President’s Message

Several weeks ago, I was in our nation’s capital and decided to tour the National Portrait Gallery, one of the Smithsonian museums that I had never visited. Like other museums in the city, it is a remarkable, riveting place – one walks away inspired and grateful for the experience. At the powerful exhibit of the women’s rights movement, I was drawn to a poster advocating for equal rights for women during the suffrage movement. The brilliant and succinct phrase on the poster read, “Equality is the sacred law of humanity.”

Equality is the sacred law of humanity. It seems so simple and powerful, yet so distant.

It’s tough to see so much poverty and hurt in the capital city of a country that espouses the rhetoric of equality. Given our monumental tasks as educators – to prepare our students for the future, to create a welcoming and safe environment, to contribute to their social and emotional growth, and to cultivate critical thinking and civic engagement – it often feels that the weight of the world is upon our shoulders. We are heroes and champions in our schools and in our communities. But we shouldn’t have to be. We are heroes and champions to our colleagues and our students. Be we shouldn’t have to be. Nevertheless, our kids need us and we take on the burden. We take on the challenge of improving people’s lives. Our students will become what they aspire to be because of us. As educators, we are the ones that make the difference.

Even during these trying times, what has become clearer is that what we do as teachers is strive to better humanity every day in our classrooms, schools, and communities. I remain idealistic because I believe in the power of education and the profound importance of teachers. I have always felt that

As the school year draws to a close, we urge all of you to take a minute to thank David Bosso for his four years of service as president of CCSS. Whether you call, email, text or simply take a quiet moment to reflect on all the things he has done our behalf . . . the list is endless. Among his achievements is bringing Elyse Poller and Nora Mocarski along to serve as our next president and vice president. CCSS is in good hands as we look ahead.

That said, let’s not get smug. In the last issue we raised the question of how our social studies curriculum is being defined, with some thoughts about about legislative intrusion. One can hardly disagree with the inclusion of specific issues into a curriculum, but when and how much has become a serious concern. Moreover, there is a potential disconnect when one mandates teaching the Holocaust but says nothing about requiring a world history course in which the Holocaust is to be taught. This May, fifth grade teachers have been tasked with beginning to teach about “climate change” as part of a science curriculum. See Steve Armstrong’s comments on one aspect of this issue on page 3.

In a sense, teachers of both science and social studies have been set aside in this legislative mandating process. Consider that a mandated course in government might well choose a case study in the politics of “climate change” as a way of understanding how governments work (or don’t). Will this meet the mandate? The bottom line in all this is that teachers, and particularly social studies teachers, need to be at the table, or on the phone to a legislator, when these mandates are proposed.

Turning to this issue, we have an interesting array of articles for your consideration. The recent production by Peter Jackson in modernizing World War I film to

(continued on page 2)
President’s Message - continued

our work is never done – it remains pressing and ever more significant. Fundamentally, the work we are carrying out each day is the manifestation of the idea that “equality is the sacred law of humanity.”

As I transition out of the role of president of CCSS, I am looking forward to a new era under the leadership of newly elected President, Elyse Poller, and Vice President, Nora Mocarski. Each is a longstanding member of CCSS and our Board of Directors, and they are collaborative, dynamic, and passionate about our work. As CCSS president, I have had the great pleasure over the last four years of working with dedicated, selfless individuals who have volunteered their time and energy to advocate for issues that impact social studies education and to provide robust professional opportunities for social studies educators throughout the state and the region. Collectively, on our Board and amongst our membership, we have an amazing group of social studies educators who are committed to improving students’ academic and civic experiences. As such, there is no doubt that CCSS will continue to offer pedagogical and advocacy opportunities to a wide variety of educators and others within our social studies community so as to further empower educators and students to make the world a better place. As we seek to ensure that equality is the sacred law of humanity, our work remains vital to our democracy, and we remain grateful for all that you do.

Have a great summer, Dave

Join CCSS . . .
And be eligible for reduced rates for conferences
See Membership Form on page 16

Editor’s Note - continued

produce a feature length film “They Shall Not Grow Old” is a tour-d’force for its technological achievement and its message (see page 14). If you are up for a bit of a challenge we have a contentious article on the problems with using “simulation” as a teaching device, starting on page 4. In keeping with the theme of how we can better understand “the other”, with or without simulations, we have included three articles: teaching about the Holocaust, an innovative connection with a Syrian refugee, and the struggles of a first-year teacher addressing racial sensitivity. Scattered about the issue we have reports from two schools who have created challenges to accepted norms. We hope those brief reports will encourage you to share some of the activities in your classrooms that “push the envelope” a bit. Finally, if you read nothing else in this issue, please read the tribute to Pamela Gardner on page 11.

Have a safe, rewarding and restful summer.

Tim  thomas.weinland@uconn.edu
Dan  danielcoughlin@charter.net
Many educators and students in Connecticut have advocated for the inclusion of more African American and LatinX history in Connecticut's classrooms. Recently the Connecticut state legislature has passed legislation making this a reality. Starting in the fall of 2021, all Connecticut high schools will be required to offer an elective course on African American and LatinX history. Schools can create their own courses (in fact, many high schools already offer electives in those areas); a model elective course will be created by SERC (the State Education Resource Center) that districts can utilize. Proponents of this course also wanted to make passing of this course a high school graduation requirement for all students; that was not included in the final bill that was approved by the legislature. Even though districts will not have to begin teaching this elective until 2021, it is not too early to begin planning for this important curricular change.

The teaching of civics is changing in Connecticut; in many schools project based activities are becoming as important as “learning about” the major concepts of American, state, and local government. This summer the Connecticut Department of Education is convening a workgroup to create a portfolio approach for the assessment of students in a civics or government course. Several states have this as a mandated assessment; what we are doing in Connecticut is creating this as a model for schools and teachers who want to utilize it. We are still looking for teachers and curriculum leaders who are interested in serving on the committee that would create this document: the workload would consist of one or two “live” meetings plus some online review. If you are interested, or have questions, contact State of Connecticut Social Studies intern Yesenia Karas at SocStudiesIntern2.CSDE@ct.gov.

On June 27 the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies and McGraw Hill will be co-sponsoring a one day social studies leadership institute entitled on “The Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks: Four Years Later” Sessions will focus on how to utilize the frameworks to inform instruction, innovative ways to utilize inquiry instruction, and ways to create an inclusive classroom. There is no cost to attend this institute. For registration information contact State of Connecticut Social Studies intern Yesenia Karas at SocStudiesIntern2.CSDE@ct.gov.

Commissioner Dr. Dianna Wentzell
On May 31, members of the CCSS Board met to recognize and celebrate the career of Commissioner of Education Dr. Dianna Wentzell as she retires. Few commissioners have been such strong advocates for the role of social studies in the school curriculum. Her open, thoughtful and effective style has been a wonderful asset to the efforts of CCSS in maintaining a lively and challenging program for social studies students in Connecticut. We wish her a long, happy and productive retirement. She is pictured here with outgoing president David Bosso, incoming president Elyse Poller and State Social Studies Consultant Steve Armstrong.
What It Felt Like
If “living history” role-plays in the classroom can so easily go wrong, why do teachers keep assigning them?

