President’s Message

I hope your school year is off to a very successful start. While there are certainly challenges to deal with, there are many reasons for an outlook of optimism and excitement about the role of social studies in Connecticut classrooms. As social studies teachers, we know that one of the main purposes of the public schools – arguably, the main purpose is to develop informed, active citizens. Without an understanding of our world and the critical thinking skills that come from our social studies classrooms, our society “of the people, by the people and for the people” just doesn’t work. To state the obvious, in recent years, not everyone in our school systems has shared the belief that what happens in our social studies classrooms is important individually for our students and collectively for society.

But, things are changing! Our CCSS Public Affairs Committee’s efforts have helped change attitudes about the importance of the socials studies. We now have a Social Studies Consultant at the State Department of Education. The State Board of Education has adopted a policy statement.

Welcome back – to school and to reading Yankee Post (at least I hope you are reading it!). Last year ended on a high note for CCSS and Connecticut Social Studies. Unless you have been living in a cave since the Spring, you know that Steve Armstrong is now the Social Studies consultant for the State Department of Education. We now have a strong and informed advocate for social studies where it counts. As President Dan Coughlin will tell you, this advocacy is already having an impact on how social studies is viewed in Hartford.

Add to this development the pending approval of the new Social Studies Frameworks. Ah, yes, we can hear the comments now: “Same old song”, “Been hearing that promise for some time now.” With Steve in a position to guide formal approval, the prospects are good. Summer workshops have begun the process of familiarizing teachers with the Frameworks. Steve has important information on pages 3 and 11 - be sure to check it out.

And now the final item on the “good news” list. Plan to get to Boston for at least one day of the NCSS National Conference – Thursday to Sunday, November 20-23. We’ve said it before but it bears repeating: the national conference will never be closer than this fall; you can drive up and back for the day if you don’t want to pay hotel rates. This is not a time to sit on our professional hands.

• If you believe that interaction with colleagues on the widest possible level helps build one’s professional expertise, you should be there.
• If you believe that a strong representation from Connecticut social studies teachers builds respect for your field among administrators, board members, parents and voters, you should be there.

(continued on page 2)
President’s Message continued

clearly outlining the importance of social studies in a well-rounded education. And we look forward to the adoption of the newly revised Social Studies Framework this fall and the development of a companion document (written by Connecticut educators) to help school systems implement the new framework. Collectively, these developments show an understanding and appreciation for the importance of the social studies.

The NCSS C3 document released last year and the Connecticut draft framework based on the C3, not only deal with what students learn, but how they learn. Both documents stress the importance of inquiry. In many Connecticut social studies classrooms, students are regularly involved in examining a variety of primary and secondary sources to address a big question, solve a problem or make a decision. For these teachers, the C3 and new Framework focus on inquiry will be an affirmation of how their students learn history, geography, civics, economics and the other social studies every day. In other classrooms, however, this move toward engaging students in inquiry activities will be more of an instructional shift. Future workshops, including sessions at the NCSS Conference in Boston this November, will be devoted to helping teachers acquire and refine these inquiry teaching skills.

Increasingly, the teaching of social studies is being recognized as critical. It is up to each of us to make sure that this recognition is well deserved. When students leave a class arguing about an important issue, when a student shares an interesting activity from class with a parent, when an administrator sits in on a class and really gets engaged in an activity, or when students take informed, positive action outside of school based on something they learned in class, people see the value of the social studies in schools.

I hope you have a great year!

Dan

Summer workshops on the frameworks. For more information see pages 3 and 11.
From the State Department - Frameworks Update

The new social studies frameworks are almost completed and are ready to be considered by the state Board of Education! The completed versions of the K-5 frameworks have been submitted, thus completing the first phase of our work. Many of you have seen all or part of the frameworks; as you know they are based on the one-year-old C3 national social studies frameworks. A dedicated group of Connecticut educators created the K-High School state frameworks; their task was to add the Connecticut-specific content to the outline that was provided by C3.

Those who helped to create new state frameworks should be congratulated for their work. Connecticut is the very first state to create new state frameworks based on the C3 frameworks: other states are eager to see our final documents. Once the frameworks are approved, we will be conducting “roll out sessions” at various schools in the state. These will take place in late/afternoon early evening, and will give social studies teachers an opportunity to become thoroughly acquainted with the new frameworks. More details will be forthcoming after the frameworks are approved.

Social studies educators should be very excited that this year’s national NCSS conference will be held in Boston from November 21-23 (with some very exciting pre-conferences and tours on November 20). This is a rare opportunity for Connecticut teachers: seldom is the NCSS national conference in our own backyard. There will be numerous workshops and sessions on using the C3, on inquiry, and on countless other social studies topics. If you can go to a single social studies conference during the year, this is definitely the one to attend. Some of you may want to attend the Sunday morning session where Ken Burns is the featured speaker (this session is co-sponsored by the New England History Teachers Association). Hope to see you in Boston!

