I hope this edition of the Yankee Post finds you well, and I hope you were able to enjoy many inspirational, memorable, and relaxing experiences with family and friends this summer. Whether you traveled, attended a conference, visited museums, read on the beach, wrote lesson plans, or engaged in any other personal or professional activity, I assume that the summer felt like it went by too fast and that autumn has arrived too soon. Of course, regardless of your summer experiences, the world kept on spinning.

The many political and social challenges that have made headlines over the past several months continue to reinforce the important work of social studies educators and underscores how crucial we are to the improvement of students’ lives and the fabric of our communities. One needs only to keep up with the news, engage in conversation about current events, or talk with students to better understand their perspectives in Welcome back; and to new teachers, welcome. Several issues back we shared an oft-used quotation: “May you live in interesting times.” We thought things were pretty interesting then. Whoaooheee, those times pale in comparison to what we catch every day on the news. And if the times are interesting, can classroom discussions be far behind? We hope this issue and the state-wide social studies conference on October 26 can enhance how we can address the “times” in the classroom. But let’s be clear; if there was ever a time when students need to develop a knowledge of government and the historical context in which events take place, that time is now..

David Bosso and others have made a pitch for the importance of attending this year’s CCSS conference. Along with a chance to meet old friends and colleagues, the conference offers a chance to exchange information and use the workshops to build your teaching repertoire. Don’t let your classroom become an isolation booth; join us for an exciting day on October 26. You can find conference information on pages 3 and 4 and registration material at https://2018ccssannualfallconference.eventbrite.com

This issue offers two articles on civics related issues including a civics test proposed for Pennsylvania. Several states have taken up some variation of the USA naturalization test as a basis for citizenship. (pages 8 and 9) A low bar? Can Connecticut do better? See also Utah’s proposal to place students on their state-wide education advisory committee (page 13). There is a case of citizenship in practice.

And about the time you thought this issue would be all about “Kumbaya”, we offer two more contentious reports – on arming classroom teachers and a significant (continued on page 2)
President's Message - continued

order to realize how critical of a role social studies education plays in informing and compelling changes at local, national, and international levels. To these ends, social studies educators are charged with encouraging respectful discourse, cultivating critical analysis, nurturing knowledgeable civic engagement, and empowering students - and we carry out these goals with passion and dedication. It is for these reasons, as I have declared time and again, that social studies education is the central pillar of a healthy and thriving democracy.

As individuals and groups press for change, their voices are being amplified at the local, state, national, and international levels. Their passion and commitment for various issues are being felt as they step up to lead the way. In many ways, the very goals of social studies education are becoming manifest as students, educators, and others are becoming more active, engaged, compassionate global citizens who want to make a difference in the world and in the lives of others. It is with these circumstances in mind that CCSS has designed a robust Annual Fall Conference with a fascinating, engaging, and powerful slate of workshop offerings. Our Annual Fall Conference, with its theme, “Finding Our Voices: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Taking Informed Action,” promises to be another excellent professional growth opportunity for members of CCSS and beyond. In addition to many of your colleagues from across Connecticut, we will be joined by Larry Paska, Executive Director of the National Council for the Social Studies; Secretary of the State, Denise Merrill; and Commissioner of Education, Dianna Wentzell. Our workshop titles are available on our website, ct socialesstudies.org, and you can follow the link available on our home page and conference page to register. Spots are limited and going fast. We hope to see you there!

change in the World History AP Test. In the latter case, it has always interested us how one can teach the Renaissance without some review of what is being “reborn.” Just sayin’; . . . but we digress. Read the article and tell us what you think – page 11.

Finally, we urge you to check out state social studies consultant Steve Armstrong’s report on page 5. Steve’s office has been significantly active over the past years and as the State Department of Education and the CT state legislature have proposed and effected new requirements, Steve has become the source for information, clarification and support for all of us. You can find opportunities for students on page 10.

So, read and join us on October 26 . . . and share some your ideas and experiences to be published in a future issue of Yankee Post. Have a great start to the year.

Tim thomas.weinland@uconn.edu
Dan danielcoughlin@charter.net

Join CCSS . . .
And be eligible for reduced rates for conferences
See Membership Form on page 16
Finding Our Voices: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Taking Informed Action

October 26, 2018 | Four Points by Sheraton in Meriden

As individuals and groups press for change, their voices are being amplified at the local, state, national, and international levels. Their passion and commitment for various issues are being felt as they step up to lead the way. In many ways, the very goals of social studies education are becoming manifest as students, educators, and others are becoming active, engaged, compassionate global citizens who want to make a difference in the world and in the lives of others. Join fellow social studies educators at this year’s Annual Fall Conference. A wide range of workshop selections will provide you with ideas, strategies, and resources to empower your students and colleagues to analyze past and current issues, take on leadership roles, and become more engaged and active citizens.

