President’s Message

Thank You!

Two years ago, when I was asked to serve as CCSS President, I was a bit reluctant. Since retiring from teaching I had done some consulting work and had coordinated two Teaching American History Projects – wonderful experiences. But, I was thinking that it might be time to back off professional commitments, have fewer meetings and to cycle, play golf, and travel more – be a retired guy.

In truth, I have thoroughly enjoyed being actively involved as CCSS has helped lead the revitalization of social studies in Connecticut. It has been a pleasure working with members of the CCSS Board of Directors. This group of interesting, hard-working, dynamic individuals devotes a great deal of time advocating for our profession, planning events for teachers, and now with the roll-out of the new Frameworks, working with CSDE Social Studies Consultant Steve Armstrong to create and present professional development programs throughout the state. This is a healthy stretch for our organization while we continue our more traditional roles such as planning the upcoming CCSS Annual Fall Conference.

I’ve had the opportunity to represent CCSS at national conferences in Saint Louis and Boston and to work with state leaders in the education, humanities and museum communities as we support each other and build on our common goals. Throughout these experiences, I have learned a great deal and met very interesting people with a variety of opinions on a wide range topics. In short, this has been a very exciting two years. So thank you for this opportunity.

(continued on page 2)

Editor’s Note

It has been a rather remarkable year for CCSS and Connecticut social studies. Steve Armstrong, our state social studies consultant, has established a presence for history and social studies throughout the state. With Steve’s leadership and the help of many others, we have finally won state board approval for the social studies frameworks. With that fight now behind us we have begun to ramp up support programs for teachers as they work to make the concepts underlying the frameworks a reality for effective teaching and student learning. Add to this list a successful – and well-attended - NCSS conference in Boston and one could almost call it a banner year!

This issue includes a partial recognition of the year with pictures and comments from our annual awards dinner held at the Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury. Here the best of social studies teaching was on display; you had to be there to sense the pride of the award winners and the pleasure the rest of us felt in applauding their achievements. See page 3.

Amidst all this warm fuzziness, we do have a few items that should give us pause. The mania for teaching citizenship – as if it were some form of vaccination – continues to make headway in several states. When added to all the controversy over testing and the use of test results for teacher and school evaluation reminds us that social studies and history are on trial. The US News article by Brian Greene should make all of us take a deep breath. How does it follow that because adults don’t know much about citizenship or government, these same adults should require social studies teachers to flog students with a bubble test to serve as a graduation requirement? It’s not the first time – and certainly won’t be the last – our field has come under fire, but this kind of nonsense calls on all of us to do our best to define our field, and support intelligent (dare I say common sense) teaching and learning. See pages 5-7.

Likewise, the reports on poor performance by grade 8 students on recent social studies NAEP tests shouldn’t come (continued on page 2).
Editor’s Note - continued

as a surprise. While one can point fingers in a variety of directions for what contributes to this result, the article on a crisis in Massachusetts offers one possibility. If you keep cutting back social studies learning time in the elementary grades in the name of STEM, what results for history and civics should we expect in the later middle grades? See pages 8-9

Two other items explore more pedagogical issues: one on primary sources and and another on that hoary chestnut: chronological or thematic history. See pages 10-13

One sad note has come to our attention. A long-time supporter of social studies, especially economic education, Philmore Wass recently passed away after a distinguished career at University of Connecticut.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not use this space to give a shout out to Dan Coughlin as he completes his two years as CCSS president. His leadership has been steady, tireless and exemplary – no surprise to those of us who know him. Connecticut social studies teachers owe him a great debt, along with best wishes for a long and successful resumption of his interrupted retirement.

To each of you: a safe and restful summer. And if you have a significant social studies experience, write it up and send it in for the Fall ‘15 issue. See you in September.

Tim thomas.weinland@uconn.edu

President’s Message continued

Great things are ahead for CCSS. The organization is in the capable hands of President David Bosso, a great group of officers and a Board of Directors that includes many veteran members along with five new members. Advocacy work, professional development programs and recognition of excellence in the social studies will all continue and who knows what new programs and activities will begin. I’m looking forward to continuing my active involvement, but perhaps being a bit more of a retired guy.

Dan

Join CCSS
See Membership Form on page 16

PLEASE NOTE:
Yankee Post is Available Only Online at www.ctsocialstudies.org

To receive Yankee Post via email, and notification of a new issue . . . please join CCSS and send your email address to: ctsocialstudies@yahoo.com
So what does the Cheerios marketing campaign have to do with Social Studies? I started thinking about the question: what if we marketed Social Studies like a breakfast cereal? How could we appeal to those in power to merit the benefits of Social Studies? What slogan can we use? How do we extol the ‘nutritional’ benefits of the Social Studies?

So here’s my marketing slogan: “Social Studies: builds the brain, grows the heart.”

Vitamin R for Readiness! When we talk about fostering college, career, and civic readiness, the Social Studies classroom is where it’s at.

