As the school year draws to a close, I need to express my sincere gratitude to our many members of the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies for the important work you do every day. Our new Frameworks have strengthened our capacities to deliver high quality learning experiences to all students. Many of you have pursued professional development opportunities offered by CCSS to further hone your pedagogical expertise, and we have worked diligently and collaboratively to share our expertise, insights, and experiences with each other. Together, we have seized the momentum generated by the new Frameworks, and we have accomplished much over the last few years.

As you know, the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies has been at the forefront of advocacy efforts to ensure that the social studies remains integral to all aspects of our school communities. Because many educators had justifiably grown concerned about the marginalization of the social studies in our schools, CCSS needed to take the lead in bringing awareness of these developments to policymakers and stakeholders. As social studies educators, we must model the very values, skills, and disposition that we seek to nurture in our students. As such, given recent proposed changes to the high school graduation credit requirements, it is important to continue to work together with your colleagues, administrators, Board of Education members, and other stakeholders to maintain or expand social studies offerings in our schools. While this ostensibly seems to affect high school teachers the most, educators at all levels can take proactive measures so that meaningful social studies instruction, resources, and opportunities are present from kindergarten all the way to graduation. Moreover, our state’s financial landscape remains tenuous. Deep cuts in educational expenditures, both at the state and local levels, run the risk of having a significant, long-lasting impact on the important work we do and the academic and social growth of our students. Social

Inspirational. There is no other word for some of the events and information that we have encountered over the last few months. Let’s start with the CCSS Awards dinner held on May 26. How can one not be impressed with the talents and achievements of the award winners. And certainly a young student teacher – accomplished as she or he may be so early in one’s career – can see the challenge ahead: to be the best one can be over a lifetime in teaching. See pictures on page 3.

If you missed NERC this year you missed additional inspiring moments. Terrence Roberts took us back to his experiences as a member of the “Little Rock Nine”. One can see the pictures in history books and note the expressions of determination and anger on the faces of respective parties to the integration drama in 1957. Mr. Roberts brought some of the memories back and we gained some small sense of what it meant to walk in his shoes. Engaging and generous with his time, yes, he too was inspiring. See page 4 for other speakers and events of the conference – and resolve to get to NERC next year.

One need look no further than the 2016 winner of the national teacher of the year, Jahana Hayes of Waterbury. Her story and achievements as a teacher working with students in the school and community where she grew up is an inspiration to her students and to each of us. Her grace and determination raises all of us. Congratulations, Jahana.

But about the time you think you have heard it all, there comes a story that is simply overwhelming. Some of you may have read a book written by Kristen Hannah, The Nightengale – a story of two sisters caught up in the German occupation of France during World War II. While a novel, it is apparently based on actual events. The New York Times recently reported on a male “Nightengale”, and you can find that story on pages 6-8. Now 95, (and still teaching!) Justus Rosenberg, a Polish Jew studying in Paris, was caught up in the early German occupation and was “drafted” to work with a resistance group. We’ll say no more except to note that
"inspiration" does not begin to describe his life.

We have filled the pages of Yankee Post over the last few years with reports from various states and their efforts to promote informed citizenship. On pages 16 and 17 we juxtapose a speech by Randi Weingarten and a new law by North Dakota establishing a citizenship requirement for graduation. You even get a chance to take part of the North Dakota test. Is there a "citizenship problem" in this country? Will a course or a test help fix it?

Finally, many years ago, a director of a national historical park told one of us that with the retirement of the park historian, there was no need to hire another historian since the history of the park had already been written. We are seldom left speechless but how do you respond to something that bizarre? If you need proof of Yogi Berra’s comment that “it ain’t over until it’s over”, turn to page 14 and read about potential new discoveries in King Tut’s tomb. As David Bosso reports in his president’s message, history and social studies are alive.

All this and much more awaits you in this issue.

And while Yogi may have been on to something, we must acknowledge that the school year is almost over. Our best wishes for a rewarding and inspiring summer.

Tim and Dan

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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

President’s Message - continued

Studies education is the foundation of public education, and indeed, it is the bedrock of a democratic society. Through our individual and collective advocacy efforts, let’s continue to demonstrate the power of a robust social studies education for the cultivation of civic-minded, well-informed, and engaged citizens.

Public recognition of excellence is another way to underscore the value of social studies education. The Connecticut Council for the Social Studies is proud to continue its tradition of honoring excellence in the classroom and service to the social studies community in our state. Congratulations to our award winners! Your commitment has made a difference, and we are privileged to recognize and praise your efforts. We hope that your award further empowers you, your colleagues, and your students to prioritize social studies education in your professional setting and beyond. With your award, you join a long line of distinguished educators, public servants, and civic organizations that have worked tirelessly in service of the values and ideals we strive for every day. On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies, thank you!

David Bosso
Top: CT State Education Commissioner Dr. Dianna Wentzell
Middle l/r:
Noah Webster Museum Hostess: Jenn Diola-Matos
Pre-service awardee Christina deVecchis
Stedman awardee William Vincent

CCSS Awardees: Left to Right
William Vincent
Christine Jewell
William Casertano
Christina deVecchis
Carolyn Ivanoff
Commissioner Wentzell
Laura Krenicki
Liz Shapiro
CCSS President David Bosso
HIGHLIGHTS OF NERC 2016

Top Left - NCSS's Susan Griffin and Terrence Roberts
Top Right - Kidger Awardee David Blight
Left - NEHTA's Ed Dorgan
Right - James Moran and Teacher/Educator Awardee Tim Castner
The Washington Post

National Teacher of the Year: I was a teenage mom, and teachers changed my life

By Emma Brown April 28

‘If it wasn’t for her, I wouldn’t be graduating’

Jahana Hayes always knew she wanted to be a teacher, but she didn’t always believe she could be one. She grew up surrounded by poverty, drugs and violence in the fading industrial city of Waterbury, Conn. But she loved school, and her teachers told her she could someday go to college. Even when she became pregnant at 17, her teachers refused to give up on her. They showed her how she could continue her education. She graduated from high school and seven years later enrolled in a community college. She went on to earn a four-year degree, and then she realized her dream: She became a high school history teacher in the same town where she grew up.

For the past decade, she has worked to give her students at Waterbury’s John F. Kennedy High School the same hope and passion and confidence that her teachers once gave her. She has pushed them to think beyond the classroom, contributing to their communities through volunteer and service projects. And she has been so successful that on Thursday she was named the 2016 National Teacher of the Year.

“Jahana is a shining example of an educator who cares about her students and has mastered her craft,” wrote Vince Schaff, a parent at Kennedy High, in support of Hayes’s application. Schaff wrote that the honor would be nice for Hayes, but that her real reward is the thousands of lives she has helped change through teaching and mentoring. “And that has no equivalent,” he wrote.

Hayes, 43, will be honored at the White House next week and then spend a year traveling the nation as an ambassador for a profession that has been battered and bruised by bitter debates over education policy. She said she wants to help remind Americans that teachers have the potential to be powerful, positive forces in their students’ lives.

“I really think that we need to change the narrative, change the dialogue about what teaching is as a profession,” she said in an interview. “We’ve spent a lot of time in the last few years talking about the things that are not working. We really need to shift our attention to all the things that are working.” She also wants to help remind schools and teachers about the power of community service. Her students regularly participate in fundraisers for cancer and autism research and they volunteer for Habitat for Humanity. Serving others shows her students that no matter how difficult their own background, they can help people, she said. “They’re empowered. I see students who lack confidence, who have no self-efficacy, who really think that they have nothing valuable to give — I see them emerge as leaders. Over time I see them wanting to do better, wanting to be better. I see that over and over again.”