Featured Speakers:
Larry Paska, NCSS Executive Director
Dianna Wentzell, Commissioner of Education
Denise Merrill, Secretary of the State

Go to https://2018ccssonfallconference.eventbrite.com to register.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE
7:30AM-8:30 AM - Registration and Breakfast
8:00-8:30 - Exhibitors/Vendors
8:30-9:15 - Opening Keynote
9:30-10:30 - Concurrent Sessions 1
10:45-11:45 - Concurrent Sessions 2
11:45-12:05 - Exhibitors/Vendors
12:05-12:55 - Lunch/Speakers
1:00-2:00 - Concurrent Sessions 3
2:10-3:10 - Concurrent Sessions 4
2018 CCSS Annual Fall Conference: Concurrent Sessions At-A-Glance

Session I (9:30-10:30)
• Helping Students find their Voices in Connecticut and Johannesburg: A Trans-Atlantic Study of Student Movements
• A Panel Discussion-Teaching the Holocaust: Opportunities, Challenges & Student Voice
• Build 21st Century Skills Through Performance-Based Social Studies Activities
• Dare to Teach: The Life and Legacy of Prudence Crandall
• Euro Challenge
• Music in the Classroom
• Creating Student Change Agents
• Speaking Truth to Power: Teaching Content Through Activism
• Deep Dive into Domain 3 – An Interdisciplinary Panel Discussion

Session II (10:45-11:45)
• Guidelines and Lesson Plans for Teaching the Holocaust and Other Genocides
• Fostering Student Discourse in a Noisy World
• Engaging students in Heritage-Making & Inquiry through the Exhibit: “A Home Away from Home: The West Indian Diaspora in the Greater Hartford Area”
• Listening to the Voices of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Teaching War and Peace
• Avoiding Repeating the Past through Design Thinking (All levels)
• Engaging Ideas for the Civics Classroom
• TeachIt: Connecticut Primary Sources & Inquiries for the Classroom
• Connecting With Kids – Ideas To Engage Students and Build Relationships in Social Studies
• A Creative Curriculum for a Crowded World

Session III (1:00-2:00)
• Teaching the Holocaust: Local, National and Online Resources
• How to Turn Kids into Voters
• National Geographic’s Geo-Inquiry Process in Action!
• BREAKOUTEDU: Unlocking a Key to Student Engagement
• Empowering Students: Human Rights in the High Achieving Classroom
• Writing in Social Studies (WiSS): Using Self Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) to Improve Students’ Argument Writing
• The 10 Stages of Genocide & The Armenian Genocide: An Inquiry-Based Approach
• How Four Questions Can Help Build “Philosopher-Citizens”
• Connecticut Certificate of Global Engagement

Session IV (2:10-3:10)
• Leadership in the Social Studies Roundtable
• Historic Documents and Informed Action: Making Past/Present Connections at the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center
• Becoming an Explorer: Using Exploration to Promote Inquiry in the K-12 Classroom
• Making Global Connections: Using the UN Global Goals #SDGs
• Connecticut's Impact on Our State and the Nation
• Become a National Geographic Certified Educator
• Learning through Time
• Change in the Land of Steady Habits: Migration and Immigration to Connecticut
State Department Activities

The State Department of Education is attempting to promote social studies in Connecticut in any way that it can. We have new webpages, we are running upcoming webinar series, and we are supporting other programs. Below is a summary of some of the work we are doing:

I. Webpages
   A. Labor History: in response to legislation, we have created a webpage with resources and lesson plans and ideas that will help teachers teach the history of labor and business in Connecticut. All of the lesson plans on this site are based on labor or business developments that occurred in our state.
   B. The Study of the Holocaust and Genocide: As you know, the state legislature passed legislation last year mandating that all school districts teach the Holocaust and Genocide. This webpage provides lesson ideas and many resources for teaching this topic to middle school and high school students.

II. Programs: there are three social studies recognition programs supported by the State Department of Education
   A. The Red, White, and Blue Schools program: This program is co-sponsored by the Secretary of State's office, and honors individual schools and school districts who do an excellent job of teaching civic education. This is the third year of the program: the theme of the program this year is “Exploring State and Local History”. Elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools, and well as entire school districts, are eligible to apply for this program.
   B. The Connecticut Certificate of Global Engagement: This program is co-sponsored by the World Affairs Council, and recognizes individual students for concentrating on global engagement in both their coursework, extracurricular activities, and through a project-based activity. This program is designed for high school students.
   C. Teaching about Veterans School Recognition Program: This program is co-sponsored by the Office of Veterans Affairs and recognizes schools who do an exemplary job of teaching about veterans and the role of veterans in American society in their curriculum. Elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools are all eligible for this recognition program.

III. Upcoming Webinar Series
    The CSDE and Connecticut Council for the Social Studies are co-sponsoring the following upcoming webinar series:
    - Teaching the Holocaust and Genocide
    - Using Music in the Social Studies Classroom
    - World War I and its Impact
    - Teaching Labor History
    - Teaching Difficult Issues in the Social Studies Classroom

    Schedules for these webinars will be listed on the CCSS website and will be publicized through CCSS eblasts.

IV. The State Department of Education is supporting a project to create rubrics for inquiry-based activities. Many teachers (and administrators) have requested these. To be part of the team creating this rubrics or to get more information contact Sarah Harris at Portland Public Schools: sharris@portlandct.us.

V. I am very interested in seeing all the great work being done by social studies teachers across the state. If a teacher in your school is doing something exciting, please contact me, I would love to come see it. Email Stephen.Armstrong@ct.gov.
A protest against gun violence on the 19th anniversary of the Columbine massacre, in which 12 students and a teacher were gunned down in a Colorado school in 1999. Photo: @ Christopher Brown/ZUMA Wire/ZUMAPRESS.com

Even police officers can’t always shoot accurately.