By REBECCA ONION Slate 20, 2019:45 AM

Ohio, 2011: A teacher assigned a 10-year-old black student to play an enslaved person in a slave-auction simulation. Georgia, 2017: A school asked fifth graders to dress up as Civil War “characters” for a “Civil War Experiential Learning Day.” A black parent, Corrie Davis, reported that her 10-year-old’s white classmate dressed as a plantation owner and told her child, “You are my slave.” New York City, 2018: Officials fired a white teacher who reportedly made black students lie on the floor and then stepped on their backs to show them what slavery was “like.” And just last week, a Tennessee father tweeted about a “Living History” exercise at his daughter’s school where a fifth-grade student dressed up as Hitler and did the Nazi salute. Soon thereafter, students began giving each other Nazi salutes “in the hallways and at recess.”

How could any teacher think these historical games were good ideas? The short answer: Teachers with no sense of perspective tried to make history personal and ended up reinforcing white supremacy in the name of “learning.” (Though it’s not always clear what race the instructors in these stories are: In 2015–16, 80 percent of teachers in American public schools were white, serving a student population that was 51 percent minority.) The longer answer: These classroom incidents show how pedagogical ideas about the value of experience in learning about history, good intentions to teach “hard histories,” and vague liberal goals of multicultural understanding can all go terribly, terribly wrong.

The idea that “living through” history, in a controlled fashion, has educational value comes from the early-20th-century Progressive education movement. Researchers Hilary Dack, Stephanie van Hover, and David Hicks have traced the idea behind what they call “experiential learning” back to the theorist and educator John Dewey, who believed that you learn things more deeply when you experience them, rather than when somebody sits at the front of the class and tells you about them.

In a database search, I found that journals for history teachers began to feature articles about role-playing in the classroom in the late 1970s and early 1980s. That’s probably due to the influence of a few prominent role-playing projects. These pedagogical exercises were explicitly anti-racist in their intention, and they had dramatic outcomes that brought them media attention. In 1967, California history teacher and activist member of Students for a Democratic Society Ron Jones carried out a project called the Third Wave, which enlisted students in a quasi-fascist fictitious social movement to illustrate how people could come to support Nazis during World War II. The students were far more enthusiastic about the movement than Jones had expected—an outcome that dismayed him.

In 1968, Jane Elliott, a white teacher in Iowa moved by the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., devised an exercise called “Blue Eyes, Brown Eyes.” She divided her third-grade students by eye color and gave brown-eyed children favorable treatment. The blue-eyed children faded into the background and the brown-eyed children began to bully them, while excelling at the classroom tasks Elliot set for them. In 1970, Elliott’s simulation became the subject of an ABC documentary called The Eye of the Storm; in 1981, Jones’ experiment became a TV movie called The Wave.

The well-intentioned idea that teachers in a classroom can increase engagement by setting up a simulation seems to have trickled into history and social studies classrooms in all kinds of janky ways in the decades since then. Cory Wright-Maley, a professor of education at St. Mary’s University in Canada who studies simulations in social studies, writes that teachers and teacher educators don’t really have a collective language to identify what experiential learning is, or what it’s supposed to do. One result is the kinds of horror stories I listed above; another less-painful outcome is failed lessons that go nowhere.

In 2015, researchers Dack, van Hover, and Hicks analyzed 14 videotaped lessons, pulled from a larger corpus of videotapes made in third- through 12th-grade social studies classrooms, that involved experiential instructional techniques. The team found that 12 of the 14 had significant problems in execution. These problems weren’t always related to the infliction of emotional trauma—often, a game or simulation just didn’t work, such as in a sixth-grade lesson on 19th-century immigration that included an element where students pretended to be on a boat, bounding and bobbing, before returning to their seats. Some of these lessons also transmitted factual inaccuracies—a problem, the trio of researchers observed, in all social studies instruction, but it seemed to get worse in experiential lessons, when teachers went “off-script.”

“I believe teachers need a higher level of content and pedagogical knowledge” to teach role-playing games in class, LaGarrett King, a professor of social studies education at the University of Missouri, said. “We’re talking about social studies teachers who are not trained in direction, or writing for dramas, or anything like that. … What I’ve found from college students who are training to be teachers is that they lack the content knowledge sufficient enough to even talk about race, or about tough historical issues, in the classroom.” I spoke to King on a day when he taught his last class of the semester, and by way of context for our conversation, he told me that in two sections of future teachers, 40 students total, he had one male student and one woman of color; the rest were white women.

A teacher may wish to teach students about the history of American slavery and may think that “feeling” their way through that history is the best way to do it. But historical empathy is much more complex than this idea assumes. In a critique of the common idea that students' historical empathy might prompt them to adopt democratic habits and acquire an affinity for social justice, professor of education Megan Boler writes, “Passive empathy is not a sufficient educational practice. At stake is not only the ability to empathize with the very distant other, but to recognize oneself as implicated in the social forces that create the climate of obstacles the other must confront.”

This recognition of personal implication is an extremely significant intellectual and emotional leap, and one that many white adults—including teachers—have not, themselves, made. King pointed out that the teacher’s position in relationship to this history was important. Someone teaching a lesson about the Confederacy, for example, might have family members still sympathetic to the Confederacy—or she herself might be. Before teaching these lessons, he said, “Teachers need to really get in there, to understand themselves as a racialized human being.”

continued on page 5
One danger of poorly executed simulations of the darkest parts of our history is that white or otherwise privileged students may revel in what they see as the dramatic aspects of these situations—they may actually enjoy themselves. Sociologist Sadhana Bery, whose children attended a school where the students were planning to put on a play about slavery, wrote a 2014 article for an education journal that described that situation in detail. According to Bery’s account, the leadership at the school emphasized the fact that the few black students in the school had not been pressured to act in the play at all; all students had been told they could take whichever parts in the play they liked. But the result was that the black parents and students boycotted the play altogether, and the white students all chose to “play” enslaved people, declining all of the roles of slave traders and slaveholders. Bery writes that “the white teachers had to persuade the Asian and Latino/a students to play the roles of perpetrators of slavery.”

She attended the play’s performance in order to see the results. The white students playing the role of enslaved people enthusiastically cried and yelled when they were “sold away” from their families. Although she didn’t use this language to describe it, it’s clear that she found this performance utterly grotesque. For Bery, the “replacement of critical thought with emotion” in the course of reenactment obliterated any historical lesson that might be learned about slavery. Instead, white students were learning to “consume” historical black trauma, and reveling in the catharsis it could bring.