She also wants to highlight the need for more teachers of color in schools nationwide. “As a child growing up in an urban poverty-stricken environment, I only came in contact with one minority teacher. This contact greatly influenced the person I became,” she wrote in her application. Most of her teachers lived outside her community and she couldn’t see herself in them, she wrote: “As a child I would have loved to see a teacher who looked like me and shared my cultural background.”

Hayes said her students know her story. They know that she comes from the same streets that they call home. And their shared background is powerful. “It definitely creates a level of trust,” she said. “I tell students, ‘I get it.’ I say, ‘I understand. The building you live in is the building I grew up in.’ ”

And for young women who become mothers before they’ve finished their education, she said, she has a message: “This is not the end of your journey. You may have to do things differently, but you absolutely can do everything you ever wanted to do.”

The National Teacher of the Year program, run by the Council of Chief State School Officers, is meant to identify and celebrate the country’s exceptional educators. Besides Hayes, the other finalists for the 2016 honor are Nathan Gibs-Bowling of Washington, Daniel Jocz of California and Shawn Sheehan of Oklahoma.
The Professor Has a Daring Past

The students know that he lived through World War II, that he speaks several languages. And yet he has left that history a bit vague. “He has talked about his experience in the war in Paris, and how he had to flee, but he doesn’t really get into the full details,” said Vikramaditya Joshi, 19, who pressed Dr. Rosenberg to come further out of retirement and be his adviser.

The details are worth knowing. Justus (pronounced YOO-stice) Rosenberg is thought to be the last remaining member of an extralegal team assembled by the journalist Varian Fry in 1940 to provide safe passage out of Vichy France to anti-fascist intellectuals and cultural figures fleeing the Nazis. Mr. Fry was something of a Raoul Wallenberg for artists: Two thousand men and women, including Hannah Arendt, Marc Chagall and André Breton, were shepherded to safety by Mr. Fry’s network.

When he fell in with Mr. Fry, Mr. Rosenberg was 19 and looked 14, blond and blue-eyed with flawless French, enabling him to fly under the radar of the Vichy authorities. He was quickly entrusted with scouting border crossings, ferrying to refugees crucial — often doctored — documents, and running errands from menial to dangerous. He went on to serve with the French Resistance and then the United States Army.

In a war when all survival, especially by Eastern European Jews like him, was unlikely, his experience was particularly remarkable. “I think of my life,” Dr. Rosenberg mused on a frigid February afternoon in the kitchen of his Rhinebeck, N.Y., home, “as what the French call concours de circonstances — a confluence of circumstances.” Seventy years after the series of improbable events that enabled his survival, he remains cheerfully amazed at his good fortune. “I was very lovable, in those days,” he said with an impish laugh.

He has spent the last seven decades teaching American students, including 50 years divided between the New School in Manhattan and Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, where he arrived to teach French, German and Russian literature in 1962. “He bears witness to history and to intellectual tradition,” said Leon Botstein, president of Bard. “I think he has been an inspiration to students.”

Born in the Free City of Danzig (now Gdansk, Poland) in 1921, Justus Rosenberg had a younger sister and parents who prospered in an import-export business. He attended secular schools. Jewish life was limited to Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

When the Nazis rose to power, anti-Semitism grew in Danzig. In 1937, his parents suggested he continue studying in England or France. He chose Paris. “You can imagine the wonderful thoughts in my mind,” Dr. Rosenberg said with a chuckle. “I was dreaming of beautiful French girls. I was 16. Let’s not kid ourselves.” He boarded at a prestigious school and quickly became fluent in French. “That would save my life,” he said. “That, and that I looked very young.”

After the Nazis rose to power, anti-Semitism grew in Danzig. In 1937, his parents suggested he continue studying in England or France. He chose Paris. “You can imagine the wonderful thoughts in my mind,” Dr. Rosenberg said with a chuckle. “I was dreaming of beautiful French girls. I was 16. Let’s not kid ourselves.” He boarded at a prestigious school and quickly became fluent in French. “That would save my life,” he said. “That, and that I looked very young.”

When the Nazis invaded Poland, in September 1939, he lost contact with his family. Suddenly penniless, he took odd jobs - first selling vegetables, then as an extra in a French theater (He had a single line in the Jules Verne play “Around the World in 80 Days”: “Liverpool bound!”) But war loomed. He set out from Paris just days before the Nazis arrived. He took a Métro to the end of the line and continued by foot and by bicycle, first for Bayonne, where he had been told, erroneously, that he might be able to board a ship. He turned and headed for Toulouse. “I was supposed to take an exam at the Sorbonne before the invasion of the Germans,” he said, “and they said we cannot have the exams here — the university
Continued from page 6  will withdraw to Toulouse. Get to Toulouse and you can take your exam there. Except by then France had fallen.” He was not alone. The roads were clogged with families, their worldly possessions in wheelbarrows. Toulouse was overrun. Dr. Rosenberg recalled: “People slept on benches. The hotels were overcrowded. They said there was a former movie house called Cinema Pax, and there they allowed people to stay overnight. They ripped the chairs out and put straw bags on the floor.” He knew no one in the city.

He happened to be assigned to a spot on the floor next to someone who was visited by a young American student named Miriam Davenport, who took a liking to Mr. Rosenberg. She said he reminded her of her younger brother, and suggested that Justus, whose name she Americanized to “Gussie,” follow her to Marseille. He did. By then Ms. Davenport had connected with two other Americans: a young heiress named Mary Jayne Gold and the American journalist Varian Fry. Mr. Fry, then 33, had been sent by the hastily constructed “Emergency Rescue Committee” — a group of New York intellectuals eager to cast a lifeline to their European counterparts. The committee was formed during an emotional luncheon held in June 1940 in Manhattan at the Commodore Hotel at 42nd Street and Lexington Avenue. They needed money, visas and an on-the-ground contact in Europe. Mr. Fry arrived in Marseille with $3,000 strapped to his calf, a passport valid for six months, a list of about 200 names and the blessing of Eleanor Roosevelt. The plan was to stay one month.

The armistice France had made with Germany that month included a grim proviso: the “surrender on demand” of all anti-fascist refugees. Desperate migrants immediately appeared at Mr. Fry’s door. Working with the American consul, Hiram Bingham IV, who had already begun a quiet rescue operation of his own, Mr. Fry set up an office, first in the Hotel Splendide and then in an old leather-goods shop, which he later named the Centre Américain de Secours (American Relief Center). It quickly became apparent that 200 was an arbitrary, and low, number. More names were added to his lists, and many more documents were needed, like passports and exit visas with official stamps. Mr. Fry and his team of expats, locals and refugees (including a skilled forger) would supply them all.

Also needed was a courier to deliver messages to refugees and scout out safe passage, especially the overland route through Spain. Miriam Davenport suggested the young “Aryan-looking,” French-speaking Mr. Rosenberg. “We have an office boy who can never get enough to eat,” Dr. Rosenberg read aloud at his kitchen table, scanning a letter that Mr. Fry had sent to his wife, one of countless memos that Dr. Rosenberg has preserved in binders and boxes, documentation of his extraordinary journey.

In her out-of-print memoir, “Crossroads Marseilles 1940,” Mary Jayne Gold (who provided crucial additional money for Mr. Fry, as did the heiress and art collector Peggy Guggenheim) described Dr. Rosenberg as a young man: “The boy’s face picked up the light from everywhere, even in my dim little room. His cheeks were pink and high and his hair was a ruddy blond. … There was a rather pointed nose running down the middle. In fact, he looked like a fox, a nice little fox. … The boy was young and curious.”