Next up... Vitamin I for teaching Interconnectedness! In an increasingly globalized world, developing cultural understanding and promoting human rights through authentic tasks in our Social Studies gives our subject a very important mission.

Vitamin C for creativity. Social Studies promotes both divergent and convergent thinking; the two cognitive hallmarks of creativity.

Vitamin E for empathy!—Social Studies is the story of us. We cultivate emotional intelligence in young people through historical stories as well as valuable lessons germaine to the collective human experience.
CCSS Fall Conference
Call for Workshop Proposals

THE CCSS FALL CONFERENCE WILL BE ON 27 OCTOBER 2015.

Using the New State Frameworks and Inquiry in CT’s Classrooms and Historical Institutions

For conference information and proposal forms, visit the CCSS Website www.ctsocialstudies.org

This year’s conference will explore ways the new Social Studies State Frameworks are being used in schools, museums and other historical places. In working together, teachers and museum educators can create partnerships and inquiry based activities that align with the new Frameworks. Workshop sessions may include methods for integrating inquiry, local history, or museum-teacher partnerships at the district, school, or classroom level.

In addition to traditional conference presentations, we are seeking proposals from educators interested in presenting breakout sessions that address this need. We welcome presentation submissions from classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, museum educators or anyone else who is interested. In previous years, our conferences have attracted a variety of presenters from a cross-section of schools and historical organizations from across Connecticut. We continue this tradition and invite candidates to submit a request for the 2015 CCSS Annual Conference.

Social Studies Leaders Conference

Daniel Rothstein, Director of the Right Question Institute and co-author (with Luz Santana) of “Make Just One Change”. Rothstein was the primary presenter at a day-long workshop promoting questioning strategies in conjunction with the launch of the CT Social Studies Frameworks. About 100 teachers attended the program held at CCSU on May 27.

Summer Conferences Set
Frameworks - Heidi Hayes Jacobs

The CT Council for the Social Studies is pleased to announce two summer conferences.

Renowned curriculum specialist and author Heidi Hayes Jacobs will present at each session, focusing on ways to incorporate the Inquiry Arc of the new Frameworks into our classrooms.

In addition, each conference will have special strands for those still exploring the Frameworks and for elementary and secondary teachers and specialists. On the last day, participants will do hands-on work with public history professionals across the state on incorporating CT history into US history courses.

TWO SESSIONS: 29 June - 2 July or 17-20 August (Each session is the same. We offer it twice to accommodate your schedule.)

To Register visit CCSS Website: www.ctsocialstudies.org
Gov. Gary Herbert on Monday signed a bill into law that will require Utah students to pass a citizenship naturalization test before receiving a high school diploma. The bill was signed less than two weeks after Herbert signed a resolution asking state education leaders to look at ways to reduce student assessment, particularly high-stakes testing.

The result is a measure of confusion and frustration for educators. “How interesting is it that at the same time (the Legislature is) adding a test, they pass a resolution to reduce tests,” said Judy Park, associate superintendent at the Utah State Office of Education. “I think the unfortunate consequence is this has now placed a huge burden on teachers, on classrooms, on instruction that could be very disruptive.”

SB60 originally proposed having students answer all 100 questions from the same test immigrants are required to pass before becoming U.S. citizens. But the bill was amended to require students to answer correctly 35 out of 50 questions identical to questions on the naturalization test. The test could be administered to students as young as sixth grade, but they can take it as many times as necessary to get a passing score of 70 percent. Park said she was “pretty confident” it would be a paper-and-pencil test.

The requirement will apply to all students graduating on or after Jan. 1, 2016. The bill did not provide funding for developing, administering or scoring the test, so involvement from state education leaders will be minimal, Park said. Local school districts and charters will decide individually whether to let students take the test all at once or one piece at a time.

Some lawmakers say the burden for students and teachers will be minimal because the concepts in the test are already being taught, and the test questions and answers are already available online. “I believe this bill will create a sense of pride in every student who graduates,” the bill’s sponsor, Sen. Howard Stephenson, R-Draper, said while defending it in the Senate. He said initiative will “ensure that every citizen who graduates from Utah high schools is prepared to have a basic understanding to be a more involved citizen and a more informed voter.”

The governor signed HCR7 on March 20, commissioning a study of Utah’s current testing methods to see how “excessive” testing can be minimized. It’s unclear what implications the resolution has for the civics test, but it’s unlikely the test will be fully implemented before the study is complete. “I think the timing’s off a little bit, but certainly you don’t need to collect data to get a sense of the disruption this (test) has the potential to cause,” Park said.

Shawn McLeod, principal of South Jordan Middle School, said the test is one that “many” kids could pass and has important facts for students to know. But it presents yet another requirement for graduation that may give students stress. “As a parent, I would want my child to know that information,” McLeod said. “I think we do assess our kids a lot. It’s becoming more and more high-stakes assessments as well. … It’s one more added assessment, one more added stress.”