I am into the second month of my new job as social studies consultant for the Connecticut Department of Education, and I greatly enjoy the work (although I will admit that it is a little different working in a cubicle than going to a school every day). The most important part of my job is help social studies professionals in any way that I can. If I can be of any assistance to you, your department or your district please contact me at Stephen.Armstrong@ct.gov or at (860) 713-6706. Starting shortly we will be establishing a once-a-week Google Hangout session; for one hour a week social studies teachers will be getting together to discuss state frameworks, inquiry, or anything else they want to discuss. Details on that will also be forthcoming. I also invite you to attend a session that will take place on Wednesday, October 15 with educators and museum educators getting together to collaborate on ways that they can better work together. Museum educators want to connect to more teachers, and teachers want to utilize museums more effectively. This will be an opportunity for dialogue on making all of this happen! The event will take place at CCSU between 4:00 and 6:30, with details to be shared.

As you can see, there is a lot going on with social studies, and I am proud to be part of it. Again, contact me if you need assistance of any kind.

Steve

Stephen Armstrong
Social Studies Consultant
Connecticut Department of Education
Past President, National Council for the Social Studies
AUSTIN — Critics of the national Common Core standards for public schools urged the State Board of Education on Friday to prevent Texas schools from implementing a new Advanced Placement U.S. history course that they contend has been infiltrated by the standards.

Board member Ken Mercer, R-San Antonio, asked the board to delay the new AP history curriculum and test for at least a year while state officials determine whether they violate a 2013 law that prohibits the teaching of Common Core materials in Texas schools.

The general counsel for the Texas Education Agency indicated the board has no authority to block the exam. Other board members noted that the Common Core deals only with English and math. And a representative for the College Board, which administers the AP history curriculum and test, denied that either includes any Common Core materials.

Common Core is a national initiative that spells out what students in kindergarten through 12th grade should learn in English and math at each grade level. The initiative also seeks to make sure high school students are college- or career-ready upon graduation. The standards have been adopted by 45 states. Five others — including Texas — rejected them, arguing that states should decide their own education standards.

Republican lieutenant governor nominee Dan Patrick, who authored the bill that prohibits the use of Common Core standards in the state, offered his support to Mercer and others Friday, saying they were working to block the standards from being brought into Texas “via a backdoor.” “As lieutenant governor, I will fight to ensure that Texas continues to educate students with our own high-quality standards, rather than national mandates pushed by special interests,” Patrick said in a written statement.

Board member Mavis Knight, D-Dallas, questioned the accusations about the new AP materials and test. She asked for specific examples of how the Common Core will “infiltrate” U.S. history classes.

Mercer responded that many important people and events in U.S. history were not covered in the materials. Further, he said, the materials too often focus on negative aspects of capitalism rather than its positive attributes.

Social conservative Alice Linahan, a media consultant and leader of the group Women on the Wall, said College Board President David Coleman is the “mastermind” behind the Common Core standards and is trying to align products produced by his company, such as the AP tests and the SAT, with the standards.

Debbie Pennington of the College Board denied that. She disputed the assertion that the new standards are just now being sent to teachers and schools, pointing out they were first unveiled in 2012. Further, she said, hundreds of teachers in Texas have been going to training sessions on the new AP standards this summer.

Several board members indicated they want to move forward at their next meeting on a new rule emphasizing that Texas curriculum standards for U.S. history be covered in the AP classes. Board Vice Chairman Thomas Ratliff, R-Mount Pleasant, asked for a rule that would require all AP classes in Texas to cover the state-approved curriculum standards.

As Gates was working his way through the [Teaching Company’s “Great Courses”] series, he stumbled upon a set of DVDs titled “Big History”—an unusual college course taught by a jovial, gesticulating professor from Australia named David Christian. …“Big History” did not confine itself to any particular topic, or even to a single academic discipline. Instead, it put forward a synthesis of history, biology, chemistry, astronomy and other disparate fields, which Christian wove together into nothing less than a unifying narrative of life on earth. … Christian had subsequently divided the history of the world into eight separate “thresholds,” beginning with the Big Bang, 13 billion years ago (Threshold 1), moving through to the origin of Homo sapiens (Threshold 6), the appearance of agriculture (Threshold 7) and, finally, the forces that gave birth to our modern world (Threshold 8).