As the year progressed, life in Marseille became increasingly dangerous, and the refugee crisis increasingly dire. Both the Vichy government and the United States Department of State were losing patience with Mr. Fry. And in August 1941, Mr. Fry was forced to leave France. “Miriam tried to get Varian to help get Gussie out,” said Pierre Sauvage, a filmmaker who interviewed Ms. Davenport extensively for his coming documentary on Mr. Fry, “And Crown Thy Good.” “Varian said, ‘Nice kid, but not much I can do.’” he added. “There were probably tens of thousands seeking his help.”

However, according to a letter sent to Ms. Davenport that had been in the archives at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, Mr. Rosenberg was very much in Mr. Fry’s thoughts. “You also ask about Gussie,” he wrote in the summer of 1941. “He was born in Dantzig and the Dantzig quota is closed.” It was now “too late” anyway, he wrote, because the new regulations forbade the consulates from issuing visas to anyone with “near relatives” in Germany or occupied countries. Those refugees were now denied passage. With Mr. Fry gone, Mr. Rosenberg’s protection evaporated. He tried to cross the border to Spain anyway. He was promptly arrested and jailed. “Next time,” the sentencing judge said, “try harder.” He was released after two weeks.

He returned to Marseille and contacted Jean Gemähling, a Resistance fighter and member of Mr. Fry’s network. On his advice, Mr. Rosenberg went to Grenoble. There, in August 1942, he was rounded up with several hundred other Jews, most of them foreign-born. He was taken by bus to a transit camp, Vénissieux, outside the city of Lyon. It was blisteringly hot; he slept on the ground, outside the barracks. On his first night he was shaken awake by a soldier who told him the camp inmates would soon be sent to a labor camp in Poland.

In the morning he ran into a fellow internee, a medical student who was the sister of a friend. He asked her what illness might help him avoid the transport. She suggested peritonitis and told him the symptoms. He fell to the ground — his acting skills in use — and began writhing and moaning. In the camp infirmary he rubbed a thermometer until it registered a dangerous fever. The ruse worked: He was rushed to a nearby hospital and given ether. “When I woke up, I really had pain in my side. I touched it and it had a big bandage.” His appendix had been removed.

When he next woke, a young French nurse sat beside him. She told him that patients from the camp would be sent on the next transport. “I said, ‘Can you do me a favor?’” He asked for paper and pen and implored her to mail a note. “Have I mentioned it to you yet?” asked Dr. Rosenberg, picking up the narrative the next day as he drove from Bard’s campus to his home in Rhinebeck. It is clear he relishes this story. Within days, he said, a priest connected to the Resistance arrived. “The plan was a simple one,” he continued, recounting how the letter found its way to the network of Abbé Alexandre Glasberg, a priest who had converted from Judaism. Father Glasberg ran an operation of Christians committed to rescuing Jews from the dragnet.

Continued on page 8
“Keep in mind they had taken my clothes away,” Dr. Rosenberg said. A sympathetic priest would arrange for a parcel to be hidden in the hospital toilet containing a shirt, a pair of shorts and sandals. Below the window there would be a bicycle. He still recalls the priest’s parting words. “‘Good luck. May God bless you,’” Dr. Rosenberg quoted. Barely healed, he set off from the hospital by bicycle, making his way to a safe house where he could recuperate. There, he received a new identity, Jean-Paul Guiton — a “fine French name” — whose father was dead and whose mother was Alsatian (to account for his accent). His birthplace, he said, was now Saint-Malo, a city whose town hall, and birth records, had been destroyed.

As he recovered, he memorized German insignia to prepare for the Resistance cell he was now working with. “They wanted me to travel to towns, go to cafes and try to recognize the units of the people who were there,” Dr. Rosenberg said. He was then assigned to an outfit tasked with rescuing contraband arms parachuted onto farms. Later he was assigned to a “real guerrilla group” and learned to throw grenades at German convoys. Dr. Rosenberg mimed the action, grinning, describing a vision of a young, tanned Resistance fighter with a magazine of bullets strapped across his chest.

Mr. Rosenberg lived as Jean-Paul Guiton until the summer of 1944, when three soldiers in unfamiliar uniforms wandered into his sight lines. Americans. He went out to meet them — and soon found himself attached to the reconnaissance company of the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion, as a scout, guide and translator. He assumed a position in the jeep up front, always next to the driver.

Telling the story, Dr. Rosenberg slid an overstuffed binder across the table. In it was a paper stamped “WAR DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL,” detailing that assignment. Next he showed a letter from Lt. Col. Peter Rodgers. “To my very dear friend ‘Gus’ — now Dr. Justus Rosenberg — who I hold in the highest esteem. A brave, intrepid soldier …” And then one in French, a certificate of his service to the Resistance, September 1942 to August 1944. Mr. Rosenberg spent a year with the 636th. One day the men played a joke on him, driving away while he spoke to a farmer. He ran and jumped into the jeep’s back, his regular seat taken. The car then hit a land mine, killing the man in the passenger seat and tearing the legs off the driver. Mr. Rosenberg escaped with cuts and bruises: the confluence of circumstances, again.

After the war, Mr. Rosenberg returned to his studies at the Sorbonne and became a supply officer for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. His parents and sister had also survived: the illegal ship they were on was intercepted by the British; the family was interned on the island of Mauritius for several years. Dr. Rosenberg would not see them again until 1952. Back in Paris, he applied for a visa to the United States; he was told to return “in six years.” Army pals pulled strings for a preferential visa; Mr. Rosenberg was soon teaching French and German language and literature and finishing his doctorate in Ohio.

Some years later, as a young professor at Swarthmore College, Dr. Rosenberg accompanied students on a trip to meet Fidel Castro in Havana just after the revolution. But his excitement, in this country, came mostly from his relationships with writers. In 1959 he joined the New School teaching political and cultural history once a week — a position he held until 2013. In 1962, he joined the Bard faculty, where he has worked with luminaries like Isaac Bashevis Singer and Chinua Achebe. Two years ago he and his wife of 20 years, Karin, started the Justus and Karin Rosenberg Foundation to fund efforts fighting hate and anti-Semitism.

In 1952, Dr. Rosenberg tracked down Miriam Davenport. He thanked her for her role in his survival. Ms. Davenport replied immediately, writing that she had “simply shrieked with joy” to receive his note. “You were a symbol of sorts, to me, in those days,” she wrote. “Everyone was moving Heaven and earth to save famous men, anti-fascist intellectuals, etc.” And there you were, she added, “a nice, intelligent youngster with no family, no money, no influence, no hope, no fascinating past.”

The Commissioner and the High School Classroom - Teacher Collaboration

On Monday, March 21, Commissioner of Education, Dr. Dianna Wentzell, visited Berlin High School to co-teach with Dr. David Bosso, President of the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies. The two educators worked together to design and deliver several iterations of a lesson for the freshman course, The World and Its People. This course includes the study of Africa, China, the Middle East, India, and Japan, and examines historical and cultural aspects of each region from ancient times to the present. As a result of the new Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks, Dr. Bosso and his colleagues in the Social Studies Department at Berlin High School have shifted from a regional to a thematic approach, with five units focusing on Geographic Interconnections; Culture, Religions, and Philosophies; Power and Authority; Imperialism, Nationalism, and Sovereignty; and Human Rights and Social Justice.