More guns mean more gun deaths.

The majority of the U.S. population doesn’t want to see teachers armed.

These are just a few of many poignant insights about the absurdity of arming teachers that have emerged since the massacre that killed 17 people on Valentine’s Day at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

Particularly moving have been the voices of students who simply want to feel safe at school and teachers who never signed up to participate in armed combat in their classrooms. Importantly, those voices have called out the National Rifle Association and Republican lawmakers for the ridiculous suggestion that, in addition to the already demanding workloads teachers face, some should also carry a loaded weapon to school in case an intruder armed with an assault rifle begins shooting the children in their care. But the issue runs deeper than adding the unwanted and dangerous task of policing schools to teachers’ jobs.

I have worked in the field of teacher preparation for over a decade, and arming teachers would change the work of teaching even more fundamentally than many may realize.

With an interest in learning how professionals who serve the public learn to take up authority, I have analyzed the differences in teacher and police preparation. Unlike police, whose job it is to quickly determine when force is necessary to constrain dangerous behavior, teachers serve the public best when they see the human potential in each child and actively work over time to remove barriers that prevent children from growing into their limitless selves. In my research, I learned that the role both teachers and police adopt as a result of their training is profoundly shaped by what Charles Goodwin called “professional vision,” and it determines how police and teachers view problems and the steps they take to solve them.

A well-recognized problem facing the teaching profession is how to prepare teachers for classroom management, a euphemistic term for keeping order in the classroom. Over the years, I have heard from countless school principals that new teachers are underprepared to “manage” a classroom, and this complaint confirms both my own experience of feeling ill-prepared to lead a classroom and the experiences of nearly all first-year teachers I’ve ever known.

Related: No guns or grown-ups allowed: Students solve their own problems with mediation

Often, new teachers (and some experienced teachers) treat students in deeply inhumane ways, through public humiliation, exclusion and punitive consequences. In part, this is because teacher-training programs generally focus on the nurturing side of teachers’ work, but rarely acknowledge fully the very real expectation that teachers regulate student behavior. Without adequate training, teachers flounder as they encounter typical and atypical student behaviors.

“Equipping teachers with guns will add to the dangers students face rather than reduce them.”

Because most teacher-education programs have done a poor job of preparing teachers for classroom management, I studied how police, whose main responsibility is to enact authority, trained their new recruits. I didn’t want teachers to become more like police — far from it. Instead, because teachers and police are both asked to assert authority on the public’s behalf, I wanted to learn how police trainers help novices don their positions of power and how they teach them to make decisions that reflect that power. By making the familiar strange, I hoped my research would help teacher-educators think more carefully about the type of authority role for which they were preparing teachers, and to consider the messages...
they were sending about how to enact that authority in responsible and humane ways.

While the police academy that I studied includes anti-bias and de-escalation training, novice police officers learn to encounter the world as a dangerous place. They are taught that life-threatening situations can arise at any time. Through a series of role-playing scenarios, recruits are taught to expect a routine traffic stop to descend into an exchange of gunfire, or a seemingly innocuous encounter with a pedestrian to turn into a physical assault.

As both products and perpetrators of the existing social order, police also internalize a framework for quickly determining who are “bad guys” and who are “good guys.” This framework is informed by racial, cultural and economic hierarchies that privilege white middle-class people over African Americans, Latinos and the poor, and becomes shorthand for making decisions about how to respond to high-stakes situations in mere seconds. Finally, police respond with routines that reflect both attunement to danger and this biased model for determining who is good and bad.

As we’ve seen, this regularly results in tragic consequences for African-American men and boys who are shot by police officers who say they felt threatened and are then contradicted by video evidence of the event. The professional vision of the police is ultimately, and unfortunately, narrow — they are taught to look for danger, make decisions based on limited information and act quickly. These decisions primarily defend a sense of security for dominant groups and preserve current social norms.

In contrast, many teacher-educators see themselves as agents of change, not guardians of the status quo. This means that teacher-educators try to help novices adopt an expansive professional vision that enables them to imagine possibilities for students, welcomes them despite differences they might have with one another and the teacher, and encourages decision-making in the moment that is informed by such a perspective.

While we can and should be doing more to help teachers develop a humane and competent sense of what it means to hold a position of power, a professional vision that is focused on the strengths and needs of each child is key to effective teaching. Teachers also need to get to know their students over the course of many months, develop strong relationships with them, and make decisions about how to teach as a result of systematic reflection. Traditionally, teachers’ work has not entailed life-and-death decision-making, which gives teachers an opportunity to take chances, build rapport and change course.

To prepare U.S. teachers to respond to school shooters, teacher-educators would likely be driven to cultivate a very different professional vision in new teachers. Rather than a hopeful stance, teachers would be taught to assume a fearful one. Rather than dismantling their biases, teachers would likely fortify them. Teachers would need to remain vigilant and see their classrooms as potential battlefields at all times. Potential threats would need to be swiftly assessed, and teachers — 80 percent of whom are white — would likely draw on the same problematic social frameworks that police do in determining who is good and who is bad.