Christian’s aim was not to offer discrete accounts of each period so much as to integrate them all into vertiginous conceptual narratives, sweeping through billions of years in the span of a single semester. A lecture on the Big Bang, for instance, offered a complete history of cosmology, starting with the ancient God-centered view of the universe and proceeding through Ptolemy’s Earth-based model, through the heliocentric versions advanced by thinkers from Copernicus to Galileo and eventually arriving at Hubble’s idea of an expanding universe. In the worldview of “Big History,” a discussion about the formation of stars cannot help including Einstein and the hydrogen bomb; a lesson on the rise of life will find its way to Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey. …

Gates … found himself marveling at the class’s ability to connect complex concepts. “I just loved it,” he said. “It was very clarifying for me. I thought, God, everybody should watch this thing!” [Gates arranged to meet with Christian]….After a bit of small talk, Gates got down to business. He told Christian that he wanted to introduce “Big History” as a course in high schools all across America. He was prepared to fund the project personally, outside his foundation, and he wanted to be personally involved. …

In 2011, the Big History Project debuted in five high schools, but in the three years since, Gates and Christian — along with a team of educational consultants, executives and teachers, mostly based in Seattle — have quietly accelerated its growth. This fall, the project will be offered free to more than 15,000 students in some 1,200 schools, from the Brooklyn School for Collaborative Studies in New York to Greenhills School in Ann Arbor, Mich., to Gates’s alma mater, Lakeside Upper School in Seattle. And if all goes well, the Big History Project will be introduced in hundreds of more classrooms by next year and hundreds, if not thousands, more the year after that. … Last month, the University of California system announced that a version of the Big History Project course could be counted in place of a more traditional World History class, paving the way for the state’s 1,300 high schools to offer it.

….True to Christian’s original style, however, the high-school course links insights across subjects into wildly ambitious narratives. The units begin with the Big Bang and shift to lesson plans on the solar system, trade and communications, globalization and, finally, the future. … A lecture on the slave trade might include the history of coffee beans in Ethiopia.

Diane Ravitch, an education historian at New York University who has been a vocal critic of Gates, put even it more starkly: “When I think about history, I think about different perspectives, clashing points of view. I wonder how Bill Gates would treat the robber barons. I wonder how Bill Gates would deal with issues of extremes of wealth and poverty.” (The Big History Project doesn’t mention robber barons, but it does briefly address unequal distribution of resources.) Ravitch continued: “It begins to be a question of: Is this Bill Gates’s history? And should it be labeled ‘Bill Gates’s History’? Because Bill Gates’s history would be very different from somebody else’s who wasn’t worth $50-60 billion.” (Gates’s estimated net worth is approximately $80 billion.)

Sam Wineburg, a professor of education and history at Stanford, told me that although he sees Big History as “an important intellectual movement,” he did not consider the class to be a suitable replacement for an actual history course. “At certain points, it becomes less history and more of a kind of evolutionary biology or quantum physics. It loses the compelling aspect that is at the heart of the word ‘history.’ ” Wineburg’s deepest concern about the approach was its failure to impart a methodology to students. “What is most pressing for American high-school students right now, in the history-social-studies curriculum, is: How do we read a text? How do we connect our ability to sharpen our intellectual capabilities when we’re evaluating sources and trying to understand human motivation?” he asked.…. 

[Alyce]Barr, the principal in Brooklyn, however, came to feel that Gates’s course was better than the existing alternative. “If you were to interview many, many progressive social-studies teachers, they would tell you that World History is a completely flawed course. It’s spotty. It’s like fact soup…. ‘So I said, ‘Why are we doing this?’ ” Last year, Barr allowed the Big History Project to replace World History, which is known as Global Studies in New York, as a required course.....
The New History Wars
By JAMES R. GROSSMAN  The New York Times  SEPT. 1, 2014

WASHINGTON — WITH the news dominated by stories of Americans dying at home and abroad, it might seem trivial to debate how history is taught in our schools. But if we want students to understand what is happening in Missouri or the Middle East, they need an unvarnished picture of our past and the skills to understand and interpret that picture. People don’t kill one another just for recreation. They have reasons. Those reasons are usually historical. Last month, the College Board released a revised “curriculum framework” to help high school teachers prepare students for the Advanced Placement test in United States history. Like the college courses the test is supposed to mirror, the A.P. course calls for a dialogue with the past — learning how to ask historical questions, interpret documents and reflect both appreciatively and critically on history.

Navigating the tension between patriotic inspiration and historical thinking, between respectful veneration and critical engagement, is an especially difficult task, made even more complicated by a marked shift in the very composition of “we the people.” This fall, whites will constitute a minority of public-school students in the United States. “Our” past is now more diverse than we once thought, whether we like it or not.