Educators agree, however, that a strong emphasis on civics education is needed to prepare students to become active members of their community. Robert Austin, a K-12 social studies specialist with the Utah State Office of Education, said he hopes the test will begin a discussion about “cognitive rigor” beyond simply memorizing facts. “The immediate outcome for schools is just the kinds of robust conversations that we need to have about what does it mean to be civically competent,” Austin said. “Not every student’s going to be a scientist, and not every student’s going to be a mathematician. But we know that every student will have the rights and responsibility of citizenship.”

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Howard Beal, Provo, UT

Just for kicks I looked at the test. Yes, at a certain level it is very easy except for maybe students who have test anxiety or reading issues. However, about 10 of the questions didn’t relate to Government or Civics, great geography questions though. Many questions are open for some interpretation. Ex: Who does a Senator represent?: A: the entire state. Technically correct, but could a student say special interest groups, the oil lobby etc. and not be correct as well. What does the Declaration of Independence do? A: gave three answers relating to breaking away from Great Britain. All true. But did it not also lay out grievances against King George. Did it not lay out a philosophy of government (it’s real importance--yes we broke away from England but we hardly needed a declaration for that as we were already at war so the declaration’s real value is its philosophical foundations for governance). Bottom line, if these answers are not multiple choice that give out specific technically correct answers, I have huge issues. But then at that level it’s just becomes a test of superficial knowledge. So either way, somewhat problematic.
Know Your Rights: States Push High School Civics Exam Requirement

Some legislators want students to take the same test given to immigrants.

High school students might have to pass one more test in order to graduate: the U.S. naturalization civics test.

By Allie Bidwel Sept. 22, 2014 | 9:59 a.m. EDT

Can you name all three branches of the federal government? How about how many votes it takes to override a presidential veto, or what the first 10 amendments to the Constitution collectively are called?

Most American adults cannot correctly answer those basic civics questions, according to a recent survey from the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania – and a growing number of state leaders believe students should be required to pass the same civics test given to immigrants seeking nationalization in order to graduate from high school.

In its survey of more than 1,400 adults, the Annenberg Public Policy Center found just 36 percent could name all three branches of the government, and another 35 percent couldn’t name any. Just more than one-quarter of respondents – 27 percent – correctly answered that a presidential veto can be overturned by a two-thirds vote from both the House and Senate.

“We all sort of laugh at that, but it’s tragically sad at the same time that we all don’t know these very, very basic things,” says Sam Stone, political director of the Civics Education Initiative, a national campaign aiming to get all 50 states to require their high school students to pass the U.S. naturalization civics test (see a sample test here).

The group is backed by many high-profile public figures and former legislators, including former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Carl Bernstein and actor Joe Mantegna. Current legislators are also coming on board in support of the initiative.

Seven states – Arizona, Utah, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Missouri, South Carolina and Louisiana – have formally launched the campaign, with another three expected to begin efforts by the end of the year, Stone says. The group’s goal is to get every state to make passing the civics exam a graduation requirement by 2017, to coincide with the 230th anniversary of the signing of the Constitution, Stone adds.

In many states, requiring students to pass the civics exam, which covers 100 facts about American history and civics, will need to be done through legislation. In Arizona, state Rep. Steve Montenegro, a Republican, announced Wednesday he is in the process of drafting legislation to make passing the exam a graduation requirement. “Every single student in Arizona and across the United States of America should have basic knowledge and understanding of American government,” Montenegro said during a news conference, according to azcentral.com. “Civics is just common sense.”

Two Utah state lawmakers – Sen. Howard Stephenson and Rep. Steve Eliason, both Republicans – also said Wednesday that they plan to introduce a bill in the next legislative session to require all Utah high school students to pass the exam. Former Missouri Gov. Bob Holden, who served as a Democratic governor from 2001 to 2005, says he’s working with state legislators to introduce a bill at the beginning of the next legislative session, which begins in January 2015. “It’s very critical as we enter a truly global economy that our leaders and our citizens have a greater understanding of how our country was formed, the values that have shaped us and the values that will hopefully lead us to continued success,” Holden says.

Continued on page 7
Know Your Rights . . . continued from page 6

Most surveys of Americans' knowledge of U.S. history and civics are striking. The Annenberg survey also found most respondents said they didn’t know which parties control the House and Senate.

Stone says it’s possible that an emphasis on American history and civics has fallen to the wayside in favor of increased focus on science, technology, engineering and math – or STEM – subjects. “I don’t think anyone is arguing the value of those, but at the same time, I think we’ve lost the focus on a well-rounded curriculum and on giving people as much of an opportunity as possible to explore the world around them,” Stone says.