The co-taught lesson, which centered on British imperialism in India, was part of the Imperialism, Nationalism, and Sovereignty unit. Using the Question Formulation Technique, students asked and revised questions to set up an inquiry investigation into perceptions and treatment of Indians under British rule. Dr. Wentzell, a former social studies teacher, has been a long-time friend and staunch supporter of the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies.
The Future of Democracy: How humanities education supports civic participation

By Danielle Allen | HUMANITIES, May/June 2016 | Volume 37, Number 2

• Lesson in civics: The higher one’s verbal score on the SAT, the more likely one is to participate politically. Not so for math scores. --Used with permission of Springer

For the last decade or more, the goal of readying young people for college and career has dominated discussions of educational policy. In 2010 Congress called on the American Academy of Arts and Sciences to study the question of the current state and future role in the country of the humanities and social sciences. The resultant commission produced the report “The Heart of the Matter” in 2013, and urged that alongside career readiness and other goals we should also foster “participatory readiness” in our young people. By this, the commission, on which I served, meant that our educational systems and supporting cultural organizations ought to prepare young people for civic participation in their communities and in the country’s political institutions. The insight of the “Heart of the Matter” report is that, of all the disciplines, the humanities and social sciences have a special contribution to make to civic education.

Over the last four years, I’ve worked with a team of researchers to study assessment in the humanities and liberal arts (HULA). As will surprise no one, when practitioners of the humanities—whether college instructors or public humanities program directors—describe their pursuits, they frequently mention cultivating civic orientations and capacities in their students. As it happens, some small fragments of data back up the idea that humanities and social sciences education achieve relevant effects. Scholars have long known that attending college seems to encourage people to increase their engagement in the political process. Importantly, level of education is an even stronger predictor than income of whether one will vote on Election Day. This suggests that something is happening on college campuses, and not in the K–12 system, that goes beyond the provision of economic opportunity. But what?

Not all college experience is the same, of course, and this fact holds an important key. Students have varying experiences depending on, among other things, their choice of major. Interestingly, there is a statistically significant difference in the rates of political participation between those who have graduated with humanities majors and those who graduate with STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) majors. Data from the Department of Education shows that, for the class of 2008, while 92.8 percent of humanities majors had voted in an election within a year of graduation; the same was true of only 83.5 percent of STEM majors. A comparison of 1993 graduates showed that 44.1 percent of former humanities majors had written to a public official within ten years of graduating, while the percentage of STEM majors who had written to a public official was 30.1.

Of course, the self-selection of students into the humanities and STEM majors may mean that the difference reflected by these data points derives from underlying features of the students rather than from the teaching they received. Yet these patterns also show up in a study that controls for students’ preexisting levels of interest in politics by Duke University political scientist Sunshine Hillygus. In Hillygus’s study, “The Missing Link: Exploring the Relationship between Higher Education and Political Engagement,” participation in social-science college curricula is a strong predictor of later political participation.

The difference between these educational strands in higher education is mirrored in K–12 education as well, Hillygus finds. Just as those who major in the humanities or take social-science courses in college are more likely to participate politically after graduation, so too those whose verbal skills are higher by the end of high school, as measured by SATs, are more likely to become active political participants than those with high math scores. Moreover, the SAT effect endures even when college-level curricular choices are controlled for.

Correlation is not the same as causation, of course, but those with better verbal skills are clearly more ready to be civically and politically involved. Something outside the classroom may have motivated them to become politically involved in the first place, and then, once engaged, these students sought the verbal skills to thrive in a public sphere. Or the verbal competence may have made it easier to engage. We don’t have a study that considers levels of engagement before and after significant increases in verbal competence. But we do have a tantalizing suggestion that the work of the humanities is intrinsically related to the development of “participatory readiness.” That there is a connection between the humanities and liberal arts and civic education should not be surprising. It is, however, often overlooked, despite its great significance.

When we think about education policy, we often ask how a mass democracy such as ours can thrive in a competitive global economy. As we focus on that question, as the 1983 report “A Nation at Risk” and the 2007 report “Rising Above the Gathering Storm” taught us to do, the STEM disciplines look like safe bets to secure a competitive economy and vocational success for our young people. But competitiveness alone is not enough to answer the question of how a mass democracy can thrive in the current world. Because of science, technology, engineering, and both math and medicine, the world saw a rapid acceleration of population growth rates in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. World population grew from 1 to 7 billion in little more than 200 years. In short, the human world in the wake of the industrial, aeronautical, biomedical, and digital revolutions simply has a different scale than it did in earlier eras of human history, and the STEM fields get credit for unleashing the “mass” part of “mass democracy.” We surely need their help to navigate this new landscape.

But if the STEM fields gave us the “mass” part of “mass democracy,” the humanities and social sciences gave us the “democracy” part. The people in this country and in Europe who designed systems of representative democracy had been broadly and deeply educated in history, geography, philosophy, literature, and art. This makes obvious sense the moment one pauses to ask what is involved in educating someone to participate in political and civic activities. The pithiest summary of the intellectual demands of democratic citizenship that I know of appears in the second sentence of the Declaration of Independence. To understand the force of its argument, it is necessary to quote that...
Continued from page 9  

sentence in full, with special attention to the final clause:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights; that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed; that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

In the final clause of this long sentence, the Declaration sums up the central intellectual labor of the democratic citizen. Citizens must judge whether their governments are meeting or failing to meet their responsibility, spelled out earlier in the sentence, to secure rights. If a government is failing in its core purposes, its citizens have the job of figuring this out and of figuring out how to change direction. This requires making judgments about grounding principles for the political order and about possible alternative approaches to the formal institutional organization of state power. Properly conducted, the citizen’s intellectual labor should result in probabilistic judgments about a causal question: What combination of principle and organizational form is most likely to secure collective safety and happiness?

If this is the work of citizenship, what intellectual resources do we need to carry it out? To make judgments about the course of human events, and our government’s role in them, surely we need history, anthropology, cultural studies, economics, political science, sociology, and psychology, not to mention some of the tools of math (especially for the statistical reasoning necessary for probabilistic judgment) and science, because governmental policy does intersect with scientific questions. If we are to make judgments about the core principles or values that should orient our judgments about what will bring about our safety and happiness, surely we need philosophy, religion or the history of religion, and literature. Then, since the democratic citizen does not make his or her judgments alone, or proceed to execute them as a solitary Prince Valiant, we need the arts of conversation, eloquence, and prophetic speech. Preparing ourselves to exercise these arts surely takes us back again to literature, and also to the visual arts, art history, film, and even music. In other words, we need the liberal arts. They were called the free person’s arts for a reason.

To say that we need all these disciplines in order to cultivate “participatory readiness” in our young people is not to say that we need precisely those versions of the disciplines that existed in the late eighteenth century. To the contrary, it is our job, working as scholars and teachers now, to build the most powerful intellectual tools we can and to decide for ourselves, learning from our predecessor’s successes and errors, how to shape these tools. If we care about shepherding a mass democracy through the complexities of our contemporary world, we cannot content ourselves with addressing only issues of economic security, public health, and transportation for populations scaled in the hundreds of millions. We must also tend to the “democracy” part of mass democracy. For this, we need the humanities and social sciences, not only in universities but also in our K–12 schools.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR  
Professor of Government and Education at Harvard, Danielle Allen is also director of Harvard’s Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics and Chair of the Mellon Foundation Board

Why We Must Teach History and Social Studies

I would like to share a story about a recent school discipline issue that illustrates the dangers of not educating our children about the past. I firmly believe we need to teach history and social studies in all grades beginning with our youngest students. This vignette illustrates for me the disservice we do to all of our children by not educating them about the past. The dangers that face our children by not teaching them history and the events and collective experiences of our nation are very real. Not teaching these lessons leaves our students in ignorance. It opens them to the forces of intolerance and narrowness and leaves them with tunnel vision in a wide and complex world. Every student deserves a sound civic and social education that enables them to make sound social and civic choices and enables us all to participate, protect, and perpetuate our democratic society for posterity.