It turns out that some Americans don’t like it. A member of the Texas State Board of Education has accused the College Board of “promoting among our students a disdain for American principles and a lack of knowledge of major American achievements,” like those of the founding fathers and of the generals who fought in the Civil War and World War II. The Republican National Committee says the framework offers “a radically revisionist view” that “emphasizes negative aspects of our nation’s history.” Stanley Kurtz, in National Review, called it “an attempt to hijack the teaching of U.S. history on behalf of a leftist political and ideological perspective.” Disagreement is not a bad thing. But learning history means engaging with aspects of the past that are troubling, as well as those that are heroic. There was a time, for example, when historians didn’t worry much about the slave trade and the emergence of an economy based on forced labor. Historians likened the plantation to a “school,” and emancipated people as children let out of class too soon. Only slightly more than a half-century ago, historians began to “revise” that narrative, examining sources previously ignored or unseen, informed by new ideas about race and human agency. More recently, scholars have revised 19th-century images of the “vanishing Indian,” a wildly inaccurate narrative that lives on in public monuments and popular lore, and has implications for public policy.

This essential process of reconsideration and re-evaluation takes place in all disciplines; imagine a diagnosis from a physician who does not read “revisionist” medical research. Revisionism is necessary — and it generates controversy, especially when new scholarship finds its way into classrooms. But debate over what is taught in our schools is hardly new. Part of the logic underlying the creation of Catholic schools in 19th-century America had to do with a public-school curriculum that took a distinctly Protestant view of religious conflicts and cultural values. Since the early 20th century, battles have been waged over the relative place of “history” and “civics” in public education, a dichotomy that many professional historians don’t even accept.

In 1994, Lynne Cheney, a former chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, pronounced the results of a congressionally mandated set of national standards in American history “grim and gloomy,” distorted by “political correctness,” and deficient for paying too much attention to the Ku Klux Klan and McCarthyism and too little to Robert E. Lee and the Wright brothers. The latest accusations arise from belief born of assumption rather than careful reading. The document is not a curriculum; in the words of David Coleman, president of the College Board, “it is just a framework, requiring teachers to populate it with content required by their local standards and priorities.” Those who assume that America’s founders are neglected seem not to have actually read the material. The Declaration of Independence stands front and center alongside the Constitution in the section devoted to “experiments with democratic ideas and republican forms of government,” including those of France, Haiti and Latin America. The framework makes clear that these “new ideas” included evangelical religion.

The framework even makes a bow to American exceptionalism — noting “the emergence of distinctly American cultural expressions” in the new republic and declaring that “the United States developed the world’s first modern mass democracy.” For good measure, one can find Washington’s farewell address — not to mention the Articles of Confederation, state constitutions, the Emancipation Proclamation and the Four Freedoms — in both the curriculum framework and the sample exam released by the College Board.

The critics are unhappy, perhaps, that a once comforting story has become, in the hands of scholars, more complex, unsettling, provocative and compelling. And there’s the rub. Fewer and fewer college professors are teaching the United States history our grandparents learned — memorizing a litany of names, dates and facts — and this upsets some people. “College-level work” now requires attention to context, and change over time; includes greater use of primary sources; and reassesses traditional narratives. This is work that requires and builds empathy, an essential aspect of historical thinking.

The educators and historians who worked on the new history framework were right to emphasize historical thinking as an essential aspect of civic culture. Their efforts deserve a spirited debate, one that is always open to revision, rather than ill-informed assumptions or political partisanship.


New History Wars, or History Repeating Itself?

- In “The New History Wars” (Op-Ed, Sept. 2), James R. Grossman, executive director of the American Historical Association, argues that critics of the new “curriculum framework” for the Advanced Placement history course do not want students to learn to think critically about history. Instead, he knocks down a straw man when he claims that the critics call the framework unpatriotic and meant to lead to a culture war conducted by the right wing. Contrary to Mr. Grossman’s assertion, the proposed framework is in fact heavily biased and presents history from a strong left-wing viewpoint. Rather than necessary revisionism, the proposals politicize history in precisely the fashion to which Mr. Grossman claims to object. He says disagreement is not “a bad thing.” But he implies that the critics are all conservative kooks, and hence should be ignored. Is this really the way to further debate on new educational policies?

- I think sometimes the “revisionists” do themselves an injustice in that they sort of accept the narrative of the Lynne Cheneys that their findings always shine a harsher light on our historical heroes. I’ve been much more impressed at the challenges faced by Washington at war and Jefferson and Adams in Philly during the “ninth month” of our country’s gestation. These dudes had guts, which the Brits and the Loyalists would have been only too happy to eviscerate. Our more current knowledge of Lincoln’s actual set of intractable challenges, from slave owning secessionists to his tetchy “team of rivals,” has raised my esteem, not lowered it. Coupled with the physical and mental health issues he was battling, his bravery and steadfastness become monumental. I venture to say that “revisionism” can burnish the truly exceptional mettle of those we revere much more than it serves to dent or dim.