This would increase the likelihood that children of color, who are already disproportionately and harshly disciplined for minor infractions at school, would become the metaphorical and literal targets of underprepared teachers relying on their implicit bias to wield firearms.

Equipping teachers with guns will add to the dangers that students face rather than reduce them.

This story about teachers and gun violence was produced by The Hechinger Report, a nonprofit, independent news organization focused on inequality and innovation in education. Sign up for Hechinger’s newsletter.

Jessica Charles, Ph.D., is the director of scholarship on educator practice at Bank Street College of Education.

Please Pass It On

If you have enjoyed this issue and found it useful, please pass it on to a colleague. If you have suggestions for improving Yankee Post, please contact the editor at thomas.weinland@uconn.edu
Fake news. Record-low voting turnout. Frequent and false claims from elected officials. Vitriol in many corners of political debate. These are symptoms we hear of all the time that our democracy is not so healthy. And those factors might be why many states are turning to the traditional — and obvious — place where people learn how government is supposed to work: schools.

More than half of the states in their last legislative sessions — 27 to be exact — have considered bills or other proposals to expand the teaching of civics.

“The electorate is largely ignorant, and there is an overall deficit of civic learning,” said Charles Quigley, the executive director of the Center for Civic Education, a nonprofit group that advocates for civics learning. The political climate at the state, local and national levels, and the steady drumbeat of negative news, “has people wondering, ‘How the hell could this have happened?’ “

In their efforts to create informed, educated citizens, some states have invested in teacher training and increased curriculum standards for civics at the elementary through high school levels. Among the most common proposals have been more attention to media literacy and closer study of the Constitution, Bill of Rights and state founding documents.

For example, the Washington state legislature in March established a stand-alone class for all high school students, expanded training for teachers and incorporated lessons about federal, state, local and tribal governments into the K-12 curriculum.

“It’s important to start teaching about civics in kindergarten to have basic ideas of justice and service,” Quigley says. Teaching students to explore questions like: “Why do we have rules and laws? Why do we have positions of authority?” Believe it or not, he said, younger kids can easily grasp these concepts.

Some states want to make sure college students understand them, too.

Florida’s State Board of Education recently approved a civic literacy component for students at public universities. They can take civics or test out of the requirement, but are required to know, at least: the basic principles of the U.S. government and how those principles are applied, landmark Supreme Court decisions and the country’s founding documents.

In Missouri, a similar law requiring college students to score at least 70 percent on a version of the U.S. naturalization test — the test immigrants take to become a citizen — was signed by the governor earlier this month.

(To see how you’d score on that exam, here are some questions.)

Sample Questions Based On The U.S. Naturalization Exam

How many amendments does the Constitution have?

• 10
• 18
• 27
• 35

Notes: These questions were created based off the naturalization test administered by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Source: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Credit: Emily Cardinali and Vanessa Qian/NPR

That test also requires students to know basic things as well, such as: How many amendments does the Constitution have? Who is the vice president? What document is the supreme law of the land? (Answers: 27, Mike Pence, the Constitution.)

Recently, 14 states considered bills to incorporate content from the naturalization test. Four states — Nevada, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Washington — adopted those bills into law.

Twenty-three states already had requirements related to that test: Some require passing an exam based on it to graduate from high school; others loop it into a half-credit civics requirement. And much of the impetus for that legislation came from an organization formed in 2014 called the Civics Education Initiative.

Arizona was the first state to pass the draft legislation written by the initiative, in 2015. The initiative’s staff of six is now working on the remaining 23 states.

Schools are often laser-focused on preparing students for standardized tests in math, science and reading, says Lucian Spataro, a former college professor who is now the director of the Civics Education Initiative, part of the nonpartisan Joe
Foss Institute. That, he explains, can push subjects like civics to the back burner. “We’re looking for a level playing field so all the disciplines are equally represented,” he said. “I’m a STEM professor. But I’m a STEM professor pushing civics.”

Separate from the initiatives at the state level, there is a nationwide standardized test that gauges how much kids know about U.S. government and politics. Scores are low and have been since the test was first given in 1998.

In 2014, just 22 percent of eighth-graders scored “proficient” on the civics part of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, commonly called the “Nation's Report Card.” The test is graded based on achievement rather than on a pass-fail basis. That same year, 26 percent scored “below basic.”

If students are “proficient,” they can probably explain the purpose of government, recognize the importance of the rule of law, and understand the separation of power among branches of the government. At the “basic” level, students should be able to identify the fundamental principles of American democracy and the documents that make up that foundation, plus they should understand the different rights and responsibilities U.S. citizens have.

“Below basic” means they likely couldn’t explain any of that, but there are no defined standards for that score category. Performance on that national civics test also varies by student race and family income, according to research from the Brookings Institution.

“People are not born knowing how you navigate political systems in a democracy and how you advocate for yourself,” said Jon Valant, an education policy fellow at Brookings who is one of the authors of the report.

If students — who eventually grow into adults — learn how these systems work, they have a better chance of using them to drive much needed change in their communities.

“If it is historically underrepresented groups that are not getting the same level of instruction on what it takes to navigate those types of systems,” Valant explains, “then it’s very likely we’ll keep seeing some of the same patterns we’ve seen so far.”