I am an assistant principal at a middle school in Connecticut. Just before the school break I received a call from one of the teachers in an 8th grade team about a vandalism incident at two lockers. I walked down the hallway to meet with the teacher and she showed me two swastikas scratched into the lockers right through the paint. The custodians were called and I had them sand the lockers down which admittedly further damaged the paint but removed the symbol. I hope that the kids that see the sanded lockers will remember what was there and why it was removed for the rest of the year.

As the custodians were doing their work, I went to each classroom in the team. I briefly spoke to each class during that period and each class received the same message. I was disappointed in the vandalism, of course, as I would be of any disrespect or damage to our building, but the swastika that had been scratched into the locker was a symbol of hate and would not be tolerated in our school. I told the students that if they saw anything such as this again they should report it. I emphasized that telling was not tattling and that this type of graffiti was symbolically evil. I didn’t lecture long and didn’t raise my voice. The students were attentive and the visit had the desired effect of bringing several students who had witnessed the vandalism to the office later in the day to report the name of the student who had done the damage to the lockers. The students who came forward were thanked and reassured that speaking up was the right thing to do and I also stressed the confidentiality factor.

I knew the student that had done the damage pretty well. When I brought her into the office, I asked if she knew why she was here with me. She answered that she did and admitted that she was the one who had damaged the lockers. I asked her why she had chosen to scratch a swastika into the lockers not once but twice. Why would she choose such a terrible symbol? She really couldn’t answer why she did it and it became evident that she had no understanding of why the symbol speaks such hateful volumes of crimes against humanity to so many people around the world. Careful and nonjudgmental questioning revealed that my student had no knowledge of who Hitler was or the Second World War. She could not make any connection to historical touchstones or events of the 20th century. She had heard of the Holocaust but could not verbalize anything about it or even that the word itself encompassed the horror, hatred, and the extermination of six million Jews and five million other peoples deemed unworthy of life by a so called master race.

Is it eye opening that an 8th grade student in our district, our State, our nation would have no inklung to the horrific emotional response that the swastika evokes for many around the world and why? How many adults cannot understand or verbalize the horror of that symbolism? I taught high school history and social studies for many years. I have been a high school and now a middle school administrator for a large portion of my career. Over the years it has become more and more evident that our students receive scant and scattered time in both history and social studies content and the important skills that accompany the subject. Social Studies is almost completely marginalized at the elementary level. Standardized testing demands and an emphasis on STEM have all but eviscerated this most important subject and its accompanying skills. Ironically, the important skills and vocabulary necessary for success on standardized testing are best taught in the context of the social studies. When students enter the 7th grade at our intermediate school, for the first time in their educational careers, they have a dedicated social studies period every day as a core academic subject. Our students respond with engagement to the subject matter, especially our boys. They enjoy social studies, the history, the geography, the information, and the non-fiction reading. But they find it so very hard. Our students lack the background to make connections to the stories of our nation and the world. They lack the necessary vocabulary to read their text books and the primary sources presented to them in class. Students have almost no background in geography, history, civics. Also sadly lacking in students is the ability to summarize, place information in context, develop informed opinions, and take an informed action based on the evaluation and understanding of source documents and information. These are all skills that history and social studies teach better than any other subject. These essential skills are not always being acquired in other subject areas despite the emphasis placed on them. Critical thinking, reading, and writing, and the 21st century skills of evaluating sources and understanding information from articles, the Internet, news reports, and various social media sources are essential to our modern lives. The skills that allow students to compare and contrast, to recognize antecedents, outcomes, cause and effect, to come to informed conclusions, and to make informed decisions are naturally embedded and acquired in the context of history and social studies education. Historically knowing history was essential to being well educated. History was considered the queen of disciplines. Knowing history and having the ability to understand the connections it fosters was the mark of a well-educated person.

History and civics were traditionally the subjects that were taught consistently through all grades because the purpose of education is to create good citizens, citizens who will participate in and carry on the democratic legacy and dreams of our nation.

Continued on page 12
As educators there is much work to be done with this student and all of our students. Every one of our students deserves a full and functional social studies education beginning during their earliest years. Skills and developmentally appropriate content will empower students to learn, to thrive, and to succeed. The content of social studies beginning with the stories and connections to our communities, states, our nation and our world needs to begin early for all students. From the earliest years education needs to help students feel connections and belonging. We need to provide students with authentic learning opportunities rooted in what is local or unique to their places, the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature and art of the community, their state, our nation and our world. Providing students first with a sense of belonging and connection to their communities in the early years provides a strong foundation for developing strong grounding and the security that enables them to successfully explore and focus on the larger world issues and ideas, as they grow and develop. It enables students from their earliest years to examine themselves, their communities and their environment. It enables students to learn about themselves and their surroundings and enables them to understand and place themselves in context with their world which expands outward as they grow and develop. Social studies illuminates the larger world. The lessons of history are authentic, compelling, engaging and motivate students to become excited about learning. If learning history is successful it strengthens communities and our society by promoting volunteerism, civic understanding, pride, and active citizenship. Teaching and learning history is not rote learning, it is not training, it is not formulaic. It is difficult, deep, wide and messy and it is true education.

There are so very many reasons for giving our students a strong K-12 history and social studies education that every one of them deserves. If we want to raise test scores, we need to teach history and social studies. If we want our students to read well, have strong vocabularies, develop the 21st century skills they need to succeed, we must teach history and social studies. If we want our students to identify with their communities, to feel a sense of belonging and connection, we must teach history and social studies. If we want to arm our students against the dangers of prejudice and intolerance we must teach history and social studies. If we want our students to become civic minded and active citizens we must teach history and social studies. The polarization of our country is deepening. Attitudes are narrower, less accepting. Differences in all areas are less tolerable. In a world of open technological connectivity society is becoming more and more disconnected and stratified, personally, politically, economically.

President Eisenhower would warn the nation in the midst of the Cold War in 1955, “Without Tolerance, without understanding for each other, without a spirit of brotherhood, we would soon cease to exist as a great nation.” We are a great nation, the greatest in world history, despite our flaws which must be taught and understood so that we may make ourselves greater. Our history, our common bonds and national values are the glue that holds this great and diverse nation together. One of the lessons that history teaches us through the centuries is that no nation that has lost touch with its history has thrived or survived. Thoughtful Americans have always known our nation, our freedoms, our way of life are ours to keep or to lose. In 1862 during the national crisis of Civil War, Lincoln would warn, “Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history” In the same speech Lincoln would remind us all, “We -- even we here -- hold the power, and bear the responsibility…We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth.” Our national history is the glue that holds us together as Americans and yet we teach and learn less and less of it. We must teach history. We must teach and learn the lessons of the past so we all understand the dangers of the present and steer toward the promise of the future.

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U.S. High Schoolers Discover Cuba on Educational Trips

By Alexandra Pannoni March 21, 2016, at 8:00 a.m.

Some high school students are embarking on trips to the country that has been off-limits to most Americans for decades. U.S. students were able to connect with their Cuban peers while abroad.

President Barack Obama is visiting Cuba this week, making him the first sitting president to visit the country in nearly 90 years. And last week his administration announced changes to travel restrictions that will make it easier for Americans to visit the country for educational purposes.

Some high schoolers are already embarking on trips to the nation that’s been off-limits to most Americans for decades. “They are very curious,” says Gretchen Calhoun, a social studies teacher at Aspen High School in Colorado who is accompanying a group of 12 students to Cuba on a trip later this week – though the trip, like many high school students take overseas, is not sponsored by the district. Her students seem truly thrilled to be going, she says.