- Good citizenship requires engaging with the darker side of American History as well as the brightest lights of American achievement. We need to get past the Puritan assumption that a person/people/country can be categorized as good or evil. We are a complex people, simultaneously capable of great good and great evil, and our capacity for good and evil grow in direct proportion to each other. One of the greatest gifts of the founding fathers was to recognize humanity’s feet of clay and construct structural safeguards in our constitution to act as curbs and warning signs to the worst of the excesses that historical governments had committed in the name of their majorities. Perhaps we should engage our history in terms of corresponding periods of light and darkness; how the energy to bring about great achievement also brought about corresponding dislocation, displacement and suffering.

- Some of this article and the associated comments are quite true and reflect the short, albeit fascinating history of this country, warts and all. The problem, as I see it, though, is with those people who seem to take glee in portraying our history as pretty much all bad, and bad in a unique way. Take slavery, for example. There is absolutely no defending it, now or then, although as a purely economic model of the 17th century one sees the perverse appeal of it to those of that era. It must be taught, but with a global context. From some modern day comments on it, however, you would think slavery originated in America, was only practiced here, and we were the worst nation on earth, ever, for it. That’s not a defense of slavery, to be sure, but the purpose of its telling should not be to simply “blame America”, an attitude sadly evident by a vocal cadre of academics and citizens. We know slavery is an ancient evil, was practiced even in Africa and is still a stain on humanity in some areas today. In other words, tell the facts of it without using it to say, “see how bad America is/was”. Similarly with government history and civics. One reason people seem so frustrated with our governance today is many just don’t understand how things are set up or intended to be, for we don’t teach it much anymore. Thus citizens can’t name the branches of government, know what the president is actually supposed to do not not, etc. All of that works against us.

- When I studied history in school (mid-60s), I learned from a maverick history teacher who believed unalterably that history consists not of names and dates, but of cause and effect. He expected us to learn the names and dates (for the NYS History Regents exam) ourselves. Instead, he devoted time in the classroom and class projects to examining and debating questions of why and how, never shying away from the fact that our historical heroes indeed had feet of clay. Examining trends and motivations also uncovered facts (many of them quite illuminating) that most students never learned about. That comprehensive view of the subject is the primary reason that to this day I still find history fascinating, sometimes peppered with more than a touch of irony…. He forced us to UNDERSTAND history. I consider myself and my classmates extremely lucky. I hope that the new framework intends to move in that direction. It can only enhance students’ understanding of what history really means.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

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SEARMONT, Maine — When Josephine Knight was 16 or 17 — she was never quite sure the exact date of her birth — she began a diary. The feisty Searsmont schoolteacher kept that diary from 1885 until 1888, writing just about every day in delicate, spidery handwriting about her home, her students, her community and beyond. Although Knight died in 1938, her words and adventures live on, thanks to the efforts of many in this small Waldo County town, including the third grade class.

On Tuesday, the excited pupils presented a hardcover book with excerpts from the diary that they carefully illustrated. “Josephine would be so proud,” Amy Robbins-Wilson, Knight’s distant cousin, said of the children’s project at a ceremony held at the Searsmont Historical Society Museum. “She was a teacher. She’d be thrilled to know her words are still teaching, years and years after she passed away.” Robbins-Wilson said that when her own grandmother died, the original diary came to her, and she laboriously transcribed all the entries over the course of a decade. Last summer, she self-published “The Diary of Josephine Knight, the life of a teenage girl in Maine” and got copies to the principal and third grade teacher of the Ames School in Searsmont. Principal Laura Miller and teacher Karen Craig-Foley loved it and thought it was a natural fit for the third-grade curriculum. “This really encompasses the history of the area,” Miller said.

Knight lived with her Civil War veteran father, mother and siblings at their Searsmont home and taught music all over the area. She went on sleigh rides to Rockland in the wintertime and took the stagecoach to Belfast to see the circus. She wrote of gypsies passing through town, deaths at sea and of the American Indians who sold their wares around the region. She also had a lot of fun in Searsmont, where people would gather for dancing school, musical evenings and all kinds of social events.

Knight stopped writing in her diary shortly after she took a ferry from Belfast to Boston, where she took in cultural highlights and came home feeling like she’d really seen something. “I have traveled to Boston and back, so I will not die a fool,” she said.