King, too, wondered what pedagogical benefit could come from reenacting the misery of slavery. “With the kind of anti-blackness we have in this country,” King asked me, “why do we have to show black vulnerability in the classroom? Why is that so important for us to do? Why is it so important for us to show black pain, and black suffering? I believe it does stem from this notion, that what we know about black history is about black pain and suffering.”

“History is about emotion,” King added, “but there are other ways of getting at that emotion.”

When students are invited to playact oppressors, as is sometimes the case in these stories that go viral, existing power dynamics in the classroom and school get exacerbated—to the detriment of all. In April of this year, an Arizona parent wrote on Facebook that her 9-year-old son was made to walk across the classroom as two teachers and his third-grade peers yelled at him, in order to simulate the gentility of hateful white people that the Little Rock Nine walked through when they integrated Central High School in September 1957. For Cory Wright-Maley, this kind of situation traumatizes the child who’s playing the “victim,” but also does a disservice to the ones whose teacher asked them to do the yelling. “You can’t pit kids against kids,” Wright-Maley said in an interview. “The realization that ‘I’ have the innate capacity to harm others is deeply scarring and psychologically harmful,” he wrote about role-plays that enlist students as oppressors, suggesting that teachers give students “the permission to act in response to evil, rather than being forced to embody it.”

One solution can be for the teacher to assume the role of oppressor. In a 2003 article interrogating the claim, made by historian Samuel Totten and others, that the Holocaust should never be simulated, professor of education Simone Schweber described an extensive and well-planned Holocaust role-play carried out over seven weeks in the context of a class on World War II. In this simulation, the teacher set herself up as “the Gestapo,” while every student in the class played a Jew at risk of being killed by Nazis.

While Schweber was inherently skeptical of the idea behind this exercise, when she surveyed the students in the class before and after the class, she did find that they “improved greatly” in their knowledge of the information and concepts surrounding the Holocaust. Schweber thought that the four students she interviewed in depth had, besides knowing much more about the Holocaust than they had, become truly emotionally engaged with the simulation: “All four interviewed students had come to recognize the arbitrariness of who survived and who didn’t, and all had gained a sense of the magnitude of that tragedy in the fabric of individual lives.”

Some educators, like Schweber, still see value in simulations in the K–12 classroom—if done with a very high level of investment and care. Adam Sanchez, a social studies teacher at a public high school in New York City, told me that both Rethinking Schools and Zinn Education Project—organizations he’s been involved with as an editor and writer—do produce curricula that include role-play and simulations. As an example, Sanchez pointed me to a piece describing a role-play on Reconstruction that he taught to a 12th-grade government class in Queens. The class, mostly students of color, role-played as freedpeople living on the Sea Islands of Georgia during and immediately after the Civil War, with the game tracing the course of the actual community’s history. The students experienced emancipation, the brief hope for the future made possible by freedpeople’s land ownership right after the war, and the thwarting of that hope when Andrew Johnson became president, pardoned the slaveholders, and restored their land. “Obviously students aren’t going to be able to feel the feeling” that formerly enslaved landowners felt when the government decided to take their acres back, Sanchez said. But through the role-play, they put time into decisions that affected the community—“Are we going to spend money to build a school or are we going to create a militia?”—and so, when the news of Johnson’s decision hit them in the game, they had some investment in the situation.

In an article for the Southern Poverty Law Center’s magazine Teaching Tolerance, Ingrid Drake collected a list of recommendations for how to run an educational simulation or role-play: “Avoid simulations that can trigger emotional traumas”; “Don’t group students according to characteristics that represent real-life oppression”; “Build in ample time for debriefing”; “Remind students to disengage from the role-play at the activity’s conclusion.” Sanchez’s Reconstruction simulation illustrates some of these practices. Sanchez said that he made sure to talk about the emotions that students experienced and to draw connections between those feelings and what the freedpeople might have gone through. It helped, too, to have a metacommunication with students about the pedagogical value of the simulation. “I always try to have time when debriefing the role-play when you acknowledge with students some of the limitations in role-play and simulation,” Sanchez said. “Any activity like that is going to necessarily simplify certain things, and I don’t think that’s necessarily a bad thing. Most histories, if you read them out of a textbook, simplify the true version of what actually happened—and that’s how most schools teach things.”

The viral role-play horror stories illustrate how far we have to go when it comes to teaching the history of slavery and the Holocaust. But LaGarrett King hopes teachers don’t get the wrong message. “What I fear is that with all the attention that these particular simulations and problematic caricatures are getting in the classroom, is that you’re going to have teachers say, ‘Well, forget it. I’m not going to teach any kind of hard history then,’” King said. “I like to think of it as a problem of professional development—like, ‘Hey, this is problematic. How can we fix it?’”
In Jill Armstrong’s social studies classes, when students learn about other countries, they don’t just learn from textbooks and news articles, which she says can seem abstract and elusive to teenagers. Armstrong, who teaches at a high school in Eastern Kentucky, likes to weave in “that human aspect, because it makes it more real,” she says.

Case in point: About once a week for the last several months, Armstrong’s humanities students have participated in an hour-long conversation with Ghenwah Kharbeet, a 28-year-old Syrian refugee—only, the students are in class in the tiny town of Greenup, Ky., and Kharbeet is 5,000 miles away in Turkey.

Kharbeet is 5,000 miles away in Turkey.

During their time together, Kharbeet, whose face is projected on a SMART Board at the front of the classroom, urges the students to ask her anything, and they do. They ask her about home (“What do you miss most?”), about life in Turkey (“Have you made many friends?”), about her religion (“If you’re a Muslim, why don’t you wear a hijab?”). They ask about her favorite foods, music and hobbies, and about the civil war in Syria. In return, she asks them about America—about the traditions of Halloween and Thanksgiving, the sports they follow and how the fast food tastes.

“I tell them about my dreams, my kids, what I want to do and where I want to go,” Kharbeet says. “At the end, a lot of them say, ‘Thank you, it made me realize you’re a real person like us.’ It’s really a lot of fun.”

Ghenwah Kharbeet, a Syrian refugee living in Turkey, tells high school students in Greenup, Ky., about her life and family. (Image credit: Jill Armstrong)

To Armstrong, the experience her students get from their regular video calls with Kharbeet is invaluable. “I really have become more passionate about global awareness and getting my students to see the world beyond what we have here, in Eastern Kentucky,” Armstrong says. “I tell them, you know, the whole concept of why we learn about other countries is to understand and be knowledgeable. You don’t have to agree. But it’s about understanding and learning and growing.”

Through Kharbeet, at least 55 students in Greenup County High School have gotten a glimpse of what it’s like to be a refugee, which has challenged the stereotypes and generalizations they may have picked up online or in their communities about Islam and Arabic culture.

They’ve learned that Kharbeet was studying English literature at Damascus University when she fled the country three-and-a-half years ago. That she was passing through Turkey on her way to France, but never made it to her final destination because she met and fell in love with another refugee, Awad, who is now her husband. That Kharbeet is now a mother to two little boys.