New Pa. bill would require civics test -- but students wouldn’t have to pass it

LASHERICA THORNTON   Harrisburg Bureau

HARRISBURG — They don’t have to pass it, but students would be required to take a civics test before high school graduation under a bill that could soon become law in Pennsylvania.

Rep. Karen Boback, R-Luzerne, wrote the bill after seeing a 2016 survey from the University of Pennsylvania’s Annenberg Public Policy Center showing only 26 percent of adults can identify the three branches of the U.S. government.

“The need for increased civics education is warranted, given the astounding lack of proficiency in U.S. civics and government,” Ms. Boback said in a statement Thursday.

The new test, which Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf said he would sign, would be separate from the state’s current academic standards for civics and government, which lay out what students in specific grades should know about the mechanics of government and the rights of citizenship. School districts are given flexibility to meet that requirement in a variety of different ways, says John M. Callahan, chief advocacy officer at the Pennsylvania School Boards Association.

The new civics test would take effect in the 2020-21 school year — a year after a requirement is slated to go into effect that students pass the state’s Keystone exams before graduating high school. (Mr. Wolf has delayed the graduation requirement until the 2019-20 school year.) The Keystone exams currently test a variety of subjects, including algebra and literature, according to the state Department of Education’s website.

Still, Ms. Boback’s bill would allow schools to determine when to administer the civics test, as long as it’s done at least once between seventh and 12th grades. The test can be developed locally by a school district, or districts can use one developed by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Students who earn a perfect score on the new test would receive a certificate of recognition from the state Education Department.

Ms. Boback’s bill passed handily in the House of Representatives — and unanimously in the Senate — earlier this week. However, some who voted against the bill, such as Rep. Mary Jo Daley, D-Montgomery, said they have lingering questions.

In an interview Thursday, Ms. Daley she said she is not convinced that a new test is the best way of addressing general concerns about ignorance of how government works.

“One of our members raised concerns that we’re not doing a great job teaching the history of our country, including a lot of the groups that we don’t talk about at all and their part in history,” she said. “[We’re] talking about African Americans, about Asians, and about different religions.”

Contact Lasherica Thornton at lthornto@go.olemiss.edu
The Connecticut Public Affairs Network is relaunching itself as the Connecticut Democracy Center!

The Democracy Center’s mission is to provide people with lifetime pathways to active citizenship by sharing the skills and knowledge that students and adults need to take civic action in their own communities. The Connecticut Council for the Social Studies is a valued partner in this endeavor and we want to hear from YOU, the members of CCSS, about the programs, resources and tools we can provide to help you teach civics. Three core programs will launch the Connecticut Democracy Center:

- **Kid Governor®**
  *Empowering 5th graders to change the world*
  
  [www.kidgovernor.org](http://www.kidgovernor.org), [CT.KidGovernor.org](http://CT.KidGovernor.org)

  Kid Governor® is a national award-winning civics program for 5th graders created by our team of talented educators. The program is an immersive, authentic experience that teaches students about state government, voting, elections, and civic engagement through the election of a Kid Governor. The program has been recognized by the National Association of Secretaries of State, American Association for State and Local History and Connecticut Council for the Social Studies. Kid Governor has already been adopted in Oregon and New Hampshire, with other states interested in bringing the program to their 5th graders.

- **Connecticut History Day**
  *Helping middle and high school students discover their voices*

  [historydayct.org](http://historydayct.org)

  As a National History Day affiliate, Connecticut History Day is a program for students in grades 6-12 that encourages exploration of local, state, national, and world history. Students conduct extensive research into a historical topic of their own choice using libraries, archives, museums, and oral history. They learn how to analyze and interpret their findings, draw conclusions about their topics’ significance in history, and create final projects that demonstrate their work. Students compete with their projects at one of six Regional Contests and winning students advance to the State Contest. Winners at the State Contest have the opportunity to compete at the National Contest in Maryland. History Day prepares students to lead active civic lives by engaging them in the world and teaching them important civic skills such as critical thinking, communication, media literacy, research, leadership, and teamwork.

- **Connecticut’s Old State House**
  *Bringing civics & history together in our state’s most sacred civic space*

  [www.ctoldstatehouse.org](http://www.ctoldstatehouse.org)

  The Democracy Center manages the educational and community programming at Connecticut’s Old State House. Interactive school programs for students in grades K-12 and college are interactive, engaging and aligned with the CT Core Standards and CT Social Studies Frameworks. The Old State House provides the unique opportunity to experience history and government in the historic halls where decisions were made, laws passed and important events transpired more than two-hundred years ago.

We want to hear from you as we build the new Connecticut Democracy Center! Drop us a line at buildctdc@ctpublicaffairsnetwork.org to learn about our programs, share your ideas, and subscribe to our updates.
After Outcry, College Board Restores 250 Years to Proposed AP History Course
By Brenda Iasevoli on July 19, 2018 4:24 PM
Education Week

Starting in the 2019-2020 school year, the Advanced Placement World History course will begin instruction with the year 1200, and not 1450 as the College Board had originally planned. The College Board faced backlash in June when it announced that it would begin AP World History content at the year 1450, when European power began to expand. That change would have eliminated content on pre-colonial Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the Middle East—nearly 10,000 years of human history. The College Board said cutting earlier years would make the content more manageable for teachers who said they were “teaching too little about too much.”

