President’s Message

Exciting Times for Social Studies

Last month the CT State Board of Education gave final approval to the new Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Frameworks. Congratulations are due everyone who participated in the Frameworks development and pushing for this final approval – this was clearly a state-wide effort by the social studies community.

Now, the next phase of work begins. Supported by a State Department of Education grant, CCSS is beginning the roll-out of the new Frameworks with a series of regional workshops, a webinar series, two four-day summer workshops, and work with selected districts to create model curriculum materials. Also, a companion document to the frameworks will be developed to give additional information on content by scholars and sample teaching material by classroom teachers for each grade level. The CCSS Professional Development Team is working with Social Studies Consultant Steve Armstrong.

Editor’s Note

YES !!!! We’ve waited some years for a vote of approval for a Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks and a combination of good people and hard work got the job done. Starting with John Tully and Steve Armstrong and ending with far too many people to mention, we combined political talent with social studies “professional” talent. You can see some of the principle players on page 3 in pictures of a celebratory event just after State Board approval. It’s not over; Steve Armstrong reports on where we go from here on page 4 (Rolling Out the Frameworks). All of us owe a great deal of gratitude to the CCSS Board and leadership. Allow me to mount a soapbox for a moment and suggest how you and your colleagues might express that gratitude. Turn to page 16 and fill out the membership form and send it in. And if you are already a member, send this message to a colleague.

“Why”, you ask? Some of the answers are in this issue. On pages 5 through 8, we have a series of articles reporting on state government activities around the country. The sum of these activities appears to be some sort of agenda to control what happens in social studies classrooms. “Can’t happen here,” you say. “After all we are the land of steady habits.” True: presently we are blessed in Connecticut with a considerable degree of governmental support for our field. But we must...

FRAMEWORKS APPROVED

NO MORE “DRAFT”, NO MORE “INTERIM” !!!

AT LONG LAST, CONNECTICUT SOCIAL STUDIES HAS A STATE BOARD APPROVED ROADMAP FOR THE FUTURE


Armstrong to create and deliver high quality, teacher to teacher, programs to help school systems implement the new Frameworks.

While this new special effort is beginning, the regular work of the organization continues. The Membership Committee has created a new flyer to advertise the benefits of CCSS membership and to encourage easier online dues payments. The Technology Committee is working to update and expand the new website to better serve our members. The Public Affairs Committee continues its advocacy role, helping elected officials and everyday citizens understand the importance of strong social studies programs in our schools.

In addition, two event committees are planning upcoming programs. This year’s Spring Social and Awards Dinner will be held on Thursday, May 28th at the Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury. If you want to be inspired, plan to attend this evening program, socialize with friends and help celebrate some outstanding social studies colleagues. Please find the information flyer in this issue of the Yankee Post.

Also, work is underway for the CCSS Annual Fall Conference. Much of the focus of the conference will be on two key themes of the Frameworks – inquiry teaching and using local and state history as a lens to deal with larger national and international issues. In addition to workshops on these topics there will be a special emphasis on our effort to partner with the state’s museums, large and small, to utilize their expertise and materials. Stay tuned for details on this very important upcoming Fall Conference.

Exciting times indeed. CCSS is proud to be leading the effort to help teachers make social studies class the highlight of every student’s day. Thank you for being a member and supporting this effort.

Dan Coughlin
CELEBRATION
Connecticut State Social Studies Frameworks are Approved!

L-r: John Tully, Tony Roy, Kristin Steeves, Matt Warshauer

L-r: Nora Mocarski, Alan Marcus, John Tully, Vanessa Diaz - Valencia

L-r: Gene Stec, Kristin Steeves Ken Dunaj

Steve Armstrong with Connecticut’s Secretary of the State Denise Merrill
ROLLING OUT THE SOCIAL STUDIES FRAMEWORKS

Steve Armstrong - State Social Studies Consultant

There are a number of activities planned for this spring, summer and next fall designed to help teachers and districts begin to utilize the new social studies frameworks. We will be having a number of late afternoon/early evening meetings across the state to introduce teachers to the frameworks and to practice inquiry instruction. We will be publicizing the locations of these workshops very shortly.

- A webinar series on the frameworks is also going to be produced; the first webinar will be on inquiry–based instruction. It will be aimed at both teachers and museum educators. Details forthcoming.

- A companion document is also being produced, that will delve into content, inquiry activities, and assessments in much more detail. Both university professors and practicing teachers will be involved in the writing of the companion document. This will be available next August or September.

- On May 27 we will be having a full-day session for social studies leaders across the state on implementing curriculum related to the frameworks at the district level. The keynote speaker for this event will be Dan Rothstein, author of *Make Just One Change: Teach Students to Ask Their Own Questions*. The session will be held at Central Connecticut State University. Registration information will be out shortly.