Requiring students to pass a civics test is one way to draw more attention to the importance of those subjects, but the push is also coming at a time when tensions around testing are hitting the ceiling. Holden says one way to mitigate concerns about over-testing is to find a way to incorporate the questions on history and civics into the testing already in place.

“Anytime you’re talking about change, it becomes somewhat difficult. Everyone likes change as long as it doesn’t affect them,” Holden says. “Let’s make this something that all Americans can get behind, because it’s about our country’s future, and our children’s knowledge of the past to lead them to the future that’s important.”

Study: One in Three Americans Fails Naturalization Civics Test

Native-born Americans fare worse on civics exam than immigrants applying for citizenship.

By Brian Greene

April 30, 2012 4:05 p.m. EDT USNews

As Americans prepare to pick the next president of the United States in November, a survey out of the Center for the Study of the American Dream at Xavier University finds that one out of three U.S. citizens fails the civics portion of the immigrant naturalization test. The survey of more than 1,000 voting-age Americans asked respondents 10 random questions from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services civics exam, which is administered as part of the immigration process, finding that 35 percent answered five or less questions correctly. More than 97 percent of immigrants applying for citizenship pass the test.

Native-born citizens fared best on questions related to history and geography and struggled most with questions about the function of government, specifically on questions about the Constitution and those that asked to identify current policy-makers. Other parts of the study show respondents were overwhelmingly confused about powers granted to the federal government and those granted to individual states.

Here are some questions that gave respondents the most trouble:

85 percent could not define “the rule of law.”
75 percent did not know function of the judicial branch.
71 percent were unable to identify the Constitution as the “supreme law of the land.”
63 percent could not name one of their state’s Senators.
62 percent did not know the name the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.
62 percent could not identify the Governor of their state.
57 percent could not define an “amendment.”

A concurrent survey found that almost 77 percent of Americans believe that all native-born citizens should be able to pass the civics portion of the naturalization test and 60 percent think that passing it should be requisite for receiving a high school diploma.
Social studies education facing ‘crisis’ as class time is slashed, departments closed

Washington Post  By Valerie Strauss March 31

It’s no secret that for years Social Studies (as well as the arts, science and physical education) have been given short shrift in many public schools around the country as academic emphasis has been placed on math and English Language Arts, the subjects for which there are high-stakes standardized tests. Now, Gorman Lee, president of the Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies, is warning that social studies education is facing a “serious civic crisis.”

The state council is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit educational organization that advocates for social studies education. It is an affiliate of the National Council for the Social Studies, which serves as an umbrella organization for elementary, secondary, and college teachers of history, civics, geography, economics, political science, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and law-related education.

On March 22, Lee posted a message on the Massachusetts council’s web site that warned of a “serious civic crisis” facing social studies education and that urged social studies educators to reach out to legislators to inform them of what is happening and schedule a statewide Advocacy Day.

Lee’s message discusses the reduction — and in some cases elimination — of Social Studies departments at many schools, and he notes that in “some elementary schools, social studies instruction has been reduced to no more than 20 minutes per week” so that classes can spend more time on what are considered core subjects.

Here’s the message from Lee, who is the K-12 director of Social Studies in Braintree Public Schools:

The Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education’s decision to indefinitely suspend the History and Social Science MCAS in 2009 has placed social studies education in a high risk of marginalization in K-12 public school districts across Massachusetts. The problem has only exacerbated with increased emphases of English language arts and mathematics in the Common Core State Standards that was adopted in 2010. Therefore it comes to no surprise that once school districts have started to face budgetary constraints, social studies is now among the subject areas first on the chopping block.

There have been recent concerning reports of K-12 school districts reducing social studies departments in order to secure support to “high stakes” subject areas, despite the promised commitments to uphold civic ideals and to prepare students to become active and productive adult citizens as described in their mission statements. Many school districts have begun to merge social studies and English language arts departments into a Humanities department, where the social studies curriculum takes a secondary role to support the English language arts curriculum. In some schools, teachers whose primary subject area is other than social studies have been assigned to teach one social studies class; it is now apparent that “highly qualified” is no longer applicable when it comes to social studies. In some elementary schools, social studies instruction has been reduced to no more than 20 minutes per week so that classes can spend more time for instructions in literature, mathematics, and science.

If we continue to allow social studies education become marginalized in our K-12 schools, our students will continue to graduate from high school with limited knowledge and understanding of their nation’s heritage, government, economy, and role in international affairs. The deterioration of a rigorous social studies curriculum will limit our students’ appreciation of community and national identity. The absence of a comprehensive K-12 social studies education will deny our students crucial learning opportunities to learn and apply higher-order critical thinking skills to address and find solutions to real world problems and issues.

We would like to hear the current status of the K-12 social studies program in your school district. Please go to our online survey and tell us what’s happening in your school district and building. The results of the survey will be collected on March 31, 2015. http://goo.gl/forms/UpJ0yFXOE6 or you can email me at president@masscouncil.org.