A petition by the civil rights advocacy group Color of Change protesting the plan garnered 30,000 signatures. As an overseer of history content that reaches millions of students nationwide, the petition argued, the College Board plays a powerful role in setting curriculum content standards in high schools. “With this power, the College Board has the responsibility to ensure that students everywhere are exposed to histories beyond that of colonial Europeans and understand that the histories of black and brown people did not start when European colonists arrived in their lands,” the petition reads.

Rashad Robinson, the president of Color of Change, counts the petition as a factor in the College Board’s decision to restore some of the early content to the course, as it started a conversation between the two groups on the importance of students of color seeing themselves represented in history. In a statement, Robinson said that Color of Change would continue to work with the College Board to “provide students with a multifaceted, accurate, and diverse historical perspective.”

Many, including Color of Change, are pleased with the addition of the early years into the AP World History course. “The College Board found a balanced solution that honors the principled feedback from members of the world history community,” said Rick Warner, a world history professor at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Ind., and former president of the World History Association. “With this solution, students will have an opportunity to learn world history at a scope and pace similar to what’s taught in college. This solution also allows high schools to approach this vast subject in a time frame that is most appropriate for their own students.”

In addition to the AP World History: Modern course, the College Board announced it plans to offer AP World History: Ancient, for “schools and students interested in AP coursework that covers the full sweep of world history.” But the group said it would first have to make sure colleges would award credit for the two courses and that high schools would be willing to offer both courses. “We believe this new approach will best serve students and educators, balance course breadth and depth, and honor the full, essential story of human history,” the College Board wrote in a statement.

Politico

AP World History gets a makeover, and high school teachers rebel
By BENJAMIN WERMUND 06/11/2018 06:42 AM EDT

High school history teachers are in revolt over the alteration of a widely taught Advanced Placement course that they say threatens to present a skewed, Eurocentric view of the world to thousands of students.

The plan is so incendiary that outraged history teachers protested against it this week at an open forum in Salt Lake City, Utah, with Trevor Packer, senior vice president of Advanced Placement and instruction at the College Board. A video of a testy exchange between Packer and the teachers has been shared hundreds of times online. The standoff touches on issues of culture, color and history with which schools — and society — have been wrangling.

Under the controversial changes, a popular AP World History course would begin in 1450 — essentially the rise of European power — effectively eliminating instruction on pre-colonial Africa, Asia, Americas and the Middle East. Earlier eras would be relegated to a pre-AP course that isn’t tested. The College Board says it’s making the change because the current class covers too much and most colleges teach similar content as two separate courses. But teachers say the pre-AP course, for which the College Board charges a fee, isn’t likely to be picked up by cash-strapped public schools. And it’s not likely to be taken by students, who can’t earn college credit off a course with no exam or seal of approval as an AP course.

The change in World History matters, teachers say, because AP courses essentially set curriculum for many high schools across the country. Millions of students take Advanced Placement classes, rigorous courses in dozens of subjects, through which they can earn college credit by passing an end-of-course exam.

Students taking the new post-1450 course will lose a broad global understanding of history, teachers say. “In a world that is fueled by quick reactions on social media, bias news (in all directions) and people responding on passion rather than facts, AP World History is needed more than ever,” Tyler George, who teaches AP World History in Clinton, Mich., said in an email.

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“Students need to understand that there was a beautiful, vast and engaging world before Europeans ‘discovered’ it. Students need guidance and knowledge of the past to understand that when they hear ‘Africa’ they shouldn’t immediately think ‘slavery,’” George said. Even some students are pushing back. An online petition — launched by a high school freshman who took the AP World History course — has drawn thousands of signatures from folks urging the College Board to change its mind.

“I’ve been teaching AP for a decade and I’ve never seen a hornet’s nest stirred up like this,” Tom Richey, who teaches an AP European History course in Seneca, S.C., told POLITICO.

The plan was announced by the College Board this spring and is set to take effect in the 2019-20 school year. The College Board contends it is a response to feedback from teachers who complained that the current setup stuffs too much into a single course, which covers everything from the Stone Age to the present.

The change “would spread this important and valuable content across two academic years, rather than just one,” said Zach Goldberg, a College Board spokesman, in an email.

But after the backlash, Packer wrote on Twitter that the plan could still shift again. Packer wrote that “constructive feedback … has suggested a path forward that will enable us to achieve several priorities that I believe we share and can agree on.” He said the organization will report back on its final plans in July.

The comments, however, followed intense pushback, including at the forum this week.

“You are the authority on our curriculum, because it’s on the test, and the schools want to teach what’s on the test and students want to learn what’s on the test,” Amanda Do Amaral, who taught AP World History in Oakland, Calif., for five years, told Packer.

“You cannot tell my black and brown students that their history is not going to be tested and then assume that isn’t going to matter. … Their histories don’t start at slavery. Their histories don’t start at colonization.”

In the video of the exchange, Packer can be heard responding, “I think you need to take responsibility for assigning me a position that is not accurate.” He says his position is not that that time period isn’t important, but “I think it is so important that it should not be rushed over.” Packer later says, “Let me put this back on you: Why don’t you switch” and teach the new pre-AP course?

DoAmaral responded that schools can’t afford to offer the new course: “They don’t have the money for pencils, dude. How are they going to teach that class?”