On Tuesday at the museum, the 42 third graders held the original drawings they had done for their book and were happy to tell everyone what their scenes depicted. Halle Tripp, 8, of Searsmont illustrated part of Knight’s diary where she described having a dream that she was being thrown out a window at school by two boys who were bigger than her. “I think she had an amazing life, and I would want to be her,” Tripp said. “I really like history.”

Michael Ham, 10, of Morrill drew a picture that showed Knight at a bonfire on the ice in the wintertime. A 9-year-old boy from Belfast who gave his name only as Kayden drew Knight using a wheelbarrow to bring her books back home on the last day of school. “I really liked her diary,” Kayden said, adding that he learned things about the past, such as how often people went to dancing school. “It was a very fun project to do.”

Craig-Foley said the students used the diary to study everything from geography to history to math. They connected Knight’s diary to all the subjects in the Common Core, she said, and even though she wrote it many years ago, it is still relevant to modern children, who could relate to her entries about having conflicts with her parents. “Mostly I loved the energy that the children brought to the project and to making connections in their modern lives that helped them understand Josephine’s life,” she said.

The students worked on the project for two months, and so far, Craig-Foley has had a handful of copies of the 101-page illustrated diary published. They’ll go to the third grade classrooms, the school library and the town of Searsmont, which has seen many changes since the days when the teenaged Knight taught school. Back then, it was a town of 1,600 known for a proliferation of lumber mills and as a busy way station on the stagecoach route from Augusta to Belfast. By 1960, Craig-Foley said the population had dropped to 600.

Norman Withee of the Searsmont Historical Society said he appreciated the enthusiasm and care that the children had for the book project. “They did a wonderful job,” he said. For more information about Josephine Knight’s diary, visit http://josephineknightdiary.wordpress.com/. The students’ work is scheduled to be included there soon. The children’s book also can be checked out at the Searsmont town library, located in the town municipal building on Route 131.

http://bangordailynews.com/2014/06/10/living/students-use-teens-diary-from-1800s-to-study-illustrate-history-of-searsmont/
HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — Unions and their allies are trying to flex their muscle in state legislatures, pushing for labor history to be included in social studies curriculum and hoping a new generation of high school students will one day be well-educated union members. But the results are instead shaping up as a reminder of the tough political landscape faced by organized labor.

In six states, opponents have pushed back against demands that teachers offer lessons about the first craft unions in the 19th century, the large-scale organizing drives that powered the growth of industrial unions in the 1930s, the rise of organized labor as a political machine and other highlights of America’s union movement. California and Delaware are the only states with laws that encourage schools to teach labor history.

Kevin Dayton, a policy consultant to non-union construction companies in California, said the legislation was pushed by unions to boost their ranks. “They believe that one of the reasons young people are not organizing in unions is because they’re not taught in schools the benefits of being in a collective workforce,” he said.

Ed Leavy, secretary-treasurer of teachers union AFT Connecticut, said the opposite is the case: “It’s not that labor unions are demanding this so we can increase the ranks. It’s people preventing this so we don’t.” The legislation proposed in Connecticut was benign, Leavy said. It would have helped teachers with resources such as textbooks and instruction guides.

Steve Kass, a member of the executive board of the Greater New Haven Labor History Association and a backer of the legislation, said Connecticut’s legislation could have bolstered the union cause. “We’re losing a generation of workers who don’t have an understanding about the union movement,” he said.

The measure failed this year for a third consecutive time even after supporters agreed to a compromise to include lessons in the history of capitalism. Opponents had many arguments against the measure. Joshua Katz, a math teacher at the Oxford Academy in Westbrook, told lawmakers that decisions about curriculum belong to teachers and students, not the legislature. “In general, I’m opposed to all of this top-down legislation,” he said.

The state’s largest business group, the Connecticut Business and Industry Association, said the legislation would have diverted resources from teaching core curriculum and closing the state’s achievement gap. And although backers say the legislation would not have required schools to teach labor history, Robert Labanara, state relations manager at the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, said the state Board of Education would have been ordered to help and to encourage school boards to include the history of labor and capitalism in curriculum. That’s less benign than it appears, he said. “It’s not uncommon in Connecticut to see this inch-by-inch law,” he said. “It’s one thing one year and becomes more of a financial and administrative burden down the road.”

Various versions of labor history legislation have failed over the years in Illinois, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Tennessee, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Legislation also failed calling for labor history and collective bargaining to be taught in Vermont. The Connecticut Legislature has already enacted measures requiring the state Board of Education to help and encourage local schools to provide curriculum materials for lessons about the Irish famine, African-American history and Holocaust studies.

Steve Armstrong, president of the National Council for the Social Studies and a West Hartford teacher, says squeezing another course into an already crowded school year could be difficult. “It would be great if we can teach six weeks on the Irish potato famine, but it ain’t going to happen,” he said.