Armstrong met Kharbeet through NaTakallam (Arabic for “we speak”), an organization that connects displaced persons with learners all over the world who want to practice their language skills or find out more about a different culture, then compensates them for their work.

NaTakallam was founded in 2015, when Aline Sara, a Lebanese-American graduate student at Columbia University, was struggling to find someone with whom she could practice her conversational Arabic.

“[Sara] saw so many Syrians who were qualified and well-educated but unemployed because of discrimination or weren’t legally allowed to work,” says Christina Meyer, the K-12 programs officer. So Sara brought together an informal network of friends who wanted to improve their language abilities and matched them with displaced persons whose native tongue was Arabic.

Since then, NaTakallam has expanded to offer lessons in four different languages and has hired displaced persons from more than 10 countries, including Syria, Iran, Venezuela and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In late 2017, it launched its K-12 program, which delivers language and cultural lessons in Arabic and Spanish (with Persian and French available soon) to students on platforms such as Skype and Zoom.

“Our goal is to challenge the narrative about what it means to be a refugee, an asylum seeker, and to create narratives of empowerment and dignity rather than victimhood,” Meyer explains. “To be able to talk to someone and hear [about] their passion for drawing, their degree in Turkish literature or that they’re a professional volleyball player, helps build empathy and has provided really touching experiences for students.”

In the year-and-a-half since the K-12 program launched, NaTakallam has served more than 4,000 students in 120 different schools across the globe. Some turn to the company to support language learning, especially when native Arabic speakers are uncommon in the area, like in Kansas or North Carolina, Meyer explains. But a lot of schools use the service to “combat
The primary purpose of NaTakallam is to meet a global need—and not the one for language services. “Our goal is to help provide a stable and substantial income to displaced persons,” Meyer says. The company sells K-12 sessions with “conversation partners” (CPs)—its term for people like Kharbeet—in one-, three- and 10-lesson packages, which cost between $125 and $150 per session, depending on how much is purchased at once. Depending on the partnership, she says, between 35 and 75 percent of that price goes directly to the CPs.

For schools, that’s a steep price. Grant funding from the Qatar Foundation International has allowed NaTakallam to provide lessons to 86 schools in nearly a dozen countries, at no cost to the schools, Meyers says. That’s how Armstrong’s students in Kentucky have been able to meet regularly with Kharbeet. But when that option is no longer available, Meyers suggests schools look at it like this: Each session costs about the same as a field trip for a U.S. school. Is NaTakallam not, in many ways, its own kind of field trip?

Kharbeet says that NaTakallam has been a “real life-saver” for her family. Once they settled in Turkey, her husband enrolled in Istanbul University to finish his Arabic literature degree. When he graduates, Kharbeet will go back and finish her own degree. But until then, she’s grateful to have a source of income that allows her to stay home with her 2-year-old and 6-month-old sons.

“For me, it’s a perfect job,” she says, adding that she genuinely enjoys talking with the students every day. “When I see schools trying to learn Arabic, I feel very happy. Our language is accepted there. Our culture is accepted there.” She adds: “The kids always ask me, ‘What do you want us to do for you?’ And I say, ‘Just be nice when you meet a Syrian. We need your kindness.’”

This story is part of an EdSurge Research series about how school communities across the country are changing their practices to meet the needs of all learners. These stories are made publicly available with support from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, which had no influence over the content in this story. (Read our ethics statement here.) This work is licensed under a CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

Emily Tate (@ByEmilyTate) is a reporter at EdSurge covering K-12 education. Reach her at emily [at] edsurge[dot] com.

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Connecticut Students to Restore American Trenches in Seicheprey, France

The Connecticut Heritage Foundation, on behalf of the Connecticut State Library, launches “Digging Into History: Trench Restoration In Seicheprey France” in cooperation with the Communaute de Communes Mad et Moselle to restore a section of World War One trenches in Seicheprey, France.

Digging Into History: WWI Trench Restoration in Seicheprey will bring 15 Connecticut high school students on a community service trip to France in July 2019. The students will spend two weeks in the village of Seicheprey working with local historians to restore a section of trench from World War One. Seicheprey, in the Toul Sector, was the site of what is considered the first German offensive against American troops, and was fought primarily by Connecticut soldiers of the 102d Infantry Regiment, 26th “Yankee” Division. The goal of this work is to create a historic site where visitors can learn about this important battle, and American (and Connecticut) contributions to the war.

“Restoring and preserving historic sites provides a connection to the past that words and images cannot” said Connecticut State Librarian Kendall Wiggin. “Restoring this section of WWI trench honors those brave United States, and especially Connecticut troops, who fought and died in a war synonymous with trench warfare.”


The Connecticut Heritage Foundation was established to support the programs and purposes of the Connecticut State Library and Museum of Connecticut History. [connecticutheritagefoundation.org/](http://connecticutheritagefoundation.org/)

For more information contact Christine Pittsley | 860.757.6517 | christine.pittsley@ct.gov
When ninth grade humanities teacher Sydney Chaffee decided she wanted to become a teacher, she admits her expectations were wildly idealistic. “This is the path that was meant for me,” she remembered thinking. “I’m going to go in there and I’m going to save all the children.” But those unrealistic expectations — and savior complex — didn’t last long. Like many new teachers, Chaffee struggled through her first year in the classroom at Codman Academy Charter Public School in Dorchester in 2007. She said while all of her papers and lesson plans were in order each day, she had a hard time adjusting to the reality of heading up a classroom: from keeping her students’ attention to forming connections. She learned a lot that year. But the biggest lesson came just a few months after school started. Chaffee — who is white — got into in a seemingly straightforward altercation with 12th grade Tyrrell Brewster — who is black.

Chaffee was helping Brewster’s younger brother study after school. Tyrell opened the door, came into the classroom and asked what they were doing. At the time, Chaffee thought the interruption was rude. She thought Brewster should have knocked on the door and said, “Excuse me.” That’s why she made the split-second decision to ignore him. Brewster lost his temper. “My natural reaction was just to blow up,” he said. “I don’t remember verbatim what I said, but I was cussing.” Chaffee froze. “Nothing in my work to become a teacher had prepared me for a moment like this,” she said. “We talk a lot about lesson planning. We talk a lot about pedagogy. We don’t really talk about what you do when a student blows up at you.”

That night, Chaffee called her boss, Head of School Thabiti Brown, in tears as she shared her side of the story. Brown had a lot of classroom experience under his belt and had been working at Codman since its founding in 2001. He also had a good relationship with Brewster, and Chaffee’s recounting of the story felt out of character for the 17-year-old. Rather than taking sides, Brown set up a mediation. Chaffee remembered heading into that meeting thinking she was totally in the right and this would be her chance to say something back to Brewster. But that’s not how the meeting went. When they got together, Brewster revealed that when Chaffee ignored him, he felt disrespected. “I think anyone feels disrespected when you are talking to someone clearly and they ignore you,” Brewster said. “You just want a response.” But it wasn’t just a matter of respect. What felt like a simple story of “he said/she said” was more complex, particularly when you account for race. Behind a lot of Brewster’s frustration in that moment was a feeling that the school he loved was changing into something he didn’t recognize.