DoAmaral told POLITICO that she stopped teaching last year “because I literally couldn’t afford to do it anymore.” She now runs a startup that offers AP instruction online via livestream.

According to a fee structure for the 2019-2020 school year, schools would be charged anywhere from $600 to $6,500 to offer the new pre-AP course, depending on the size of the school and the number of other pre-AP courses it offers.

The College Board doesn’t charge fees for AP courses, but it does charge students $94 for each exam that they don’t take in pre-AP.

Writing on Twitter about the decision to revisit the changes, Packer cited “particularly balanced, thoughtful, and productive suggestions” from teachers he received after that open forum.

But while the College Board is reconsidering how to proceed, it still appears the course will be broken in two, a move officials say will bring it more in line with how world history is taught in college.

“It’s simply not feasible to cover the entire scope, starting in 8000 BC to the present, in one course,” Rick Warner, an associate professor of history at Wabash College in Indiana who is on the College Board committee considering the change, said in a statement.

“The changes to AP World History will benefit teachers and students, enabling them to focus much more care and attention on studying modern world history through a truly global lens, so that students who then take further history classes in college will have the knowledge and skills to succeed,” he said.

DoAmaral said she was hopeful the College Board would reverse course, but wasn’t appeased yet.

“Due to our collective passions for equitable history education, it is clear that College Board is listening,” Do Amaral said. “I hope that they continue to listen as we work together to create an inclusive history curriculum — one that teaches Africa before slavery, the Americas before Columbus, and Asia before imperialism. Our students deserve more than for us to start the story in the middle.”

Even if schools do shell out for the new pre-AP course, students might be less inclined to take it, said Dylan Black, a high school freshman in New Jersey who started the online petition against the change. That’s because students who pass AP exams can earn college credit.

Pre-AP courses, which end with an exam, are “just a fancier way of saying an honors course,” Black said. “There’s no real value to it.”

Black wrote on the petition, which had more than 4,700 signatures as of Friday afternoon, that “the class is demanding on students, but is also one of the most rewarding, life changing classes I’ve ever had the privilege to take.”

Noah Mitchell, a junior at a high school in Oakland, Calif. who took the world history course as a sophomore, said learning especially about the earlier periods “opened my eyes.” “It would be cutting down so many people’s different histories — like Asian history before imperialism, American history before Columbus and African history before slavery. … I’m not sure I would have known a lot of my own history before slavery,” Mitchell told POLITICO.

“There are so many students who are being told they don’t matter outside of the classroom. … Really, the message that this would be sending is that their histories don’t really matter.”
Deseret News, Salt Lake City

Youth movement: High schoolers would advise State School Board under proposal

By Marjorie Cortez August 3, 2018

SALT LAKE CITY — The State School Board is considering creating a student council of high school juniors and seniors to advise the board on a wide array of issues such as college readiness, school climate and at-risk behaviors including suicide. A Utah State Board of Education committee on Friday endorsed a board policy that would create the student advisory council, which could include up to 15 members. The proposal must be considered by the full school board, possibly next month.

Kate De Groote, who is entering her senior year at Skyline High School, proposed the idea to Linda Hansen, the state school board member whose district includes the Granite School District. De Groote told the full board on Thursday that student representation is vital. “Students have a unique perspective. After all, we’re the ones who personally know what goes on in high schools around Utah, and we provide insight that not even educators or administrators have. We know what works and what doesn’t. We are the ones who witness school bullying and what kind of teaching is the best,” De Groote said.

De Groote, who serves as West Valley City’s youth mayor, said she recently learned about student advisory councils from peers out of state whose states have either student state school board members or advisory groups. “When I realized such a council didn’t exist (in Utah), I brought up the idea to my board rep, Miss Hansen, and we have been working on this proposal along with others here at the state department of education ever since,” she said.

Utah’s state board is considering an advisory board model. In a few states, student members who serve on school boards are selected by their state governors and have full voting rights. In Maryland, the student board member is appointed by the governor and the appointment is confirmed by the state Senate. The student can vote on most matters except disciplinary actions or certain appeals. According to a spreadsheet prepared by State School Board staff, most states have some form of student advisers to respective state school boards. They are a mix of advisory councils and student board members, although most have no or limited voting rights.

The proposal before the Utah State Board of Education contemplates a student advisory council of eight 11th-graders and seven 12th-graders. The seniors will serve one term while the juniors would be asked to serve two, according to the proposal. Some local school boards also have student members. Students have served on local school boards in Utah. The Salt Lake City Board of Education has had a nonvoting student member for at least 25 years.

In higher education, college students have served on the Utah State Board of Regents for more than 40 years. Interested college students apply to the Utah Student Association, which are made up of the student body presidents of state colleges and universities. That group narrows the field to three candidates and submits their names to the governor for his or her selection. One student regent is selected each academic year. Student regents have full voting rights, participate in presidential searches and serve one-year terms, said Melanie Heath, spokeswoman for the Utah System of Higher Education.

The State School Board policy and application are a work in progress, so it is unclear if the advisory council will be in place during the coming school year. The board has yet to determine how student board members will be reimbursed for mileage or offered per diem or lodging. De Groote urged the State School Board committee to follow the lead of other states and move ahead with an advisory council.