- The Connecticut State Department of Education and CCSS will also be working with approximately eight districts in the state that will serve as “model social studies districts”. We will have districts from all types of districts in the state. We will provide support for the districts as they create curriculum materials based on the frameworks; curriculum materials created will appear on the CSDE website for other districts to see.

- This summer we will again be holding two four-day workshops on the frameworks and on inquiry. One will be held from June 29-July 2, with the other being held August 17-20. This year we will be having two levels at each workshop: one for teachers and curriculum leaders new to the C3 and the state frameworks, and the second level for those who have already begun to implement curriculum changes using these documents. Registration for these workshops will be available in early May.

As you can see, we have an ambitious plan to roll out the frameworks, and we hope that social studies teachers will be energized by these efforts. If you have questions, contact Steve Armstrong, Social Studies Consultant at the Connecticut Department of Education at Steve.Armstrong@ct.gov.

Getting “Lincoln” Right

Steve Armstrong and Dan Coughlin were recently asked to speak at 2nd District Congressman Joseph Courtney’s press conference. It focused on a new guide for teachers to use when showing the film “Lincoln” noting the error in the film about the votes of members of the House from Connecticut. Keith Dauer and Sandy Senior-Dauer also attended.
A conservative Oklahoma representative is reworking a bill targeting Advanced Placement U.S. history courses after coming under a firestorm of criticism. Rep. Dan Fisher, R-El Reno, said Wednesday his bill, widely interpreted as seeking to do away with the courses, was poorly worded and is being rewritten.

“We’re trying to fix the bill,” Fisher said. “It was very poorly worded and was incredibly ambiguous, and we didn’t realize that, so it’s been misinterpreted. We’re going to clear it up so folks will know exactly what we’re trying to accomplish, and it’s not to hurt AP. We’re very supportive of the AP program.” Republican House Floor Leader Jason Nelson said the rewritten bill will not call for elimination of AP history, but will merely ask the state Board of Education to conduct a review.

The original measure, House Bill 1380, was approved earlier this week in a party-line vote of the House Education Committee and sent to the full House. It ordered the board to adopt a new program and test to replace the current AP U.S. history program and test offered by the College Board, a not-for-profit organization that developed the new course framework. Fisher, a Baptist pastor, faced criticism after saying the course framework emphasizes “what is bad about America” and omits the concept of “American exceptionalism.”

Teachers speak out
Patti Harrold has taught AP courses — including U.S. history — for 27 years, and is a College Board consultant. The Edmond Memorial High School teacher said Fisher is misinformed and questioned the purpose of his bill. She said local school districts already know what is being taught in AP courses and evaluate their teachers based on state and district standards, not College Board standards.

“All of this is about helping students,” said Harrold, a self-described conservative Christian Republican. “It’s not leftist; it’s not subversive. It’s simply a way to align the courses (European, World and U.S. history) and exams to give us a flexible framework that makes these courses easier to teach and easier for students to understand.”

Harrold, who is president of the Oklahoma Counsel for History Education, said Fisher should have consulted with AP teachers before drafting his legislation. “We could have saved a lot of misunderstanding,” she said. “By not talking to us, it makes us feel like we are not worthy of being trusted to be in the conversation.”

State schools Superintendent Joy Hofmeister said she is focused on addressing “significant problems” facing schools. “It is early in the legislative session still, and a bill that passes committee is likely to go through many incarnations,” Hofmeister said in a statement. “The Legislature has the authority to enact changes in education policy, and right now I am focused on working with them and the governor to address significant problems facing our schools. We are struggling with a major funding shortfall, an unprecedented teacher shortage and excessive testing of students. These issues are top priority for my administration.”

Critical of program
Word that Fisher was targeting the well-regarded Advanced Placement program led to hundreds of phone calls to his and other legislators’ offices, and widespread attention on social media websites. The legislator has questioned the content of the state’s AP history course, saying it was too critical of the United States and didn’t stress positive aspects of U.S. history.

Harrold said the new course is not designed to question “our government or heritage or American exceptionalism.” “I don’t see that at all,” she said. “I don’t know of any teacher, Christian or non-Christian, that is teaching kids about the ugly side of America.”

Belinda Wall, who teaches AP U.S. history at Southeast High School in the Oklahoma City district, characterized the bill as “unnecessary.” “It’s frustrating…because there’s not that big of a change (in the coursework),” Wall said. “I don’t think it leaves anything out. We cover a lot of material.”