Social studies educators must unite and let our elected representatives know that social studies education is facing a serious civic crisis. As President of the Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies, I am recommending that we coordinate a statewide Advocacy Day, where K-12 social studies educators schedule a meeting with their respective elected representatives at their local offices or at the Massachusetts State House in Boston.

If you are doing a special project with your students, I strongly encourage you to invite your elected local representatives to your classroom and showcase what students are learning in social studies classes. It is our civic responsibility to express our collective concerns to our legislators and enlighten them on the importance and necessity to support and promote a strong K-12 social studies education in our public, charter, and private schools across the Commonwealth.

We need your help!

Sincerely, Gorman Lee, Ed.D. Mass Council President

Few Eighth-Graders Proficient in U.S. History, Civics
Not even one in five eighth-graders scored at or above proficient in U.S. history in 2014.

By Allie Bidwell  April 29, 2015 | 12:01 a.m. EDT

History, geography and civics have taken a back seat in American education, according to a new report. Results from the 2014 National Assessment of Educational Progress showed that roughly a quarter or fewer eighth-grade students scored at or above proficient in geography (27 percent), civics (23 percent) and U.S. history (18 percent). The overall average score in each of the three subjects is unchanged from 2010, the last time the test was administered in these subjects, although scores have marginally improved since the 1990s. What's more, there remain wide, and in some cases increasing, gender and racial achievement gaps.

On history tests, for example, 33 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander students scored at or above proficient, compared with just 6 percent of African-American students. The male-female gender gap in history scores, which was nonexistent in 1994 when the history test was first administered, has widened to four points.

Terry Mazany, chairman of the National Assessment Governing Board, which oversees NAEP, said in a statement that history, geography and civics are core subjects “that must be a priority.” “They represent knowledge and skills that are fundamental to a healthy democracy,” Mazany said. “The lack of knowledge on the part of America’s students is unacceptable, and the lack of growth must be addressed. As a country, we must do better.”

Michelle Herczog, president of the National Council for the Social Studies, said in a statement that the focus on standardized testing may be partially to blame. “Emphasis on raising test scores in reading, mathematics and science has caused educators to prioritize instruction, professional development and resources supporting these subjects, particularly in elementary school,” Herczog said.

Chasidy White, a history and geography teacher from Brookwood, Alabama, suggested the national emphasis on STEM education – science, technology, engineering and math – has taken away attention from other important subjects. “Of course, those subjects are important, but subjects like history, geography and civics are equally important,” White said in a statement. Learning about “historical events and changes over time, the countries of the world and their inhabitants and the fundamentals of government and responsibilities of citizenship all contribute to today’s students being well-rounded contributors to society – now and in the future.”

Recognizing this problem, several states are tinkering with the idea of making civics education mandatory and requiring high school students to pass the U.S. naturalization civics test in order to graduate. At least five states – Arizona, Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota and Utah – have passed legislation requiring high school students to pass a civics exam in order to graduate. Similar legislation has been introduced in 17 other states, according to the Civics Education Initiative.

Policymakers are also looking to increase support for social studies through Congress’ reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, commonly known as No Child Left Behind. The Senate bill to reauthorize the education law allows for a competitive grant program to support the teaching of “traditional American history.” The secretary of education is also authorized in the bill to award competitive grants to promote innovative instruction for history, civics and geography.

“World events increasingly demand informed, engaged problem-solvers – knowledge and skills found in the teaching of civics, geography, history, economics, psychology, sociology and philosophy,” Herczog said. “The future of our communities, our nation and our world depends on it.”

Please Pass It On
If you have enjoyed this issue and found it useful, please pass it on to a colleague. If you have suggestions for improving Yankee Post, please contact the editor at thomas.weinland@uconn.edu
Investigating the world through primary sources is a great way to build students’ research skills and global competence. Ann Marie Gleeson, Program Director, and Jennifer Hanson, Librarian, Primary Source, share primary source collections and project ideas to get you started.

By guest bloggers Ann Marie Gleeson and Jennifer Hanson

Do your students know how to access global primary sources for research? Globally competent students need to know how to find, analyze, and use information to solve complex problems and investigate the world. The Common Core standards require that students “conduct original research” for short and sustained projects to build and present new understandings. Encouraging students to use primary sources is one way to support inquiry around global topics by engaging students with authentic voices and raw data. These original sources provide students with opportunities to construct their own interpretations and claims while corroborating their new knowledge with other secondary sources.

New initiatives and technologies have made global primary sources more accessible and readily available. In fact, students are often overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information available to them and have difficulty finding or selecting source material to support their inquiry. One way to build students’ research skills in this area is to introduce various archival collections and tools that can be used to research a multitude of issues and topics around the world. Here are a few primary source collections and project ideas to support student research on global issues, topics, and histories.