Calhoun thinks that her students feel it’s almost like an opportunity to travel back in time to see a country that has essentially been sealed off from capitalism. Some of the students going are truly interested in diplomacy, she says. And Calhoun thinks they are interested in the fact that there’s still some controversy in lifting the embargo. A travel organization handled most of the logistics, Calhoun says. The students will be participating in educational and cultural activities while in Cuba.

Jill Grimaldo, a Spanish teacher at Redmond High School in Washington, visited the country as a college student in 2001 for educational purposes and says it was one of the coolest – and safest – places she has ever visited. She led a group of high school students there last year. She says the trip was more educational than other international trips she has planned for students. The trip was about interacting with the people, and learning about the history, culture and day-to-day lives of Cubans.

She had fewer parental concerns on this trip than any other one, she says. “In general, the parents who are willing to send their kids to Cuba were a little bit more open-minded,” she says. “I think if a parent was concerned about travel, in general, this would not be the trip they would have sent their kid on.”

Some parents were concerned about things like whether the water was safe, but no one expressed concerns about political issues. And Grimaldo thinks it helped parents to know that she had traveled to Cuba previously and felt very safe. The trips also was very structured.

Nancy Hallock was very excited for her 13-year-old daughter Emily to get the opportunity to visit Cuba on a trip with fellow students and educators from Pierson High School in Sag Harbor, New York, last month, since it’s such a unique time in history. She says she would have concerns no matter where she sent her daughter outside of the U.S. without her, but she trusted the judgment of the chaperones on the trip and that they wouldn’t put the students in any questionable situations. There was also an informational night for parents and students with two local journalists who had recently visited Cuba. They said they felt very safe there and that was very reassuring, Hallock says.

The highlight of the trip for students was a visit to an intermediate school where students got to interact with their Cuban peers, says Toby Marienfeld, a Spanish teacher at Pierson High who was one of the educators who accompanied students on the trip. She thinks her students expected their counterparts to be totally ignorant of things like social media and to know little about American culture. But they have ways to access social media and even exchanged that information with her students. When the groups met, the U.S. students realized the two were a lot alike.

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Scans of King Tut’s Tomb Reveal New Evidence of Hidden Rooms

Second round of radar scanning will look for more clues to what lies behind the walls of Tut’s burial chamber. One theory: the tomb of famous Queen Nefertiti.

The walls of King Tutankhamun’s burial chamber are painted with scenes depicting the burial rituals of the young pharaoh. Radar scans suggest the presence of open spaces behind the walls.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRANDO QUILICCI, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

By Peter Hessler
PUBLISHED MARCH 17, 2016

For at least 3,339 years, nobody has seen what lies behind the west and north walls of the burial chamber of Tutankhamun. But this secret of three millennia might not last much longer.

On Thursday, Mamdouh Eldamaty, the Egyptian antiquities minister, held a press conference in Cairo to announce a tantalizing new piece of evidence: Radar scans on those walls have revealed not only the presence of hidden chambers, but also unidentified objects that lie within these rooms. These objects, Eldamaty said, seem to be composed of both metal and organic materials.

“It could be the discovery of the century,” he said. Noting that he can’t speculate further about the things that lie within the chambers, he said that another radar test has been scheduled for the end of this month, in order to determine the best way to proceed with the investigation.

The results of the radar scan represent another step toward a radical new understanding of the most famous tomb in Egypt’s Valley of the Kings. First discovered by archaeologist Howard Carter in 1922, the tomb of King Tut yielded an astonishing array of grave goods—more than 5,000 artifacts, many of them in pristine condition. It was the most intact royal tomb ever found, providing Egyptologists with an unprecedented glimpse into the material life of a king who ruled during the 14th century B.C. (Read more about the pharaoh who shaped the future of Egypt.)

But for almost a century, nobody imagined that Carter’s painstaking excavation—he spent a decade documenting and clearing objects from the tomb—might be essentially unfinished. In July of last year, Nicholas Reeves, a British archaeologist who specializes in the Valley of the Kings, published a paper claiming that there may in fact be another tomb hidden behind the walls of Tut’s burial chamber.

Reeves’s theory was based in part on close examination of high-resolution laser scans of the tomb, which seemed to indicate traces of passageways and door openings that had been plastered and painted over during the preparation of Tut’s chamber. Initially, Reeves’s paper was dismissed by many Egyptologists, but over the past half year, an ongoing examination of the tomb has supported a number of his key ideas. “I’ve not found anything that makes me doubt my initial conclusions,” Reeves said, when contacted by telephone earlier this week. “I guess we’re getting closer to a resolution now.” (Related: Will King Tut Fever Bring Visitors Back to Egypt?)

The radar results represent the biggest endorsement thus far. Last November, Eldamaty invited Reeves and Hirokatsu Watanabe, a Japanese radar specialist, to Luxor, where they spent two evenings conducting radar scans of the west and north walls of Tut’s burial chamber. An initial read of the scan was compelling: After those tests in November, Eldamaty announced that he was “90 percent positive” that another chamber lay behind the north wall of the tomb. But his comments were based entirely on the analysis of one man—Watanabe—and at that time the Japanese specialist had yet to conduct a detailed study of his data.

Thursday’s announcement, though, was based on Watanabe’s full report, which was delivered to the minister earlier this year. Eldamaty noted that the Japanese specialist believes there are objects made of metal and organic materials behind the north wall, and others composed of organic materials behind the west wall. “But I cannot say exactly what it is,” Eldamaty noted at the press conference.

“There’s Something in There”

These radar findings have also been reviewed by outside experts. Remy Hiramoto, a specialist in semiconductors and microelectronics who has served as a consultant to the UCLA Egyptian Coffins Project, examined the raw data, along with some of his colleagues, including Adrian Tang, a strategic researcher who works at NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory in the THz systems group.

When contacted by telephone earlier this week, Hiramoto described the data set as “tight” —he felt that Watanabe’s equipment had performed well in the tomb. “It validates the initial hypothesis that there is a non-natural occurring chamber or cavity on the other side of that wall,” Hiramoto said. “Based on the signatures that are in the data, there’s a void, and there’s definitely something that’s within the void. There’s something in there.” Hiramoto said that he and his colleagues could not tell what those objects are made of, or what
Continued from page 14  they might be—whether they are naturally occurring features, or grave goods, or something else. But he noted that reading a radar is “like a Rorschach test,” and such work tends to be highly specialized.

Jason Herrmann, who specializes in archaeological geophysics at Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen in Germany, said that a radar expert can determine some details about unseen materials. “In my past experience I’ve been able to pick out metal versus stone pretty easily,” he said, noting that in the past he used radar to locate metal artifacts that were buried within sand dunes in the United Arab Emirates. He said that detecting a metal object in a stone-carved room should be easier than detecting it in sand. “I’m not surprised that he’s able to pick out something that’s a weaker reflector than stone would be, or metal would be,” Herrmann said, referring to the possible presence of organic matter.

Later this month, a team of specialists from National Geographic will travel to Egypt at Eldamaty’s invitation, in order to carry out another series of radar tests, with the hope of confirming Watanabe’s results. At the press conference, Eldamaty mentioned that one of the main purposes of the new scan will be to determine the thickness of the walls, in order to decide the next step of the investigation. But he refused to say what that step might be. “We have to wait,” he said.

Signs Point to Queen Nefertiti?

Almost anything that comes to light behind the walls will force specialists to envision the age of Tut with new eyes. “It makes us re-look at everything,” said Kara Cooney, an Egyptologist at UCLA who has done extensive research on the 18th Dynasty, Tut’s period. She noted that one of the most explosive aspects of Reeves’s theory is the idea that Nefertiti, who most people believe was Tut’s stepmother, may be buried behind the north wall of the tomb.