The AP program allows Oklahoma high school students to gain college credit for successfully completing AP tests. Many educators criticized the bill, saying it threatened an important, successful program. “AP has been a choice for our students for decades and it has earned countless students and families years of college credit and saved them an untold amount of money in college tuition,” Norman Superintendent Joe Siano said in a statement. Siano said the courses prepare students for college and called any attempt by lawmakers to deprive Oklahoma students of opportunities granted students in every other state “unacceptable.” “Our sincere hope is that lawmakers will focus their energies on expanding, rather than narrowing, Oklahoma students’ educational opportunities and contemplate how to shore up the state’s $611 million budget shortfall and protect school funding,” he said.
Responding to a wave of public pressure, a conservative lawmaker in Oklahoma has backed off a bill that threatened to cut funding for Advanced Placement US History courses, unless they were revised to reflect the concept of “American exceptionalism.” “It was very poorly worded and was incredibly ambiguous…. We’re going to clear it up so folks will know exactly what we’re trying to accomplish, and it’s not to hurt AP,” Oklahoma Rep. Dan Fisher (R) told The Oklahoman Wednesday. The new bill will simply ask the state education board to review AP history, The Oklahoman reports.

House Bill 1380 passed out of committee earlier this week, with no Democratic votes. Representative Fisher and other supporters objected to the recently revised framework for AP US history by the College Board, which administers related exams so high school students can earn college credit. “The redesign … trades an emphasis on America’s founding principles of constitutional government in favor of robust analysis of gender, racial oppression, class, ethnicity, and the lives of marginalized people,” Fisher said during the committee meeting. “The emphasis is on America as a nation of oppressors and exploiters. Certainly we all know … we have our blemishes, but we don’t want only our blemishes taught.”

Such battles over how US history should be taught – and how much emphasis should be placed on the country’s role as a model for liberty, democracy, and a free-market economy – have been playing out for several decades. Last year, the Republican National Committee condemned the new AP US History framework as “a radically revisionist view of American history that emphasizes negative aspects of our nation’s history while omitting or minimizing positive aspects.”

The Texas state board of education objected to the AP US History framework and emphasized that teachers of the course must also follow state standards. Students in Jefferson County, Colo., walked out of classes in the fall, successfully opposing an attempt by conservative members of the school board to review and revise AP US history. Backers of the Oklahoma bill said they worried it would supplant state history standards with a skewed attempt at a national curriculum – an objection that conservatives also commonly lob at the Common Core State Standards, which many states have voluntarily adopted.

HB 1380 enumerated several categories and more than 50 documents that should form the basis for US history classes, including:

- The US Constitution
- The Ten Commandments
- The sermon known as “A Model of Christian Charity” by John Winthrop
- The document known as the “Declaration of Sentiments” by Elizabeth Cady Stanton
- The Decision to Go to the Moon speech made by John F. Kennedy
- The letter “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” written by Martin Luther King, Jr.
- The Address to the Nation speech made by George W. Bush on Sept.11, 2001

On social media and in calls to legislators’ offices, students, educators, and other concerned citizens laid out their objections to the possibility that students might lose the opportunity to earn college credits. They also defended the AP courses as offering a balanced understanding of US history. “We all love our AP classes, and depend on them to challenge us, prepare us, and ultimately, provide us with the chance to excel and gain college credit,” wrote high school student Moin Nadeem in a petition he placed on Change.org that has since received more than 16,000 online signatures.

One post to the petition, by someone identifying himself as both a conservative and an AP US history teacher in Broken Arrow, Okla., said he was appalled by the bill: “The framework is a barebones ‘map’ of topics that are to be covered; however, the teacher has the opportunity (and fails to do their job correctly if they do not take the opportunity) to add to the framework … with the state standards for US History…. Keep the government out of my classroom!”

Supporters of the new AP framework say it’s inaccurate to say the framework overemphasizes negative aspects of American history, and that teachers do use many of the documents listed in the bill. The framework is about “teaching kids to see complexity and draw their own conclusions,” says Fritz Fischer, a history professor at the University of Colorado and author of “The Memory Hole: The U.S. History Curriculum Under Siege.” The problem with people pushing “American exceptionalism” in the curriculum, Professor Fischer says, is that they want to teach “that America was always right…. They believe the US is the best country now and therefore it has always been the best country.”

Fischer agrees there are many examples of shining moments for the nation, but worries that some backers of exceptionalism don’t want students to be exposed to anything negative. Some have objected to letting students know about some founders of the country being slaveholders, while others have said America’s expansion westward can only be called expansionism, not imperialism.

“It’s much too simplistic for the classroom, where you want to teach critical thinking,” he says.
Arizona will become the first state to require students to pass a civics test to graduate from high school, following swift moves Thursday by state legislators and Gov. Doug Ducey. Beginning with the class of 2017, students will have to prove they know the history and workings of American government before they can receive diplomas. The bill sailed through the Arizona Legislature’s committees Thursday morning, was approved by both houses Thursday afternoon and was signed by Ducey Thursday evening.