Art and Artifacts Works of art reflect the values, beliefs, interests, and/or the practices of the society in which they were created. Material culture such as paintings, literature, music, jewelry, and architecture, among others, can be used as evidence to support claims about a historical event or contemporary issue. The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History comprises nearly 7,000 artifacts, detailed thematic essays, and extensive timelines from around the world, circa 8000 BCE to the present. Students can use the site to access works of art, place artifacts within their historical context, and consider broader connections between cultural practices and works of art.

For example, you might ask students to select an artifact related to a region or topic that they are researching and use resources from the site to consider how the artwork reflects cultural values or connects to a particular event. Students can find similar materials through sites such as Google Cultural Institute and MFA for Educators.

Data As they research contemporary global issues, topics, or world regions, students can draw on a vast wealth of data compiled and published by various government and non-governmental organizations. Worldwide data collected by organizations such as the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) can be used to analyze trends within and across nations and regions on such topics as economics, health, education, and the environment, to name a few.

For a short research activity, assign students to different countries and ask them to find information about the country on two to three indicators related to a global issue from the OECD’s datasets. Use a shared Google Doc to compile the collected data from the different countries and, as a class, construct claims about the issue. Additional global datasets can be found through World Bank Data and UNData.

Maps Maps tell stories about population, politics, the environment, and much more. Through map analysis, students can build visual, spatial, and critical thinking skills. The Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection from the University of Texas at Austin contains over 60,000 digitized map images and includes historical, thematic, topographic, and current issues maps (for example, maps of the Nepal earthquake). The collection provides access to government and military maps, current news maps, and digitized atlases.

Ask students to compare and contrast a political map and a thematic map (such as energy use, climate, or economic activity maps) from the same country or region. Have students observe the size and shape of the maps, the elements and features included on the map, and the perspective from which the map is drawn. Based on their observations and background knowledge, ask students to infer the purpose and audience of the map and reflect on what the maps convey about a particular place and culture. To further their map investigation, ask students to research the map creators and accuracy of the maps. For more mapping resources, visit Google Maps and Worldmapper.
Newspapers Keeping up with current events is one of the best ways to increase students’ global knowledge and understanding. However, reading the news from US sources will provide a primarily Western, United States-centric viewpoint. To truly grasp the events and issues citizens in other countries are experiencing, students need to read news from other countries. Newspapermap uses Google mapping features to pin news sites from countries around the world. Color-coded pins identify the language in which the news is reported, and students can filter results by location and language.

To engage students with news from around the world, ask them to identify a global current event or news story that interests them. Then, have them select a country and find a newspaper from that country using Newspapermap. Using the news site they have selected, what can they learn about the issue or topic? Compare the coverage from the foreign news site to a US news site. How is the coverage similar? How is it different? From what perspectives is the story told? Then, ask students to return to their chosen country’s news site. What other stories are in the headlines in that country? Are they being reported in the United States? Discuss with students why news from other countries might or might not be reported in the United States. For more newspaper websites, visit World Newspapers.

The more students interact with art, artifacts, data, maps, and news from cultures and countries other than their own, the better they will understand the cultures, issues, and histories that shape the world in which they live. Using the collections mentioned above, students can access high-quality research materials while also developing global awareness and cultural empathy.

Follow Primary Source, Heather, and Asia Society on Twitter.

Photo: Primary Source.
“I just don’t see why I have to know these dates,” grumbled Danny as he looked at his midterm exam grade. Other students echoed his complaint. What do these dates matter? Why should we need to know the difference between 1789, when the Constitution was ratified, and 1765, when the Stamp Act was passed? Isn’t saying they’re in the 1700s enough? At this point, after a year and a half of teaching 8th grade U.S. history thematically rather than chronologically, I started wondering whether I was on the right track. If my students weren’t understanding these connections, maybe I was giving short shrift to the momentum of a strong historical narrative.

The power of chronology

I know what that momentum feels like. When I taught 7th and 9th grade world history, we began with Rome and swept through to the Black Plague. For Europe, the chronology was clear. For Africa, China, Mesoamerica and India, we could make connections between events that happened at approximately the same time, such as the construction of Machu Picchu and the Great Zimbabwe. Similarly, when I first taught 8th grade U.S. history, we did a standard middle school sequence based on California’s content-based social studies standards: Pick up where elementary school left off at 1763 or so, and then dive into the 100 years to the Civil War and beyond. It was thrilling to observe the progression from Jeffersonian to Jacksonian democracy, to watch Manifest Destiny work its way westward.

Teaching a U.S. history survey course to juniors also left little doubt about the power of chronology. Certain themes, such as reform movements and U.S. intervention in world affairs, appeared over and over. To recognize these patterns was to understand the rhythms of a young country’s experiments at home and abroad. With a chronological approach, a lot of the work of history happens naturally. This leads to this leads to this, one after the other. Lincoln’s 1858 “House Divided” speech gives way to South Carolina’s secession two-and-a-half years later. China’s artistic Tang Dynasty, contemporaneous with Europe’s early Middle Ages, shines all the more because of its contrast with more militaristic earlier reigns.