In 2007, all but one of the 112 students enrolled in Codman were black or latinx. Of the 13 staff: Three were black and the rest were white. When the school opened in 2001, four of the five founding teachers were black. “I didn’t think much of the staff reflected the student body here,” Brewster said. “And at the time there were a lot of staff coming in that were not people of color.” That was unsettling for Brewster. He had attended other schools before enrolling in Codman in 2003. At those schools, learning was a chore and school was not a positive place to be. “I didn’t enjoy those schools because it felt like the teachers were just there to get a check,” he said. “It was very hands off and I didn’t feel supported.”

But Codman Academy felt different. When he got there as a freshman, he felt like learning was fun. When he saw more white teachers being hired at the school, Brewster was concerned. “I was worried about that shift — that Codman isn’t going to be fun anymore,” he recalled. Hearing that explanation was eye-opening for Chaffee. She realized she had not considered his perspective or the many ways that race factored into how their interaction played out. “There were layers to that [moment] that I was not critical about because I was so new to it,” said Chaffee. “I hadn’t thought about those things. I hadn’t been exposed to those ideas, which is my white privilege in action.”

Today, Brewster is back in the halls of Codman Academy, this time as a high school math teacher. “When Tyrell came back to work here, it was the first thing that I thought of,” Chaffee said. “Like, Does he remember when I really messed up? Does he think of me as the ignorant white teacher who doesn’t get it?” But Brewster didn’t hold a grudge. He said his perspective of Chaffee changed a lot over the last 12 years. Now, he thinks of her as a role-model teacher. In fact, that incident has informed how he handles similar situations in his classroom. “It’s helpful to have been through those things. Just because I can speak of it firsthand and the students really respect that,” he said.

For Chaffee the incident taught her about patience and consideration of the nuanced ways that racial differences can play into everyday interactions. “I have a ton of learning that I’m still doing in my growth as a white teacher” she said. “Both in the context of this school, but also in general.”
On June 12, 2013, kids in Cayuga County, New York, were getting antsy: the sun was shining, the sky was bright blue, and the school bell was about to ring. Excitement built as the students gathered outside, some staring longingly at the nearby playground. For the adults present, however, it was a somber occasion. Southern Cayuga Central School was about to plant one of the saplings of the Anne Frank tree — a horse chestnut that served as a symbol of hope to the teenager. Frank watched it for years from a window of an attic in Amsterdam, where her family lived in hiding.

"From my favorite spot on the floor I look up at the blue sky and the bare chestnut tree, on whose branches little raindrops shine," Frank wrote in her diary on February 23, 1944. "As long as this exists, and it certainly always will, I know that then there will always be comfort for every sorrow, whatever the circumstances might be."

Frank's tree fell during a storm in 2010, after years of suffering from a fungal disease. But in the years leading up to its collapse, New York City's Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect secured 11 saplings to distribute across the U.S. One is planted on the west lawn of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. Another sits in New York City's 9/11 Memorial at Liberty Park. And, thanks to Southern Cayuga Central School English teacher Bill Zimpfer, another has taken root in a rural dairy farming community.

When Zimpfer first read about the sapling initiative, he immediately went to his superintendent for permission to apply. “This chestnut tree — this was like the Dutch Statue of Liberty,” he told FRONTLINE. “It symbolized their resistance to the Nazis and the Nazi philosophy.” The superintendent gave him the green light. About three months later, the school — which has about 700 students — learned that it had secured a part of the historic tree. “We’re just a little school district that nobody knows out in the Finger Lakes of upstate New York, and we’ve got something that is really special,” Zimpfer said. “It’s a source of pride for [the students].”

As the planting ceremony began on Anne Frank’s birthday in 2013, Zimpfer thought about the enormous responsibility that came with the sapling, which was then barely more than a twig with a bundle of roots the size of a softball. “This is an educational tool — not a tombstone with leaves on it,” he said. “Now, we have to follow through.”

The arrival of the sapling, nicknamed Annie, has helped transform Holocaust education at Southern Cayuga Central from a blip in a sprawling social studies or literature class into a year-long learning process. The school has since launched a nonprofit, the Southern Cayuga Anne Frank Tree Project, that brings in survivors from the Holocaust and other genocides, including Sudan, and arranges field trips to war memorials. “I think everybody — especially students — when they have something physical they can see, something they can touch, it connects them to concepts that are very far away and makes it easier for them to understand,” Zimpfer said.

But the school’s concerted efforts to keep the memories and teachings of the Holocaust alive for the youngest generation is far from the norm. Educators across the country are grappling with how to make the lessons of the Holocaust relevant to children at a time when it is vanishing from the collective memory. Sixty-six percent of millennials wrongly think Hitler came to power by force.

These gaps in awareness are underscored by an alarming uptick in schoolyard anti-Semitism. The number of hate incidents directed at Jews quadrupled in K-12 schools from 2015 to 2017, a study by the Anti-Defamation League shows, jumping from 114 to 457 reported incidents. School grounds surpassed other public spaces, such as parks and streets, to have the highest number of reported anti-Semitic incidents in 2017. And it’s all going viral on social media: a photo posted to Twitter and Snapchat earlier this year showed a Nazi-themed party where California high schoolers played a drinking game with red cups arranged in the shape of a swastika while laughing and doing a Sieg Heil salute.

“The internet helps amplify these ideas that spread hatred and violence,” Elisa Rapaport, Chief Operating Officer of the Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect, told FRONTLINE. “Interactions are no longer limited to a small community. With opportunities to connect, we have also witnessed a rapidly-spreading virus of hostility.”

The rise of anti-Semitism in K-12 schools is “impossible to ignore at this point,” according to Peter Nelson, director of Holocaust education at the ADL. Nelson provides education support to schools, sometimes in the wake of an incident. “It’s not clear that these [students] are neo-Nazis necessarily,” he said. “It may not even be directed at Jews in particular. But it is woefully ignorant.”

Educators like Zimpfer believe Holocaust awareness can serve as a line of defense against anti-Semitism, and the American public strongly supports Holocaust education in schools: according to the Claims Conference survey, 93 percent believe...
that students should learn about the Holocaust in school, and 80 percent think it is important to learn about the Holocaust so something like it does not happen again. Yet only 10 states require schools to teach students about the Holocaust.