The American Civics Act will require students to pass 60 of the 100 questions on the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization civics test. They can first take the test in eighth grade, and can retake it until they pass. School districts and charter schools will determine how to include civics instruction in their curricula and how to test their students. Ducey, who had promised in his State of the State address on Monday that he would sign the bill, said a firm understanding of civics is vital for future voters. Critics said a required test is unnecessary and would cost schools money. The House vote on House Bill 2064 was 42-17-1, and the Senate vote was 19-10-1.

Sydney Hay of Silver Bullet, a consulting firm, said Arizona is the first state to pass the measure. Her firm is working to pass the bill in all states by Sept. 17, 2017, the 230th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution. She said North Dakota is also fast-tracking the bill. In all, 18 states are likely to pass the bill this year, she said.

Sen. Steve Yarbrough, R-Chandler, responded to criticism that the bill was rushed by saying the idea has been discussed for months. “I’ve read that anything of real value is worth appropriately measuring,” he said. “I would submit that a minimal understanding of American civics is of real value and therefore worthy of measurement.”

Critics of the bill cited the potential cost to schools and the burden of adding another test. Stephanie Parra, a member of the Phoenix Union High School District governing board, told the Senate Education Committee that the requirement will be a waste of classroom time. “Having students memorize and regurgitate facts is not going to get to the goal of what we want to accomplish here, which is retaining the importance and value of what American civics education should be,” she said. But Rep. David Farnsworth, R-Mesa, said the cost of the test will be “infinitesimal,” and that students already memorize facts such as the periodic table as a method of learning.

The test asks questions including “What is freedom of religion?” and “What are the two parts of the U.S. Congress?” A working knowledge of history and government should be minimum requirements, according to Eileen Sigmund, president and chief executive of the Arizona Charter Schools Association, which released a statement supporting the bill. “This legislation will provide the means to measure whether Arizona students are learning the civics essentials necessary to grow into our nation’s next generation of leaders.”

Steve Ramos, a retired civics teacher from Mesa Public Schools, said he is dismayed there’s an impression that civics has been poorly taught. “Civics has been part of the curriculum of every grade level for some time,” he told the Senate Education Committee. He taught for 32 years and students were required to pass his course to graduate. “To now mandate another 100-question civics test seems to fit the governor’s definition of waste and duplication of effort,” he said.

In his State of the State speech, Ducey cited dismal student results from a civics study that has since been discredited. The Associated Press reported Wednesday that the survey Ducey relied upon was done for the Goldwater Institute, which withdrew the survey results in 2009 after the company that conducted it failed to show that its basic research met Goldwater’s standards.

Other measures, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress, have found low civics literacy among students. Scott Leska, a member of the governing board of the Amphitheater Unified School District in Tucson, said he supports the requirement but is worried about students taking the test online. “My concern is that going online and putting your address in is giving the federal government one more piece of information on our students that could be used for whatever reasons — commercial, political, whatever,” he said.

Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey (pictured above) said he will sign a bill requiring a civics test for the state’s high-school students.
Bill calls for more focus on U.S., W.Va. history in schools

by Samuel Speciale, Education reporter

Students would not be able to learn about social problems, foreign affairs, the United Nations and communism until they study the United States and its founding documents under legislation introduced by a group of Republicans in the West Virginia House of Delegates. The bill, which currently is pending in the House Education Committee, would require schools to rework their history curricula to cover the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights and West Virginia history and geography for a minimum of a year and a half before students could be taught about world politics and social issues.

Delegate John Overington, R-Berkeley, the bill’s lead sponsor, said many people he talks to don’t know much about America’s early years and that he wants to correct that by making sure West Virginia’s schools get back to the basics. “Students need a understanding, first and foremost, of what led us to become the greatest country in the world,” Overington said. “And I’m unapologetic about my belief in that.” Overington, who has represented portions of the Eastern Panhandle since 1985, said learning about foreign affairs and other political ideals is important but that students first need a basis in America’s founding principles. “We’re just making sure the foundation is there and that students know that the allure of those other systems never matches up to the reality,” Overington said.

Co-sponsor Delegate George Ambler, R-Greenbrier, said the bill could still use some work but agrees with Overington that students should learn more about the importance of America’s founding documents. “We need to make sure kids know about our country before we saturate them with everything else,” said Ambler, who also is a high school social studies teacher in Greenbrier County.

The state Department of Education’s current social studies standards do not extensively cover the world’s political and social structures until students reach the ninth grade. In middle school, students learn about the roles and functions of government in world events and civilization up through the age of imperialism. They also complete a comprehensive study of West Virginia. In 10th and 11th grade, students return their focus to the United States, its founding documents and its interactions with the rest of the world. Seniors study civics. It’s not clear how the proposed bill would change that structure, but Ambler said students should have a firm understanding of their country’s history before learning about others.