As of yet there is no hard evidence for this theory, but a number of prominent Egyptologists have agreed with Reeves’s suggestion that the famous funerary mask of Tutankhamun was originally fashioned for Nefertiti. And there are signs that many of Tut’s grave goods were originally made for somebody else. Cooney says that nowadays when she looks at statues of Tutankhamun, she’s not sure if she’s seeing his face or Nefertiti’s—part of the disorientation that is happening as experts confront new possibilities regarding the 18th Dynasty. “You’re looking at the coffin, at the tomb, at the statues,” she said. “Everything about this period has to be reevaluated.”

Tutankhamun Offspring of a union between siblings, this often-studied pharaoh is now revealed to have had a congenital clubfoot afflicted with bone disease, which would have made walking painful. Inbreeding may have caused this deformity and even prevented him from producing an heir with his wife, who was probably his half sister.

PHOTOGRAPH BY KENNETH GARRETT, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CREATIVE

It’s a Matter of Perspective
A fight for the very soul of our country
by Randi Weingarten, President, American Federation of Teachers 03/20/2016

It’s one of my proudest moments as a civics teacher—and I didn’t have to say a word: I had helped the students in my American history class prepare to debate whether the decision to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was justified. But once the debate began, I just stepped back and listened. My 11th-graders backed their strongly held opinions with facts, played devil’s advocate and respectfully challenged each other’s reasoning. For a teacher, it doesn’t get much better than that.

Weingarten addresses a rally in New York City on March 2, 2016. Photo by Michael Campbell.

Boy, could we use more of that kind of thoughtful yet passionate discourse and engagement in civic life today. Republicans in the United States Senate are letting politics trump their constitutional duty to give President Obama’s Supreme Court nominee a full and fair hearing and an up-or-down vote. The frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination is normalizing hate speech and promoting the use of violence against peaceful protesters with calls to “beat the crap out of them,” among other threats.

America needs a crash course in civics. More important, we need to engrain an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizens into our collective experience.

Perhaps the need has grown so acute because civics education, like other areas of social studies, has been pushed to the back burner in American schools, a victim of standardized testing mania in which “what gets tested is what gets taught” (which, prior to recent changes in federal accountability rules, was only math and English). But, in a very real sense, American democracy is being tested, and we need an informed, engaged citizenry that is deeply involved in civic life. Civic education in our public schools is essential to achieving this—after all, the purpose of public education is to prepare our young people not only for college and career, but also for citizenship.

We need to send young people into adulthood knowing their rights, responsibilities and power as citizens. They need to have a sense of agency in their lives, to realize that they can be change agents in their own communities and neighborhoods, and that they are the “people” in “we the people.” The most important role in a democracy is not president or prime minister, but citizen.

For adults, we need to create an adequate understanding of local, state and national government and how it functions—regardless of ideology, candidate or party—so they have a critical lens through which to examine promises and policies. Take the misinformation about the Common Core State Standards, for example. Ted Cruz and Donald Trump repeatedly claim they’ll abolish those standards if they’re elected. But states—not the president—choose whether or not to adopt these standards, and 42 states have chosen to adopt them. And the new Every Student Succeeds Act prohibits the federal government from requiring any particular set of standards. The constant repetition of clear falsehoods exploits the widespread lack of understanding of federalism and is intended to further erode the public trust.

An hour watching cable news, a scan of my Twitter feed or a day talking with people (outside of Washington, D.C.) makes it clear that we are engaged in a fight for the very soul of our country. People are angry—with good reason. They are anxious about the changing economy and their ability to get by, much less get ahead. And they don’t think their representatives in Congress are doing anything to make things better. But rather than stoking fears and frustrations and turning people against each other, we need to acknowledge that anger and the unrealized aspirations underneath it. Educating people about what citizens can do in a democracy can help move their anger to action.

The Supreme Court nomination process underway is one such teachable moment. In President Obama’s eloquent remarks introducing Merrick Garland, his nominee to the Supreme Court, Obama asked senators not to make the confirmation process “an extension of our divided politics” but to “reflect on the importance of this process to our democracy.” Indeed. Ours is a system of laws rooted in our Constitution. At its best, it rises above the momentary fray and considers, instead, our children, our children’s children, and the democratic values and institutions we bequeath to them.

Regardless of party or ideological leaning, every American should have a sense of civitas. Whether that sense is ingrained, instilled by family or informed in public schools, it is vital to the strength of our democracy. It can be taught in school through approaches like project-based learning, where students solve problems and work in teams. It can be strengthened through service learning. It can be developed in debate societies. As my civics students realized, knowing your rights, understanding your power, and making a difference all make learning civics and civic engagement pretty cool.

- See more at: http://www.aft.org/column/fight-very-soul-our-country#sthash.2lRtiaq6.dpuf
A new North Dakota high school requirement will have Grand Forks students answer 100 questions for their civics test this spring. Last year, North Dakota became the second state in the nation to adopt the requirement, which is based on the Immigration and Naturalization test covering questions about government and history. Eighth- and 11th-grade students are taking the online test for the first time at the end of this month.

Students who graduate next year must achieve 60 percent or greater proficiency on the test to pass, while those who graduate in 2018 and each subsequent year must achieve 70 percent proficiency. Grand Forks students may have been the first in the state to experience the test. In 2014, district social studies teachers heard about the civics test bill from Superintendent Larry Nybladh, who attended Legislative committee hearings while the bill was being discussed. That year, they developed a 25-question pretest. Of 2,065 students who took the test, 88 percent were proficient, said Gabe Dahl, assistant principal at Central High School and civics test committee member. This gave school administrators confidence students will do well on the real test this year, he said.

The process of developing an oral test into a multiple-choice version proved to be an exciting and welcome challenge for social studies teachers, Dahl said. A committee of 11 teachers developed the test in October. They were happy the subject matter was getting its due, he said. “If you look at state assessments, social studies has never been tested before,” he said. “When the (bill passed), our social studies teachers said, ‘Hey, people are finally seeing this is essential knowledge kids need to know.’”

Students are taking the test during their U.S. History class whenever it best fits each school’s schedule, Dahl said. U.S. History is offered only the eighth or 11th grade year in the district. Students are required to take only one unit to fulfill high school graduation requirements. Support will be given for students who don’t meet proficiency, including retesting “as many times as they need to be successful,” Dahl said. Students can even take it during their senior year government class, which covers content related to 70 percent of test questions. “We want to have as many options for them to be as successful as possible,” he said.

Teachers specifically targeted the grade level and time of year to coincide with when the material is most often taught, Dahl said. They also spent a significant time debating what grade levels would take the test, what time of the year would be best to administer it and question phrasing. “There was one question that probably took about 15-20 minutes (for everyone to agree) it was right,” he said. The pretest results did not reveal any specific academic weakness. Results also helped administrators realize the strength of the district’s American government curriculum, which covers the principles of democracy, systems of government, responsible citizenship and other topics, said Terry Bohan, principal of Community High School.

Continuous student exposure to recurring concepts, starting in sixth grade, helped students succeed on the pretest, he said. “It seems that students were very well in American government,” he said. “We want to do very well in American government,” he said. District teachers will use test results now and in the future to determine errors in question phrasing, teaching or if students should have known the answers, Dahl said. Teachers specifically targeted the grade level and time of year to coincide with when the material is most often taught, Dahl said. They also spent a significant time debating what grade levels would take the test, what time of the year would be best to administer it and question phrasing. “There was one question that probably took about 15-20 minutes (for everyone to agree) it was right,” he said. The pretest results did not reveal any specific academic weakness. Results also helped administrators realize the strength of the district’s American government curriculum, which covers the principles of democracy, systems of government, responsible citizenship and other topics, said Terry Bohan, principal of Community High School.