The recent surge of anti-Semitism has reignited legislative efforts to expand Holocaust education. In January, U.S. Rep. Carolyn Maloney introduced a bipartisan bill that would establish a federal fund at the Department of Education for schools to develop and improve the quality of their teachings on the Holocaust. The proposed legislation, titled the Never Again Education Act, would prioritize schools that do not already cover the Holocaust. The bill has 99 co-sponsors. There are also a number of additional states that are working to require Holocaust education in their schools, including Maryland, Massachusetts and North Carolina. Still, not all states believe that Holocaust education should be required, highlighting the prickly politics behind they did not want to support a bill that singles out the Holocaust, had concerns around extra costs to schools, or had competing legislative priorities.

Some educators fear that mandating a topic will result in an overloaded curriculum. “In your global history course, you have just covered everything from the Reconstruction to the Iraq War in nine months or something crazy,” Elizabeth Edelstein, vice president of education at New York’s Museum of Jewish Heritage said. “So, you have much less time per topic.” Research has shown that mandating Holocaust education to teachers, who don’t always have the proper guidance on how best to approach the complex topic, can backfire. A study by the University of College London found that even though British students overwhelmingly were familiar with the Holocaust, most had a flawed understanding of it.

In New York, teachers have increasingly reached out to the Museum of Jewish Heritage for guidance on how to best teach the Holocaust, requests that tend to come on the heels of an anti-Semitic school incident. “One question we hear frequently is, ‘We don’t know how to start,’” Edelstein said. The museum — in partnership with the NYC Department of Education — recently launched a free education portal for teachers in an attempt to promote best classroom practices. This includes relying on primary sources such as survivor testimony or artifacts, a change from outmoded textbooks that tend to highlight the chronology of Nazis at the expense of the Jewish experience. “Kids perceive Jews, if they know anything about the Holocaust, as victims,” she said. “Of course they were victims of the Holocaust. But they were also active agents in their own fates to the utmost possibility that they could be.”

Although it’s become much less prevalent in the past 20 years, some schools still rely on dubious Holocaust education practices. Some teachers divide classrooms into two groups — Nazis and Jews — based on the color of their shirts and have them simulate scenarios such as a deportation. Others show graphic photos from concentration camps to the class with no context. “[The teachers’] intent is to show them the horrific outcome of when hatred is unchecked,” Edelstein said. “But when students are shocked, they shut down. They are not open to learning.” Teaching the Holocaust just to tick a box is not enough, educators say. “That is not using the Holocaust to give us the lessons we need to be good citizens in a democracy — to not be complacent and take our responsibilities seriously,” Nelson said.

Back in Cayuga County, Annie the sapling was deliberately placed right next to the playground, so that the youngest children would always see it. “Every kid, grade K-12, can tell you about Anne Frank, can tell you about the sapling, can tell you about the Holocaust,” Zimpfer said. “It’s incredible what having this tree has done to draw attention to and enlighten everybody on the campus and in the community about the Holocaust.”

Cayuga County’s small part of the Anne Frank tree has sparked not only a comprehensive education about a horrific moment in our history, but a pathway to apply the lessons to the future. “When you have a deeper knowledge of a subject and not just a passing knowledge,” Zimpfer said, “it gives you a deeper understanding of it, and then I think you connect it to your own life. I think you connect it to other events that are similar to it in some way.”

Only one Cinderella?
How about dozens? - the Rough faced girl of the Algonquin, Adelita of Mexico, Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters from Korea— it turns out almost every culture has its own version of the classic fairy tale. Shelton High School social studies teacher Catherine Burgholzer who teaches Cultural Anthropology teamed up with library media specialist Michele Piccolo to collect over 20 different children’s books on Cinderella. Students compared and contrasted the social themes developed in the books and then created their own unique versions of the tale based on their own cultural identities. Catherine is shown with her class displaying children’s books from around the globe.
On June 12 at 1:15 forty-five 4th graders from Centerbrook will walk out the doors of CT’s Old State House, board their bus, and summer will officially begin at the Connecticut Democracy Center! The CT Democracy Center at Connecticut’s Old State House is the place where history and civics meet. Without history, we can’t understand the world and without civics, we can’t make it better. And without Social Studies teachers— we can’t do anything. Among other things you are inspiring future historians, leaders, museum workers, and museum visitors, so we owe you a lot.

If you were at the last CCSS Conference, you received a free pass to the Old State House and we hope you’ll use it! If you can’t find your pass, you can check out four free tickets at your local library. You can tour the building on your own or with a museum educator. You can relax and soak in the scenes and stories. On Tuesdays and Fridays you can shop in our Farmers Market and hear a live concert. On Thursdays, you can find foods from around the world at the outdoor One World Market.

We’re a 3-minute walk from the Science Center and the Wadsworth, and we’re surrounded by lots of good restaurants. You can also walk across the street to Constitution Plaza and stroll across the river on a beautiful day, enjoying sculptures, views of the Colt dome, and river scenes along the way. If you visit, please ask to see Sally Whipple, Rebecca Taber-Conover, or Brian Cofrancesco. We welcome the opportunity to thank you for all you do for Social Studies.

For hours and other information please visit https://www.cga.ct.gov/osh/.

Pamela Bellmore Gardner

Editors’ Note: Connecticut Social Studies and Connecticut Education lost a champion this past year with the passing of Pamela Bellmore Gardner. As a leader in CCSS, Pam served as President and co-chaired a state conference and NERC 2004. In her honor and memory, CCSS has established an award to recognize leadership in social studies. As the following tribute from her aunt Patricia Libero describes, Pam Gardner defined leadership.

“She was the best of us.” That is what Jim Bellmore, Pamela’s brother wrote on Facebook the morning she died. “She was the best of us”. Pam’s return to West Haven HS was not easy. She did not get hired for the initial social studies position that she applied for and was so disappointed. So, she went on the Groton, Old Saybrook. Guilford- where she met her husband-, then to Stratford as assistant principal, then to WHHS. I used to tease her that she couldn’t keep a job! Along the way Pam received many awards, including the Milken Award, Fulbright Fellowship, and named 3 times Teacher of the year. She was involved with the Holocaust Museum in DC. When she was appointed principal of WHHS, she felt like she was coming home.

She LOVED awards night and graduation- those were her super bowls. Last year, I don’t know who received more standing ovations- the students or her. People were amazed at her strength. Pam had a spirit that was infectious- she could draw folks in to help with any of her crazy ideas- her magical mystery and her Harry Potter themed birthday parties were epic.

She had a leadership quality that was superb- she listened, she understood, she was there for her students and staff. Pam knew the importance of connections. She made every effort to connect. Her students loved her. They admired her. The main reason for her success is she never lost focus that this is all about the kids. Any idea that was presented was always questioned on how it would help students.

Pam was diagnosed in June 2017 with stage 4 cancer. She was determined to work. And work she did. She was an amazing role model for these high school kids to observe. She lost her hair and rocked the bald head look.