To Leavy, labor history could introduce students to early labor leaders such as Eugene V. Debs in addition to industrialists who are familiar to most Americans. “You hear Rockefeller, you hear Vanderbilt,” he said. “You don’t hear Debs. The world is bigger than this.”

http://bigstory.ap.org/article/unions-push-legislatures-labor-history-courses

Pass It On #2

Have an exciting new course? Been to a great summer workshop? Write it up and send to Yankee Post. Contact the editor at thomas.weinland@uconn.edu
Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

- Robert F. Kennedy

As part of its initiative to promote Human Rights Education in Connecticut classrooms, the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center at the University of Connecticut is partnering with the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights to introduce teachers to the Speak Truth To Power (STTP) human rights curriculum. This two-day workshop will provide participants with training in STTP lessons, resources, and projects, along with guidance in integrating the curriculum into district and school-level standards.

**Workshop Includes:**
- Review of human rights education concepts and standards
- Introduction to the Defenders Curriculum and STTP online resources
- In-depth training in 3-4 selected Defender Lessons
- Collaborative work to develop course-specific lesson plans

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One Univerity Place
Stamford, CT

*Teachers unable to participate in both days may attend the Oct. 17 session only. Teachers participating in both days will receive certification as STTP Lead Teachers.

Workshop is free of charge and open to enrollment by pre-service and in-service teachers of all grades and content areas. Workshop examples and tools will be most appropriate to Language Arts and Social Studies teachers at the middle and high school level. Registration is limited.

To apply or for more info visit
http://thedoddcenter.uconn.edu/k-12-education/
State Department of Education Activities

The creation of Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks is near completion. We would like to invite you and/or your colleagues to a session at Central Connecticut State University on Monday, September 29, where the final drafts of the frameworks will be shared; we would love to have final comments on these frameworks. We have frameworks K-12 that we would love to have you review. The meeting will take place from 4:00-6:30 at CCSU.

I would like to invite pre-service teachers to attend this session. The viewpoints of those just entering the field are essential.

I would also like to announce that beginning on Sunday, October 5 there will be a “Google Discussion” for social studies educators every Sunday night from 8:00-9:00. We will be on every Sunday night at that time: social studies teachers can post (and receive responses) on inquiry, the frameworks or anything else they want to talk about. Pre-service teachers are especially invited to take part in these sessions as well. More details forthcoming.

On October 15 we are also having a session where a group of museum educators and teachers will be getting together to discuss ways to foster teacher/museum collaboration. Museum educators are incredibly excited about this meeting. It will also be from 4:00-6:30 at CCSU.

Stephen Armstrong
Social Studies Consultant     Stephen.Armstrong@ct.gov
Connecticut Department of Education
Past President, National Council for the Social Studies

NHD Resources at the Library of Congress: Leadership and Legacy in Baseball History

Participants gain skills and experience locating and identifying digitized sources from the Library’s web site and utilizing them to support student inquiry. Legacy and Leadership in Baseball History is this year’s example theme.

Tuesdays    September 30th - November 4th   5:00 - 7:00 pm (online)
- Real-time facilitated chat sessions
- Independent project development
- Check out projects from previous participants

NOTE: This is an advanced TPS workshop for educators of grades 6-12. If you have not yet completed TPS Level I, during registration you will be asked to complete a 12-hour independent online course before the start date. Further information provided upon registration.

Register here: https://forms.waynesburg.edu/machform/view.php?id=368156

Professional Opportunities

Be part of the action.
Attend one of the workshops:
Social Studies Frameworks or
Teacher/Museum Collaboration
Professional Opportunities

NCSS Conference Preview: For Your Consideration

Stephen Armstrong, David Bosso, Carolyn Ivanoff, Gene Stec, and John Tully, each a member of the CCSS Board of Directors, will be presenting two separate one-hour sessions at the 94th NCSS Annual Conference in Boston.

On Friday morning, November 21st, the group’s session, entitled, “Enhancing Your Council’s Advocacy Efforts: Connecticut’s Success Story,” focuses on the history, challenges, goals, and strategies of the recently intensified and successful public advocacy efforts in support of Social Studies education in Connecticut. Members of state councils interested in enhancing the status and political clout of their respective organizations will benefit from this session, as will Connecticut educators who want to know more about recent events in our state.

The session for Saturday afternoon is entitled, “Using the C3 to Revise State Frameworks: Connecticut’s Transition.” Using Connecticut’s experience as a model, the presentation will familiarize participants with the process of using C3 as a tool by which their respective state frameworks can be re-examined and revised. Any educator interested in learning more about how the C3 Frameworks have facilitated state-level framework revision should considering attending this informative session.