Authors of a 2012 efficiency audit of West Virginia’s public education system said control of the state’s schools is too centralized and that they are over-regulated by code. Overington agrees. “I generally don’t like more regulation and mandates out of Charleston,” he said. “But students learning about the formation of our country is as important as reading and writing.”

The bill emphasizes the study of America’s founding documents and, more specifically, the historical, political and social environments at the time of their passage and ratification. The bill goes on to say basic instruction in state and United States government and geography must be completed before students “may participate in secondary level courses involving the study of social problems, global economics, foreign affairs, the United Nations, world government, socialism and communism.”

The bill also is sponsored by Republican Delegates Geoff Foster, Cindy Frich, Eric Householder, Kelli Sobonya, Michael Moffat, John Kelly, Ruth Rowan, Mark Zatezalo and Jim Butler. Ambler, who sits on the committee that will determine the bill’s fate, said there are many education issues likely to be taken up during this year’s legislative session, and that he would be surprised if this is one of them. “We’re going to follow the Republican platform of revamping our education system to make it better,” Ambler said. “Then we will deal with issues of lesser degree.” When asked if changing the state’s history education requirements is an “issue of lesser degree,” Ambler said it may not be a priority because “there are major issues that need to be taken care of first.”

- See more at: http://www.charlestondailymail.com/article/20150128/DM01/150129201#sthash.HfFQtSZX.dpuf
“Why do we need to learn this?” “Will this be on the test?” “Is this for a grade?”

Most teachers are familiar with these student refrains. Such questions reveal a larger challenge that teachers face on a frequent basis: how to create compelling, meaningful, evocative lessons that resonate with students and their fundamental needs to learn and grow. The recent adoption of the new Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks provides an opportunity for teachers to begin the transition to a more inquiry-based approach to curriculum design and lesson planning. Using the C3 as a guiding document and inquiry as a philosophical foundation, the Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks are the manifestation of many months of advocacy and the continuous efforts of numerous social studies educators at all educational levels.

Now that the Connecticut frameworks have been approved and adopted, the pedagogical shifts prompted by the frameworks will necessitate a gradual evolution in how we utilize common planning time and resources, how we conceptualize and implement instructional strategies, and how we think about and incorporate content, literacy skills, and assessments. The curricular design of full units, lesson plans, and even elements within individual lessons must now respond to the prospects for inquiry. As such, there are three outstanding qualities to consider when designing inquiry-based lessons.

Inquiry Lesson Design Consideration #1: Relevance and Connections

Students need to make meaning of content and connect it to their understanding of the world around them. For many students, however, topics in their social studies classes often seem distant in both time and place. Focusing on current events and delving into their respective historical and cultural roots can enhance the relevance of a lesson. Likewise, examining meaningful and age-appropriate cultural, political, economic, and social issues will facilitate students’ understanding and allow them to appreciate personal, local, and contemporary connections to national and global events and issues. For example, in an Africa unit we use in my school, we examine and discuss not only the trans-Atlantic slave trade, but we also compare and contrast these atrocities with present-day instances of human trafficking. Lessons that are relevant to students and sensitive to the way they make meaning of the world and their place in it will undoubtedly enhance overall student interest and understanding.

Inquiry Lesson Design Consideration #2: Authenticity and In-Depth Analysis

Similar to developing lessons that emphasize connections to students’ lives, we must create lessons that authentically tap into students’ innate desire to learn about the world around them in a genuine manner. Perfunctory, prepackaged lessons that involve a collection of seemingly disparate facts and concepts fail to leave a lasting impression on students and rarely foster the sort of deeper interest that derives from authentic learning experiences. Authentic lessons, even those that are controversial, should generate discussion and should provoke introspection and self-reflection. Moreover, such activities should encourage critical analysis and should help students become lifelong learners. In our Africa unit, we use primary documents, images, and media reports to help students understand the perspectives of those involved in human trafficking past and present – while allowing for age-appropriate analysis of the inherent dilemmas and real-world implications.

Inquiry Lesson Design Consideration #3: Enduring Understandings and Engagement

Too often, subject matter is presented in a way that encourages short-term action – i.e. for simplistic regurgitation on a summative assessment. Of course, this is what students are accustomed to, and many have been socialized to engage with course material in such a fashion. When lessons are meaningful for students, they become more invested in the learning process and their overall performance will improve. But, it’s more than just a test score. As students increase their capacity to direct their own learning under the expert guidance and tutelage of their teachers, they will be better situated to seek learning opportunities themselves. Dimension Four in the C3 Framework – Taking Informed Action – is one way to ensure that lessons are meaningful, memorable, and stay with students long after a unit has concluded. A lesson focusing on the trans-Atlantic slave trade provides opportunities for further investigation into modern-day slavery by analyzing statistics, researching non-profit organizations, reading firsthand accounts, and heightening community awareness. All of these activities increase the likelihood that students will have a more profound and enduring understanding of, and connection with, course content.