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Greetings! It’s refreshing to know of the interest American teachers have in knowing more about our northern neighbors. I hope that the resources, information and recommendations below help inspire learning in the final months of the school year. Best wishes for the months ahead! Tina Storer

1. THE “DON’T TOUCH” ZONE BETWEEN CANADA AND THE U.S.

A colleague drew my attention to a humorous video about the Canada-US border which accurately reveals the quirky nature of the 5,500-mile border between the two nations. I highly recommend viewing it. All who teach about our shared history will undoubtedly appreciate the vagaries of early map-making and boundary marking. See “Canada & The United States (Bizarre Borders Part 2)” at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMkJYlIA7mg.

2. 60 MINUTES: GETTING TO KNOW PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU

Justin Trudeau was interviewed on the TV program 60 Minutes on the day before his historic state dinner with President Barack Obama. He was the first Canadian leader in almost two decades to be welcomed by the White House at such an event. Years of Conservative leadership in Ottawa was often at odds with the Obama administration and had caused standoffish relations between the U.S. and Canada. The interviewer addresses issues such as Trudeau’s promise to welcome 25,000 Syrian refugees, some of them in person, and asks, “Would you be just as comfortable if there was a terrorist attack carried out by someone who came through as a refugee?” His response was inspirational, “Ultimately, being open and respectful towards each other is much more powerful as a way to diffuse hatred and anger than, you know, layering on, you know, big walls and oppressive policies.” View the interview at http://www.cbsnews.com/news/60-minutes-prime-minister-trudeau.

3. YOUR COUNTRY, MY COUNTRY: A UNIFIED HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

What do the United States and Canada have in common? Your Country, My Country: A Unified History of the United States and Canada, written by historian Robert Bothwell, guides readers back to the seventeenth century when both countries remained intertwined due to their British colonial heritage. “Tracing Canadian-American relations, common values, and differences through the centuries, Bothwell suggests that Canadians and Americans are not quite different as we were led to believe.” He compares Canadian and American differences over questions such as universal health care and the war in Iraq and recognizes that what happens in one country is frequently revealed in the other. To purchase this book or learn more, visit: https://www.chapters.indigo.ca/en-ca/books/your-country-my-country-a/9780195448801-item.html.

4. SOCIAL STUDIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

“Our society depends on its environmental, economic and social underpinnings. Weaken one and you undermine the whole structure. The most important pillar is the environment. We rely on it for a wide range of essential natural products and services, such as clean air, a stable atmosphere, food, water, energy, wood and other fibres, and waste disposal,” according to sustainability expert and author Michael Keating.

Since sustainability is about preserving the benefits of millennia of evolving civilization, it is a vital issues topic for all social studies classrooms. As 21st Century citizens, students should be prepared to answer key questions such as: How can we curb our demands on the environment and avoid undermining life as we know it for future generations? How can we transition to sustainable ways of living and doing business?

In order to look at where we are on the curve of sustainable development, students need to take the long view. An excellent chronology of environmental sustainability is provided by The Sustainability Report at: http://sustreport.org/environment-and-sustainability-chronology. I hope this resource proves useful for all teachers who are tackling these important issues in classrooms.

5. CANADA-US TRADE: AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

The automotive industry has been one of Canada’s most substantial manufacturing industries since the early 20th century. It has also been a main manager of Canada’s manufactured imports and exports, employment as well as overall industrial production. It is rare for students to be taught about the European or Canadian history of automobiles, because the focus is always framed upon American manufacturing industries and American inventions. Look under the hood of your own Ford, GM, or Chrysler vehicle and you might learn it was assembled in Canada.

Currently, Canada’s auto division deals with serious challenges in the 21st century. “The continentalization and globalization of the industry through free trade agreements and international trade arrangements threaten the future of the Canadian industry.” Learn more at: http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/automotive-industry. This resource provides a clear understanding of Canada’s strong efforts to maintain a successful automotive industry as well as spotlights how their history intertwines with America’s past.

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Resources for Teaching About Canada

Note: The following are selected sites for materials on Canadian history, economics and culture

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Washington, DC – May 1, 2016 – Today the largest civics education project in the United States announced the opening of voter registration. The National Student/Parent Mock Election gives American students, and parents too if they wish, all across the country and around the world, the opportunity to cast their votes for candidates in both the federal and state elections. They may also vote on the issues they care about.

About the National Student/Parent Mock Election

The National Student/Parent Mock Election, the country’s largest civic education project, which reached more than 5 million students and their parents in all 50 states and American schools all around the world in 2012, is built on more than a half-century of teaching experience. The project will engage students, parents, and educators all year long. The polls will open everywhere on October 24th, 2016.

“Our goal is to help our country’s young people from kindergarten to college levels, understand what ‘government of the people, by the people, and for the people’ really means,” said National Student/Parent Mock Election President Gloria Kirshner. “It is never too early to start empowering our future leaders to be involved and share their informed opinions about the issues that matter most.”

For more information and to register to vote, go to www.nationalmockelection.org. There is never any charge. You may register entire school districts.

SOCIAL STUDIES SUMMER INSTITUTE

USING THE CONNECTICUT SOCIAL STUDIES FRAMEWORKS AND INQUIRY

TO IMPACT SOCIAL STUDIES INSTRUCTION

Dates: June 20-23, 2016
Location: Center Connecticut State University
(An Institute for Social Studies Teachers, Curriculum Developers, and Museum Educators)

Sessions will be held on critical social studies topics, including:
- Inquiry instruction in the K-12 classroom
- Authentic assessment in social studies
- Geography and inquiry
- Using music in the social studies classroom
- Analyzing primary sources, grades K-12
- Preparing students for the SAT
- Teaching Civics and the 2016 Elections
- Teaching critical reading and writing skills in the social studies classroom
- Social Studies in the elementary grades

Even if you have attended one of our previous institutes, there will be plenty of new material presented at this one!

Cost for attendees: $40

Registration will open on Friday, May 27. Registration forms will be available next week and sent out via this email list.

For information and other questions contact Stephen Armstrong, Connecticut social studies consultant: Stephen.Armstrong@ct.gov

Institute sponsored by the Connecticut State Department of Education and Connecticut Council for the Social Studies

The Middle East Policy Council’s educational initiative, TeachMideast, would like to share some of its latest website features and outreach programs with you. TeachMideast aims to give American high school teachers and students the tools and knowledge to become better-informed global citizens. Our online resource offers an abundance of information about the Middle East and its people, cultures, religions, history, and current events. Curriculum resources, classroom guides, in-depth essays, professional development opportunities, and film and book lists are all available!

On the website, Country Profiles provide closer looks at the distinct challenges and qualities of 21 different countries. Links give further insight on a variety of subjects for further exploration, and up-to-date information can be used for student projects. This Week in the Middle East gives a snapshot of current events that cover major stories as well as the everyday experiences of people in the region. This weekly material considers subjects like economics, health, sports, civics, and class and race, and be can be used as discussion points in Social Studies units.

Megan Geissler mgeissler@mepc.org.
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:
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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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Home Address___________________________City_________________State_______Zip______
School Name_____________________________________________________________
School Address__________________________City__________________State_______Zip______
Home Phone_____________________Cell Phone_______________Work Phone_____________
Position____________________________Level of Instruction________________________________
Areas of Special Interest_____________________________________________________________

CCSS Membership (July 1- June 30) NEW NCSS Membership
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____Student $10 ____Comprehensive* $83
____Retiree $10

*Choose one:
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