In addition to a late-March national webinar, “State Level Social Studies Advocacy: Connecticut’s Experience,” with John Tully and David Bosso serving as panelists, these two sessions at NCSS and many other endeavors of the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies demonstrate the ways by which Connecticut has emerged as a national leader and example for the empowerment of teachers and students in our Social Studies classrooms.
CONFERENCE SPEAKERS:

Opening Keynote Speaker:
Dr. Aidan McQuade, Director of Anti-Slavery International, United Kingdom

Closing Keynote Speaker:
Ms. Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, United Nations
Ms. Irina Alkhovka, Chair, La Strada International (LSI), Europe
Ms. Holly Austin Smith, Author and Survivor, USA
Ms. Jean Enriquez, Executive Director of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Philippines
Ms. Jennifer Gentile Long, Director, AEquitas: The Prosecutors' Resource on Violence Against Women, USA
Ms. Florence George Graves, Journalist and Founding Director, Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism, Brandeis University, USA
Mr. Siddharth Kara, Author and Lecturer in Public Policy at Harvard Kennedy School, USA
Dr. Jacob Mofokeng, Department of Safety and Security Management, South Africa
Dr. Iyabo Obasanjo, Distinguished Fellow at the African Presidential Center of Boston University, Nigeria
Dr. Marie Segrave, Advocate and Researcher, Australia
Ms. Erin Siegal McIntyre, Activist and Award-Winning Journalist, Brandeis University

CONFERENCE CO-SPONSORS:
Lawyers Without Borders, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, Office of Global Affairs, Human Rights Institute, Residential Life, Student Health Services, Women’s Center

Note: If you wish to bring students to this event, contact unescochairintern@uconn.edu

Reminder
The NCSS National Conference in Boston is the only large conference for Social Studies in New England this academic year - 2014-15

No CCSS conference in October
No NERC next Spring

We hope to see you in Boston
Don't miss the History Day Kick-Off Workshop!
Saturday, September 27, 2014
Connecticut's Old State House - Hartford, CT

Teachers, students and parents are encouraged to participate in this half-day workshop! Get excited and prepared for the History Day experience!

9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. View winning projects from 2014, meet staff and volunteers from CT’s many heritage organizations and enjoy light refreshments.

10:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. What is leadership?
Mary Barnaby, CEO of Girl Scouts of CT

10:30 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. Leadership & Legacy in CT
Steve McGrath

11:15 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. CT Research Resources & Topic Ideas
Rebecca Taber-Conover, State Coordinator

11:30 a.m. - Noon Unlocking the ‘Secrets’ of Special Collections
Barbara Austen, Connecticut Historical Society

Noon - 1:00 p.m. Ready? Set? Begin!
Sharon Wlodarczyk & Jennifer Hunt, NHD Teachers

1:00 p.m. - 1:15 p.m. Time for Q & A
Rebecca Taber-Conover, State Coordinator
Membership in CCSS entitles you to:

- Reduced Registration for the CCSS Fall Conference
- Reduced Registration for the Northeast Regional Conference for the Social Studies (NERC)
- Convenient access to the Yankee Post, the CCSS online newsletter
- Opportunity to apply for ‘mini-grants’ of up to $500 for innovative curriculum in social studies and other special projects
- Opportunity to meet colleagues and develop a network of professional friends and associates
- Ability to keep up-to-date with developments in the social studies.

If you have always wanted to become a member of NCSS, now is the time to act. New membership subscriptions to NCSS will also give you membership benefits from Connecticut Council for the Social Studies for one year—a $20 savings. This offer applies to only new NCSS Regular or new Comprehensive members only who send in their form to CCSS. Joint member benefits include:

- All CCSS benefits
- Regular and Comprehensive membership in NCSS includes a subscription to Social Education or Social Studies and the Young Learner
- NCSS Comprehensive membership also includes all bulletins published during the membership year.

Please complete membership form. Make checks payable to CCSS and mail this form to CCSS, P.O. Box 5031, Milford, CT 06460.

Name______________________________________email_________________________________
Home Address___________________________City_________________State_______Zip______
School Name_____________________________________________________________
School Address__________________________City__________________State_______Zip______
Home Phone_____________________Cell Phone_______________Work Phone_____________
Position____________________________Level of Instruction_____________________________
Areas of Special Interest____________________________________________________________

CCSS Membership (July 1- June 30) NEW NCSS Membership
_____Regular $20 _____Regular* $69
_____Student $10 _____Comprehensive* $83
_____Retiree $10

*Choose one:
___Social Education
___Social Studies and the Young Learner