“Many states already have student representation and utilize the power of student voices. They understand having students involved make communities and schools better places,” she said.

**Please Note:** We had hoped to share the results of a questionnaire we have sent to Connecticut’s gubernatorial candidates, focusing on issues we believe relevant to teachers. To date we have received no responses. If we do receive one or more responses, the CCSS Board will share the information in an email blast and/or at the Fall Conference on October 26.
Opportunities For Social Studies Teachers

1. **Connecticut Kid Governor**: Registration for Connecticut’s Kid Governor® 2018-19 is now open! Fifth grade teachers are invited to register their classes to participate in Connecticut’s Kid Governor®, an award-winning statewide civics program created by the Connecticut Public Affairs Network. This free, in-class civics program teaches 5th grade students about state government, voting and elections, and civic engagement through the annual election of a Kid Governor. The program takes place right from the comfort of the classroom and registered teachers receive Toolkits of lesson plans that guide them through the entire program. Schools can participate by nominating one student candidate in the election, voting in the election, or both.

Kid Governor is an authentic, immersive experience that teaches students about the democratic process by giving them a voice in a real election. To learn more and to register your class, please visit or email Brian.Cofrancesco@kidgovernor.org.

2. **2018 Holocaust and Genocide Workshop**: On Monday, October 29th, 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. the University of Hartford is hosting a Holocaust and genocide education workshop. It is free for all middle and high school teachers. Click here for more information.

3. **Fight Fake News! Professional Development and Workshop**: The Fairfield Museum is presenting the educator workshop for fighting fake news. This event takes place on October 9th, from 4:00 to 6:00 pm. This workshop will give information on how to teach students the difference between reliable and unreliable media information. Click here to register and for more information.

4. **A Historic Evening with Eva Schloss**: The stepsister of Anne Frank, Eva Schloss will be at The Bushnell on Monday, October 29th to share the story of her and Anne Frank. Click here for more information, click here to purchase tickets.

5. **Upcoming Conference on “1918: One Hundred Years Later”**: The New England History Teachers Association is sponsoring this conference on Saturday, October 20 at Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts. This conference is for middle school, high school, and university instructors, and will be about the end of World War I, the aftermath and impact of World War I, and the impact of World War I on the New England States. The keynote speaker will be Professor Christopher Capozzola from MIT, who is the author of Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen. For registration information click here

6. **CFOG Webinar for Open Government**: CFOG, the Connecticut Foundation for Open Government, is an organization of attorneys and journalists who are very interested in open government and first amendment issues. They have created a webinar on this topic for you to view. In addition, they offer for your class an attorney and a journalist who will come in and discuss these issues with your students. For information, contact info@cfog.org.

7. **Hartford Hamilton Education Program**: The Gilder Lehrman Institute has partnered with the producers of Hamilton and the Miranda family on the Hamilton Education Program. Title I-eligible high schools are being invited to integrate Alexander Hamilton and the Founding Era into classroom studies and then see the musical for one “Hamilton” ($10). The Hamilton Education Program is part of the Gilder Lehrman Institute’s broader mission to improve the teaching and learning of American history. The program will take place on December 13th, and schools are encouraged to apply using this link.

8. **Implicit Bias Training**: Discovering Amistad is pleased to launch the premier event of their Freedom Institute, which will feature interactive workshops focused on diversity, inclusion, and social equity. Following a keynote address by Connecticut Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson, the Institute will lead workshops centered around raising awareness and enhancing the understanding of biases - both implicit and explicit. The event is on Friday, October 12 from 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM at Southern Connecticut State University and you can register for $20 online at https://da/freedom/institute.eventbrite.com

9. **NCSS Pre-Conference Workshop**: Teachers who attend the World History Digital Education Foundation pre-conference clinic at the NCSS Conference in Chicago on November 29th will receive a check for $500 to defray travel expenses for an upcoming trip to Korea. The clinic is going to focus on three new modules on Korean History created for the AP World classroom but also relevant to any world history class. Contact Samantha Fraser at Samantha.fraser@kwdhproject.org with any questions.
Opportunities For Social Studies Teachers

1. HERO Center Field Trips and Museum Curriculum: The Holocaust Education Resource and Outreach (HERO) Center, a joint initiative between Voices of Hope and the Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Hartford, is excited to invite you to book your FREE field trip to the Museum of Jewish Civilization, housed on the University of Hartford campus. Our tour program includes a tour of the museum, discussions on identity, the refugee crisis: then and now, and why it is so important to remember the events which took place during this dark time in history. Through this unique program students learn about the dangers of intolerance and indifference and have the opportunity to meet a Holocaust survivor. With the implementation of the new Holocaust and genocide education legislation, our program will help you meet the state requirements while simultaneously offering your students an exceptional outside-the-classroom experience. Please find the attached curriculum that accompanies our tour program, which was developed by master educators in our community. With this curriculum, students will not only be asked about the facts but also about how we view ourselves, what makes us proud as individuals, and how we treat people in need. Do not pass up this incredible and unforgettable learning opportunity! We hope that you and your students will join us this fall. We have already begun scheduling tours, so make sure you get in touch with us while we still have openings! To schedule your trip, please contact Kimberly Ballaro, HERO Center Director, at herocenter@ctvoicesofhope.org or 860-768-5729.

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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  
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