Pam never wavered in her strength, or her resolve. Pam inspired us every day. Her courage, her compassion, her drive is unmatched, beyond compare. Every day is a fight and she fought like only a Westie could”. The Pamela Gardner Social Studies Award recipient will be one who cares about the students and staff, who shows strength and compassion, who knows the importance of community and will exemplify the words: She was the best of us!
How We Argue: A Workshop for Social Studies Teachers
August 5, 2019 to August 7, 2019

How do we discuss controversial topics? Often, it seems, we rely upon superficial research of the facts, intimidation, or appeals to emotion. Yet, democracy depends on citizens charitably and accurately engaging each other’s arguments.

In this workshop, we introduce argument mapping: a simple, powerful, research-backed method for applying logical rigor to writing and classroom discussions. Visualizing the structure of arguments makes students more precise, confident thinkers across disciplines. Harvard philosophers have partnered with social studies teachers to develop and test this method with students. Teachers will be provided tools, resources, and best practices that can be implemented immediately to support student learning.

Aligning with dimensions of the C3 Framework, argument mapping can help your students develop critical reasoning skills by:

- Structuring their thinking using a visual method that organizes claims into a hierarchy of support relationships
- Evaluating the quality of an argument by (1) evaluating premises (evidence) for truth or reasonableness; and (2) evaluating the strength and weakness of support relationships

This process helps students not just weigh evidence, but analyze whether that evidence adequately supports the logical structure that is at the heart of any argument, whether found in an essay, speech, editorial or other source vital to civic discourse.

Registration Fee*: $459 NCSS members / $599 nonmembers  *Membership can be acquired at registration to receive the member rate

Who Should Participate?
This event is open to those with an interest in creating a classroom environment open to thoughtful, evidence-based discussion amongst students.

- K-12 Classroom Teachers
- Administrators
- Curriculum Specialists/Coaches
- Higher Education Faculty
- Teams

Jonathan Haber is the author of Critical Voter, a curriculum that uses presidential politics to teach critical thinking. His professional background is in assessment, educational standards, certification and curriculum development.

Nate Otey is COO and Lead Instructor for ThinkerAnalytix and a Fellow in the Harvard Philosophy Department. He is also a co-founder of ThoughtFull.

Anne Sanderson is CEO and Co-Founder of ThinkerAnalytix and an Associate in the Harvard Philosophy Department. She taught high school English in California and Massachusetts schools for 25 years

Institute Location: Harvard University       Robinson Hall in Harvard Yard,  35 Quincy St,  Cambridge, MA 02138
https://members.socialstudies.org/Scripts/4Disapi.dll/4DCGI/events/Register.html?Action=Register&ConfID_W=215

NCSS Summer Institute - Woodstock at 50: The 1960s & the Transformation of American Society
July 14, 2019 to July 17, 2019

Make connections between US history and popular culture, earn credit, and visit Bethel Woods, the Woodstock festival grounds, and its museum during the Woodstock at 50 Institute!

In August of 1969, the social and political forces at work in throughout the 1960s converged at Yasgur’s Farm. The ensuing music festival became a pivotal moment in defining American identity. In honor of Woodstock’s 50th anniversary, delve into the cultural, social and political impact of the festival and the 1960s on American society and how the changes of the 1960s still impact the United States today. Historian, author, and long time Grateful Dead publicist, Dennis McNally, will serve as Scholar in Residence, sharing from his deep research of the post-war Bay Area “Beat” and “Hippy” scenes, as well as his work connecting race and popular culture from Mark Twain to the present.

In collaboration with Steven Van Zandt’s Rock and Roll Forever Foundation, participants will:
- Examine the societal changes crystalized at the Woodstock Festival from WWII to present.
- Discuss how to “take informed action” from the lessons learned.
- Engage in discussion lead by Dennis McNally, historian, author and music publicist for the Grateful Dead.
- Gain classroom-ready techniques, concepts and free curriculum resources for immediate classroom use.

Guiding Themes:
1 The cultural and political importance of Woodstock, American culture, and the 1960s
2 The value of using music to teach in the social studies classroom
3 Changes and conflicts of the 1960s and today
4 Music as a change-agent

Registration  $459* per person (NCSS Members) / $599* per person (NCSS Non-member)
Nonmembers may join or renew during registration to be eligible for the member rate.

* Credit available through Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) Department of History at additional cost (optional).

Register at https://members.socialstudies.org/Scripts/4Disapi.dll/4DCGI/events/Register.html?Action=Register&ConfID_W=213&_ga=2.204805846.791945986.1558300154-1235602962.1557881558
NERC Update from Laura Krenicki:

The 49th NERC was held at Framingham State University on March 18-19, 2019. I attended the second day of the conference and was pleased to see eight session offerings for each time slot. The highlight of the day was the Keynote Address by Justice Robert J. Cordy, retired associate justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. Justice Cordy has worked with judges from Mexico, Russia, China, Kosovo, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Afghanistan and other countries on issues relating to judicial ethics, rule of law principles and the American judicial system. His address was titled “The Interdependent Relationship Between a Free Press and an Independent Judiciary in a Constitutional Democracy - The American Experience and Lessons from Abroad.”

The first part of the address was a summary of the paper he wrote for the Boston College Law Review which was a rationale for the importance in a democratic government of both a free press and an independent judiciary. He used case studies through American history of the dangers and pitfalls of limiting or influencing them.

“The primary vehicle for creating informed citizens is an independent, robust press in its many varied forms. The freedom to speak and write on matters of importance about society, government and public officials is thus an inescapable necessity of democracy. An independent judiciary is necessary to ensure that the rights and protections afforded to all persons, as provided in the Constitution, are respected by the government, regardless of their majority or minority status in the democracy. These rights and protections must be interpreted, applied and ensured by a judiciary sufficiently independent of the other branches of government that might be inclined to chip away at them.”

The second part of his address included how he began his relationship with Russian judges who showed up in the Boston District Court. They were looking for information on how the judiciary is kept independent. This unexpected meeting turned into a collaboration between judiciaries, to learn about the systems of law, and the relationships between the law and the press. After changing leadership in Russia, the rules on the press and on the judiciaries were affected; essentially ending the relationship between American and Russian judges.

For more information, please see: https://www.vanguardlawmag.com/case-studies/robert-cordy/

Global Collaborations & Digital Museums at the CECA Tech Expo

Students from William J. Johnston Middle School shared their digital learning social studies projects at the CECA Tech Expo at the State Capitol on May 1, 2019.

Inspired by National Geographic Explorer Paul Salopek’s Out of Eden Walk, students researched their families’ histories and collected artifacts from their pasts. These artifacts became part of a Digital Museum Project where students created museums using Google Sites or Google Tour Builder. Those who used Tour Builder traced the path of a specific artifact as it was passed down through family members. In some cases, this involved students interviewing family members to find the stories of the objects, and connected their objects to geography and human movement.