Whether they articulate it or not, students yearn to grow – to learn more about the world, to care deeply and passionately about something, and to make a difference. Teachers, as lifelong learners, also want to grow as professionals – to continuously improve our craft, to become experts in our respective disciplines, and to better ourselves for our profession and our students. Inquiry lessons that are relevant, authentic, and focused on enduring understandings encourage students and teachers to embark on a paradigm shift together that leads to new ways to engage with content and skills.

If students’ participation in a lesson simply means knowledge acquisition for a test or a grade, we are responsible for perpetuating an educational culture that inadvertently encourages expediency and superficiality. Inquiry lessons – designed with relevance and connections, authenticity and in-depth analysis, enduring understandings and engagement in mind – offer a robust and valuable alternative.
Martin Luther King, Jr. considered this to be life’s most persistent and urgent question: “What are you doing for others?” As we approach the holiday that honors his legacy, here’s another question worth pondering: How many of your students know how to ask persistent and urgent questions of their own? Knowing how to formulate a good question -- and having the courage to ask it -- is a skill with profound social justice implications. Dan Rothstein and Luz Santana, founders of the Right Question Institute, first became interested in questioning techniques when they were working with parents in a low-income community. Parents told them they didn’t participate in their children’s education because they didn’t know what to ask.

That was more than 20 years ago. By now, Rothstein and Santana have taught question-formulation techniques everywhere from homeless shelters to adult literacy classes to community health centers. Patients take a more active role in their own care, it turns out, when they know how to ask doctors better questions. And people who have felt disenfranchised because of language barriers or low literacy levels can reengage as citizens by learning how to ask questions that matter to them. In their important and accessible book, Make Just One Change: Teach Students to Ask Their Own Questions, the co-authors outline a simple but powerful approach to put classroom questions where they belong: with students. Instead of organizing learning around teachers’ questions, they suggest letting students’ questions drive the learning experience. For many students, this means reconnecting with their innate sense of curiosity and wonder about the world.

The co-authors’ Question Formulation Technique is appropriate for any classroom. It unfolds in four steps, typically carried out in small groups of students and in response to a specific focus that the teacher has introduced:

1. Ask as many questions as you can.
2. Do not stop to judge, discuss, edit, or answer any question.
3. Write down every question exactly as it was asked.
4. Change any statements into questions.

In a recent article for Education Leadership, “The Right Answers,” Rothstein and Santana describe teachers using their technique to rekindle curiosity in classrooms ranging from elementary to high school, and in subjects as diverse as math, science, and social studies.

I’d argue that their approach belongs in the toolkit of any teacher implementing project-based learning. Inquiry is supposed to provide the oxygen for PBL. By starting with questions that students want to answer, PBL creates a need to know. When projects work well, that authentic inquiry is what delivers higher levels of engagement and puts students on the path to deeper learning.

But what if students don’t exhibit a strong “need to know” in response to an entry event or driving question? What if they don’t launch into a project with a host of questions that they are burning to answer? What if that supposedly captivating driving question is met with.... silence? The problem might be that the project focus doesn’t connect with students’ interests. Or, it might have to do with students forgetting what it means to be an active learner. If their prior experience in school has been passive, if their previous experience with questions has been limited to responding to what teachers ask, they may need a refresher course in curiosity.

Along with the excellent resources from Rothstein and Santana, you can learn more about questioning strategies in A More Beautiful Question: The Power of Inquiry to Spark Breakthrough Ideas. Author Warren Berger shows how artful questioning leads to better thinking in a range of endeavors, from business to social activism. On an accompanying blog, Berger posts “beautiful questions” posed by readers. Recent examples that might get your students talking (and questioning): What if pizza was good for you? Why can’t the classroom be a coffee shop? What would happen if teenagers believed they deeply mattered to the world around them? As a quick write or warm-up for a PBL experience, you might have students submit their own beautiful questions to the author.

As students get more confident asking questions in class, they’ll be better prepared to take their questioning attitude into the world. PBL often creates opportunities for students to engage with community members and experts. Make sure students know how to frame those conversations with the questions that they care about answering.
Teachers: Assign History Papers to Teach Writing Skills
Posted on 29 January 2015. The Concord Review

Fewer and fewer schools assign rigorous history papers, yet writing about history is a great teacher of writing skills as well as history itself. If more schools would assign history papers, perhaps the 88% high school seniors who rated by the NAEP as not proficient in American History would learn something...