I get it. The students get it. But when I returned to 8th grade U.S. history two years ago (after seven years teaching English), I did not simply want to march through the same material students would encounter again in three years, in the soup-to-nuts survey course they would take as high school juniors.

My thematic approach

Instead, I wanted to highlight U.S. history’s greatest hits, the moments that most laid the groundwork for today. Amazingly, my school gave me flexibility to choose the content of the class, as long as there was a reasonable focus on civics and the Constitution.

So, for the past two years, the first semester’s curriculum has covered the following:

- Current events, including how to read and look for news articles;
- The American Revolution, 1763-1783, with a focus on philosophy and primary documents to make it different from many elementary school curriculums;
- A research project on a dictator in another country, to tie in with our focus on governments and to connect with George Orwell’s Animal Farm in English class;
- Federalism in U.S. history, focusing on the conflicts of the 1850s and the early civil rights struggles of the 1950s;

Second semester has been even more thematic. It covers:

- Social reform movements, including women’s history, affirmative action, and Progressive Era reforms;
- A research project on a reformer in American history, including the film “All the President’s Men” to show the power of investigative journalism;
- Civil rights during the Civil War, a short unit centered on the film Glory;
- Total war, using Sherman’s March to the Sea as a springboard, in which we also touch in World War I trench warfare before focusing on the nuclear bomb. In future years, I would like to include 9/11 and its aftermath.

My goal in constructing these units has been to give students a grounding in government, current events, social history, civil rights, and warfare. And deep questions have easily emerged: What does it look like to be a good citizen? What makes change happen in American history? When should the United States be the world’s police officer?

But we miss a lot The first year, I didn’t teach John Marshall’s theory of judicial review from Marbury v. Madison, and students’ understanding of the Supreme Court’s power suffered as a result. Had I been teaching the Early Republic chronologically, this topic would have been at the top of the list. Last year I also realized, as we were finishing the Glory unit, that my students had no idea what Fort Sumter was. Oops! While we had read the pages on social history from the textbook’s Civil War chapter, we had unfortunately skipped exactly how the war started. This year I made sure to discuss the election of 1860 and Lincoln’s decision not to resupply the fort, and my class felt more grounded as a result. This year I made sure to discuss the election of 1860 and Lincoln’s decision not to resupply the fort, and my class felt more grounded as a result. This year I made sure to discuss the election of 1860 and Lincoln’s decision not to resupply the fort, and my class felt more grounded as a result.

At moments like the Fort Sumter omission, I sometimes despair that I have not taught students enough, that I have left out something crucial. And then I remember: We all leave out something crucial when we teach history. We cannot include every date, every strike, every financial crisis.

National standards lean toward thematic study Many national standards acknowledge this impossibility by focusing on skills rather than content. The Common Core standards for “literacy in history and social studies” discuss reading and writing literacies, and the National Council for the Social...
Teaching MS History - continued from page 12

Studies standards cover ten key themes of history. Even the College Board has jumped on the thematic bandwagon in recent years, with new AP U.S. History course guidelines in 2014-15 and AP European History guidelines in 2015-16 that emphasize historical analysis skills and depth of content more than before.

A swinging pendulum

As much as I love the ideas that have emerged from the past two years of teaching 8th grade history thematically, I still can’t say definitively whether it’s a better approach. We are able to span more eras and focus on high-interest topics, but we miss the rat-a-tat excitement of chronological history. As the year ends, I do know that the 8th graders in my class need more help realizing the importance of cause and effect. Before our final exam, I plan to remind Danny and the others that the dates I force upon them help illuminate how one event leads to another – just as the events in their lives lead one to the other. And I’ll hope that this year’s web of history, however scattered, make sense as it relates to the personal identities that these 13- and 14-year olds are forming, as well as to the drumbeat of history that we are all trying to establish.

Teaching Arguments

Rhetorical Comprehension, Critique, and Response
Jennifer Fletcher

No matter where students’ lives lead after graduation, one of the most essential tools we can teach them is how to comprehend, analyze, and respond to arguments. Students need to know how writers’ and speakers’ choices are shaped by elements of the rhetorical situation, including audience, occasion, and purpose. In Teaching Arguments, Jennifer Fletcher provides teachers with engaging classroom activities, writing prompts, graphic organizers, and student samples to help students at all levels read, write, listen, speak, and think rhetorically.

Jennifer believes that, with appropriate scaffolding and encouragement, all students can learn a rhetorical approach to argument and gain access to rigorous academic content. Teaching Arguments opens the door and helps them pay closer attention to the acts of meaning around them, to notice persuasive strategies that might not be apparent at first glance. When we analyze and develop arguments, we have to consider more than just the printed words on the page. We have to evaluate multiple perspectives; the tension between belief and doubt; the interplay of reason, character, and emotion; the dynamics of occasion, audience, and purpose; and how our own identities shape what we read and write. Rhetoric teaches us how to do these things. Teaching Arguments will help students learn to move beyond a superficial response to texts so they can analyze and craft sophisticated, persuasive arguments—a major cornerstone for being not just college-and career-ready but ready for the challenges of the world.

