and $15 for matriculating students. Inquiries regarding the symposium may be e-mailed to Nicholas F. Russell, chairman of the Outreach Committee, at <nicholas.russell@tufts.edu>. 

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For more information visit rhokappa.socialstudies.org or call 301-588-1800 x 107 or e-mail at rhokappa@ncss.org.

Euro Challenge

History is currently being made in the Euro area. Would your students enjoy learning about it? If so, the Euro Challenge is the program for you! This FREE program for schools provides 9th and 10th grade students with an exciting opportunity to explore the economic and other issues facing the Euro area, propose solutions, and compete against other teams from across the United States. Student teams select and research one from a range of challenge issues such as the debt crisis in Greece, the challenges to growth in Italy, or the aging population in countries like Germany and present their findings during regional competitions in March. The top teams then compete in the national finals at the Federal Reserve Bank of NY in April. Winning teams earn monetary awards and a trip to Washington DC!

Now in its eighth year, this great program will help your students build analytical, critical thinking, problem solving, communications and team building skills, all relevant to the Common Core.

To register, visit www.euro-challenge.org/registration.html or contact Chelsea Ziobro at 212-421-2700 or cziobro@wise-ny.org for more information.

Professional Opportunities

*Register Now*

New England History Teachers Association Annual Conference

“TEACHING THE VIETNAM WAR: NEW APPROACHES, PERSPECTIVES, AND RESOURCES”

OCTOBER 4, 2013

DODD CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT, STORRS, CT

Click here to learn how to register:
http://nehta.org/conferences-events/fall/
Trumbull Model United Nations – Lite
Trumbull High School is sponsoring a Model United Nations Training Conference for Middle School Students. Workshops include Parliamentary Procedures, Writing Working Papers, and Public Speaking Skills. Practice Committee and Security Council workshops to be held in afternoon session. November 2, 2013, from 9:00am to 5:00 Pm. A $20.00 registration fee covers lunch and snacks. For additional information please contact Gene Stec and stecg@trumbullps.org.

First EVER! History Day Kick-Off
Saturday, October 5th, 9 AM to 1 PM
Connecticut’s Old State House, 800 Main Street, Hartford, CT

Need inspiration? ideas? information? Students, parents and teachers are invited to this lively introduction of the 2014 National History Day theme of Rights and Responsibilities in History. Explore potential topics with Central Connecticut State University historians, Dr. Matthew Warshauer and Prof. Stephen McGrath. Receive a copy of Connecticut topics related to this year’s theme (and where to go to research them!) from the Connecticut League of History Organizations. Discover research resources such as www.connecticuthistory.org. Participants will be able to view award-winning History Day projects and get research leads from local museums and archives. The workshop is FREE but please RSVP to Rebecca at historyday@cga.ct.gov by October 1.

Global Conversation Series
What is the World Affairs Council:
The World Affairs Council of Connecticut (WACCT) engages the Greater Hartford community in global issues and promotes greater understanding of the world. WACCT is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization. Established in 1924, it is a member of the World Affairs Councils of America, a network of nearly 100 councils that together comprise the largest global affairs nonprofit organization in the U.S.

About the Global Conversations Series:
The World Affairs Council Global Conversations Series focuses on critical global issues in a unique interactive conversation format. Each program will be held at the Mark Twain House Visitor Center in Hartford, CT from 5:30-7:30 pm. Each program will feature a networking reception prior to the program.

October 23, 2013 ISRAEL & PALESTINE: IS IT NOW OR NEVER? (PART 1)
5:30-7:30 p.m The Mark Twain House and Museum, 351 Farmington Ave, Hartford, CT
Members: $5.00 Non-Members: $10.00

November 5, 2013 ISRAEL & PALESTINE: IS IT NOW OR NEVER? (Part 2)
5:30-7:30 p.m. The Mark Twain House and Museum, 351 Farmington Ave, Hartford, CT
Members: $5.00 Non-Members: $10.00

December 3, 2013 BLACKOUT! ENERGY SECURITY IN CONNECTICUT AND AROUND THE WORLD
5:30-7:30 p.m. The Mark Twain House and Museum, 351 Farmington Ave, Hartford, CT
Members: $5.00 Non-Members: $10.00

February, 26 2014 UNDERSTANDING TODAY’S MUSLIM SOCIETIES: FACT VS. FICTION
5:30-7:30 p.m. The Mark Twain House and Museum, 351 Farmington Ave, Hartford, CT
Members: $5.00 Non-Members: $10.00

April 1, 2014 FIGHTING BELOW THE BELT: GLOBAL CYBER TERRORISM
Members: $5.00 Non-Members: $10.00
5:30-7:30 p.m. The Mark Twain House and Museum, 351 Farmington Ave, Hartford, CT

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