By Samantha Wesner, managing editor of The Concord Review, which publishes high school students’ research papers.

As a junior in high school taking American history, my class had two options for the final project: a PowerPoint presentation or an extended research essay. To many it was a no-brainer; the PowerPoint was definitely going to involve more pictures, fewer hours of work, and less solitude. But some of us went for the research paper, whether because we were naturally drawn to writing, seeking a new challenge, or presentation-averse (as I was).

The daunting task loomed. The essay length: fifteen to twenty pages. The topic I had chosen: The Spanish-American War of 1898. I was a slow writer, and the longest paper I had written before was a five-page English paper on Kurt Vonnegut. The English department had seen to it that I had plenty of practice writing shorter papers. But this new assignment was a leap forward rather than a step. I might have been better off with Will Fitzhugh’s “Page Per Year” plan: With each year, I would have written a paper to correspond with my grade—one page for first grade, nine pages for ninth grade, and so on.

I scoured the textbook for the few paragraphs it offered on the subject. And then what? I would have stopped there if I hadn’t known that other students had done it. Those of us writing a paper were given examples, plus guidance on paragraph structure, quoting, balancing primary and secondary sources, and footnoting. We toured the library and some online resources to get us started. With this essential how-to knowledge in hand, the assignment inched toward the realm of the possible in my mind.

Stacks of library books, reams of notes, and a twenty-page paper later, I had written what I now consider to be the capstone of my high school education. Years later, I remember 1898 better than the great majority of what I learned in high school. To this day, I really do “remember the Maine”; I have a lasting understanding of turn-of-the-century American imperialism, the power and danger of a jingoist press, the histories of complex relationships between the U.S. and the Philippines and Cuba, and Teddy Roosevelt’s unusual path to national prominence. My initial, vague interest blossomed into a fascination that I did not expect when I first set out. I felt a sense of pride as I tucked the stack of paper neatly into a binder to be handed in.

Happy to be done, but even happier to have done it, I felt as if I had summited a peak that had seemed ineffably large from below. And I had certainly needed a big push.

Perusing class syllabi my first semester in college, I came upon a description of a final assignment in a history class that looked interesting: a fifteen- to twenty-page research paper. “I can do that,” I thought, “I’ve done it before.”

I didn’t know how lucky I was to be in the small minority of college freshmen who had learned how to write a research paper in high school. Most American high school students graduate without ever being encouraged to explore a topic in such depth, and yet this is exactly the kind of work they will encounter in college, especially in the humanities. In an era in which the president is invested in making college an opportunity all can afford, it’s only fitting that all should be afforded the proper preparation.

We do a disservice to students when we don’t ask them to do challenging work that will hold them in good stead in college and beyond. True, hard-working teachers, some of whom have over 150 students to teach, often simply do not have the time to grade this kind of assignment. In a perfect world, there would be time and resources to spare for extensive feedback to every student. But a research paper that receives even a little feedback is better than no research paper at all. The former still immeasurably deepens a student’s knowledge, skill set, self-discipline, and confidence.

I have my high school history teacher to thank for the confidence with which I approached my first college research paper. I ended up majoring in history and was comfortable writing a senior thesis of more than one hundred pages. Now, with The Concord Review, I have the wonderful task of recognizing student achievement. And yet, I’m painfully aware that The Concord Review’s young authors are the exceptions—those high schoolers who have written extensive history research papers. Those published go on to great things; many attend top colleges and four have been named Rhodes Scholars. Without a doubt, these are bright students. But how many bright students in the public school system have brilliant papers within them? If they aren’t afforded that first push, we may never find out.
2015
We’ve got a lot to celebrate!
Spring Social and Awards Dinner
Thursday, May 28, 2015
4:00-8:00 p.m.

Schedule of Events
4:00 Museum opens
4:30-5:30 Guided Tours
5:30-6:00 Cocktail Social
6:00-6:15 CCSS Meeting
6:15-8:00 Dinner & Awards

Tickets: $35/person

Register by May 1, 2015 at http://www.ctsocialstudies.org/
or send check to CCSS, c/o Max Amoh, CCSS Treasurer,
10 Clark Street, Apt. 2, New Haven, CT 06511-3802

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Start a Rho Kappa Chapter Today!

RHO KAPPA National Social Studies Honor Society is the only national organization for high school juniors and seniors that recognizes excellence in the field of social studies. Membership in RHO KAPPA is an honor bestowed upon students by a local chapter for accomplishments in social studies and overall academic achievement. Any accredited high school can apply to start a chapter, through which students will be inducted into the RHO KAPPA Social Studies Honor Society.