Free Professional Development Workshop:
Common Core, C3 Framework, Social Studies Standards-Aligned

Whether you love or dread teaching the Arab-Israeli conflict, ICS’s nationally acclaimed professional development workshop will give you the tools you need to strengthen your knowledge and abilities to navigate this complex and often fraught subject.

ICS’s scholarly workshop explores the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict and peace process through primary source documents and teaching strategies that support critical analysis of texts.

Encourage your department chair, professional development coordinator or administrator to contact Jacqueline Regev, to schedule a free workshop for you and your colleagues.

Workshop participants will develop pedagogic content knowledge about:
• The origins of Arab nationalism and Zionism
• The connections among the broken promises made to Arabs and Jews during World War I and current challenges in the Middle East
• The challenges and benefits of a peaceful resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict

Professional Opportunities

SUMMER TEACHERS INSTITUTE
Montréal and Québec City: June 28-July 3

On behalf of the Northeast National Resource Center on Canada with support from the U.S. Department of Education, we are delighted to extend an invitation to you and your fellow Council for the Social Studies members to participate in the Summer Institute for K-12 Professionals held this summer in Montréal and Québec City, Canada, from June 28 to July 3. Please forward to interested colleagues.

K-12 teachers, curriculum coordinators and administrators with teaching background in social studies, geography, history and/or French, in addition to pre-service teachers, are welcome to apply.

“Québec Dimensions: Historical, Geographic and Cultural Explorations” is a unique professional development opportunity providing participants with foundations in history and geography plus contemporary cultural insights through first-hand experience. The Canadian and Québec content taught by academic specialists is designed to meet Common Core, C3, and state standards.

Registration: US$649 covers transportation during the Institute, lecturer fees, admission to educational sites, curriculum materials, double-occupancy at four star hotels, and some meals.

Rolling applications accepted between now and April 15th or until full. Apply online!

Alan Kramer  AKramer@goodwin.edu
REMAKABLE PRODUCTIONS LLC
94 Sylvan Avenue  West Hartford, Connecticut 06107
AKwrites2@aol.com  860-304-8762

I’m contacting you about In Freedom, a new musical I’ve written about the underground railroad. My production company will be making In Freedom available to schools for the 2015-16 school year.

I would be very interested in reaching out through you to members of the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies to discuss how we can arrange to bring the show to schools. The company will be arranging performances during two periods next year – October/November 2015 and February/March/early April 2016. Our target population is upper elementary and middle schools, but we have also had success with students learning American History at the grade 9/10 level. Below is a brief description of the show to share with people in the schools.

In Freedom is an original musical that follows a couple’s escape to freedom on the underground railroad. Through song and dance, this interactive show helps students explore issues that resonate today: slavery, freedom, courage, compassion and the dynamic relationship between men and women. In Freedom tells the story of a couple setting out into the unknown, following secret signs, fighting their fears and struggling to trust those who have also risked much to help them. The show’s musical roots go from gospel to African rhythms to traditional, always expressing hope and the joy of freedom. A booking of In Freedom also can provide learning materials for before and after performances, helping students and teachers to understand the universality of the show’s themes and to delve as deeply into these issues as the developmental level of students makes appropriate.
Visualizing the American Revolution
A workshop for teachers grades 3-5

July 28 & 29, 2015 + 3 online hours

Using art and other visual sources is an engaging way to help elementary students understand the people, geography and events of the American Revolution. In this workshop, teachers will work with scholars, educators and one another to gain a more complete and complex view of the American Revolution (focused mostly on Boston) and how to integrate visual sources into their classroom teaching. Participants will use resources from the Library of Congress, Leventhal Map Center and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston to create an online gallery and lesson plan to enhance their teaching.

Dates & Time:
Tuesday, July 28, 9 am – 3:30 pm
Wednesday, July 29, 10 am – 5 pm
Online hours: 3

Audience: Grades 3-5 Teachers

Instructors & Locations: Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library (Copley Square) & Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

PDPs/Graduate Credit: 22.5 PDPs or 1 graduate credit (additional $75 to Framingham State University)

Cost: $75 (includes some meals and classroom materials)

To Register: Go to maps.bpl.org, professional development
Questions? mleblanc@bpl.org, 617-859-2294

massHUMANITIES

MFA BOSTON

TEACHING with PRIMARY SOURCES
Membership in CCSS entitles you to:
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• Reduced Registration for the Northeast Regional Conference for the Social Studies (NERC)
• Convenient access to the Yankee Post, the CCSS online newsletter
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• 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:
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