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

Professional Opportunities

Summer Institutes: Teaching the Humanities through Art
Smithsonian American Art Museum
Monday, July 13–Friday, July 17, 2015  OR
Monday, July 27–Friday, July 31, 2015

Be inspired this summer at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, as you join colleagues from across the country for an exciting exploration of the connections among American art, social studies, history, and English/language arts. Attend one of our week-long institutes in the nation’s capital, Washington, D.C. Stay connected with your newfound colleagues and museum staff throughout the year.

Core subject teachers for grades 6-12 may apply as individuals or as part of a team. Priority will be given to social studies and English/language arts teachers.

Applications are due April 1, 2015. Registration Fee: $200 per participant

For more information and the application please visit: http://americanart.si.edu/education/dev/institutes/

Graduate credits, scholarships, and low-cost housing accommodations are available. For more information, please contact us at AmericanArtInstitutes@si.edu

American Institute for Economic Research (AIER)

AIER is inviting high school teachers, particularly those who teach in the Social Studies, Math or English departments, to our summer workshop (June 22-26). Through this workshop teachers learn how to apply key economic concepts to create engaging lesson plans.

AIER’s Teach the Teachers Initiative explores major economics concepts including Money and Inflation; Business Cycles; and Government and the Economy. Participants will choose one economic concept to create a lesson plan for their students and use knowledge gained during the workshop to field test the lesson in their classrooms.

Registration is due by May 1st (rolling admission, class size of 20) with a refundable $150 registration fee (refunded upon completion of the workshop). Accommodations and meals are provided and travel expenses will be reimbursed up to $150. Upon completion of the field tested lesson and feedback report a stipend of $500 will be provided.

AIER has partnered with Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) to prove 3 Graduate In-Service Credits ($300) or 45 Professional Development Points ($100). A Certificate of completion from AIER and MCLA is also available at no additional cost.

For additional information or to register, please see the attached brochure or visit our web page at https://www.aijer.org/teach-teachers

From Mesa Verde to Santa Fe: Pueblo Identity in the Southwest

A Three-Week National Endowment for the Humanities Summer InstituteJune 28–July 18, 2015

Join us at Crow Canyon in southwestern Colorado for an extraordinary professional development opportunity for educators. The program is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), which provides stipends to help cover expenses. The faculty includes educators, archaeologists, and American Indian scholars. Information about all 2015 NEH Summer Institutes and Workshops is available on the NEH website.

This little-known history is the subject of From Mesa Verde to Santa Fe: Pueblo Identity in the Southwest, a three-week NEH Summer Institute for K–12 educators. The institute scholars will examine this history, piecing together the data and perspectives of archaeology, ethnohistory, and oral history. The institute will be distinguished by a commitment to creating a multicultural community of inquiry that will be led by notable American Indian scholars, Southwestern archaeologists, and educators. It will be based at Crow Canyon and will feature two field trips to significant ancient and contemporary Pueblo villages. Institute scholars will spend several days each at Mesa Verde National Park and at historic Pueblo and Spanish colonial communities in northern New Mexico.
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! For more information: www.umaine.edu/teachingcanada

The Rochester Reform Trail is a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Landmarks of American History and Culture Workshop for K-12 School Teachers, hosted by the College at Brockport, State University of New York, and the State University of New York Research Foundation. We are hosting two week-long workshops in July of 2015 exploring the antebellum reform movement. Landmark visits include an Erie Canal packet-boat cruise; field trips to Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Historic National Park, the Susan B. Anthony House and Museum, and local sites associated with long-time Rochester resident Frederick Douglass (including Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony’s gravesites at Mt. Hope Cemetery). NEH summer scholars receive a stipend to offset travel and accommodation expenses. Please see the website below for more information. Hope you will join us!

See our webpage: www.brockport.edu/rocreformtrail Like us on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/RochesterReformTrail Follow us on Twitter: https://twitter.com/RochesterReform

Jose Torre jtorre@brockport.edu

http://www.brockport.edu/rocreformtrail/index.html

Professional Opportunities
Thursday
May 14, 2015
9 am - 2:30 pm

ONE DAY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP FOR EDUCATORS IN GRADES 9-12 ON ELLIS ISLAND

SPACE IS EXTREMELY LIMITED AND PRE-REGISTRATION WITH PAYMENT IS REQUIRED BY April 14, 2015

To register send an email to Jessica Cameron-Bush, Director of Education and provide your name, address, grade level and subject(s) taught.

jcameron-bush@saveellisislan.org

In Addition:
One Day Workshop for Teachers Grades 4-8
Thursday May 21, 2015 9 am - 2:30 pm
Register by April 21
CONNECTICUT COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES
MEMBERSHIP FORM

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.

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