For Global Collaboration Day, WJJMS students hosted a global collaboration project called One Day in our World. Using Flipgrid as the main means of collaboration (flipgrid.com/oneday), they hosted topics easily accessible for multiple grade levels. Since they were hosting, they made sure there were student ambassadors assigned to topics to promote discussion, provide feedback, and encourage participation. Using Twitter as an advertising tool, they invited classrooms around the world to join in the project. Within 24 hours, they had videos posted to the project from kids around the world! Flipgrid shared their work (http://blog.flipgrid.com/news/oneday) and the connections they made have developed into other collaborations this year, including examining refugee issues and universal access to education.

Submitted by Laura Krenicki
As the director of elaborate fantasy epics like the “Lord of the Rings” and “Hobbit” trilogies, Peter Jackson has become known for meticulous attention to detail. Now he has put the same amount of care into making a documentary. With “They Shall Not Grow Old,” Jackson has applied new technology to century-old World War I footage to create a vivid, you-are-there feeling that puts real faces front and center and allows us to hear their stories in their own words.

The documentary, which will screen nationwide Dec. 17 and Dec. 27, concentrates on the experiences of British soldiers as revealed in footage from the archives of the Imperial War Museum. Jackson and his team have digitally restored the footage, adjusted its frame rate, colorized it and converted it to 3-D. They chose not to add a host or title cards. Instead, veterans of the war “narrate” — that is, the filmmakers culled their commentary from hundreds of hours of BBC interviews recorded in the 1960s and ’70s.

The result is a transformation that is nothing less than visually astonishing. “The clarity was such that these soldiers on the film came alive,” Jackson said in a phone interview describing the restoration process. “Their humanity just jumped out at you. This footage has been around for 100 years and these men had been buried behind a fog of damage, a mask of grain and jerkiness and sped-up film. Once restored, it’s the human aspect that you gain the most.”

The film came about through a partnership between the Imperial War Museum and 14-18 Now, a cultural program that commissioned artists to create work for the centennial of World War I (1914-1918). They approached Jackson about contributing a film to the project.

“We discovered that Peter Jackson has a huge knowledge, expertise and passion for the First World War,” said Jenny Waldman, the director of 14-18 Now. Jackson’s grandfather was a professional soldier in the British Army before the war began, and served in the conflict for its duration.

The centennial project gave Jackson the freedom to make a film as he saw fit, but had two requirements: that he use only the footage from their archive and that he do it in an original way. Jackson was given 100 hours of footage of varying levels of quality. “It was sometimes a duplicate of a duplicate of a duplicate,” he said.

Much of this material, of soldiers in training and then in the trenches, was shot for propaganda newsreels that would play in theaters between other movies. “It’s interesting to think that this footage could have been put between a cartoon and a Charlie Chaplin film, and accompanied by organ music,” said Jean Cannon, the co-curator of a 2014 World War I exhibition at the University of Texas at Austin.

“So in some ways the war gets on the scale of entertainment.” In fact, the first feature-length documentary to depict combat, “The Battle of the Somme,” was released mid-war, in 1916, and drew nearly 20 million moviegoers.

For Jackson’s documentary, rather than sift through the archival footage to decide which scenes to use, he opted to restore all 100 hours first (working on that daunting three-year task with a New Zealand company, Park Road Post Production). Decades of scratches, dust and splotches were cleaned up, and the now-pristine material was donated back to the war museum.

There were other technological adjustments as well. Jackson’s goal was to reconnect audiences with the soldiers in a way even more intimate than “The Battle of the Somme” did. The footage had a herky-jerky feel because it had been shot on hand-cranked cameras that produced images at a much slower frame rate than modern audiences are used to. Jackson’s team retimed the footage, speeding up the frame rate, adding extra frames digitally and smoothing out the movement.

Then Jackson turned to the company Stereo D to colorize the film’s centerpiece clips. This required the help of a historian who could identify the military details, down to what colors uniform buttons should be. Additionally, Jackson’s team traveled to some of the battle sites to pin down color references.

The film begins with basic training footage, in black and white, building to the moment when the soldiers go to the Western Front. That’s when the movie transitions into startling color. Was Jackson going for a dramatic, “Wizard of Oz”-style effect? Well, not exactly.

“It was all to do with the budget,” he said. Originally the documentary was to be about half an hour long. “The budget we had was to colorize about 30 to 40 minutes of film.” But as he and his team listened to the interviews, what the veterans said about training provided much-needed context, and the filmmakers didn’t want their movie to “jump straight into the trenches.” Still, the budget wasn’t flexible. So they settled on a feature-length movie with restored black-and-white footage book ending the dramatic, full-color highlights.

Stereo D also worked on converting the film to 3-D for a more immersive effect, a sense of being on the battlefield. And Park Road enhanced the experience with sound editing to rival that of “The Lord of the Rings.” But explosions, gunshots and tank engines aren’t as surprising as the moments when the soldiers speak.

“We got some forensic lip readers, who, before this, I had no idea actually existed,” Jackson said. These experts, who often work with law enforcement to help determine the words of people in security camera video, reviewed the archival footage to reconstruct, as nearly

continued on page 15
as possible, what the soldiers were saying.
Voice performers were hired to stand in for the soldiers, but Jackson’s team, mindful that regiments were drawn from different regions
of Britain, made sure the actors came from those areas and had accurate accents. In a similar vein, military historians provided ideas for
what off-camera officers’ commands might have been, and that information made its way into the film as well.
Even with all of these moving parts, and with footage that could have told a dozen different war stories, Jackson tried to keep his film
specific. “I didn’t want to do a little bit of everything,” he said. “I just wanted to focus on one topic and do it properly: the experience
of an average soldier infantryman on the Western Front.”

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Special Notice on Membership Dues
and NERC Registration

Membership in CCSS runs from July 1 to June 30th each year. Members who are current on their dues
for the 2017-2018 year will be sent a discount code for registration for NERC. To be eligible for reduced
rates for the NERC conference, please be sure to renew your membership as soon as possible. Dues may
be sent to CCSS, PO Box 5031, Milford, CT 06460.

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Kids Take Center Stage

About two weeks before the March 15, 2019 International Climate Change Strike, two Mansfield Middle School 7th graders
came to a Student Council meeting and suggested a “walk-in” assembly on climate change. Adults immediately reacted
supportively - albeit with some skepticism that kids could organize everything in such a short time. The kids
attracted a dedicated group of 5th through 8th graders who did research, prepared speeches and visual presentations, alerted the media, and
contacted our local legislators... All in time for an hour-long morning assembly on 3/15.

The student body was informed and given the option to leave classes for the events. Many made signs and participated in a
march around the building before entering the school auditorium for the presentations. Speakers were poised, well-informed, respectful,
persuasive and passionate. They discussed the history, science, economics, technology, politics, and social issues associated with
climate change.

Representative Gregg Haddad and Senator Mae Flexer attended the assembly and were invited to speak as well. They were
clearly impressed by the kids and their comments were encouraging and recognized that it is this generation that can be most effective in
impacting decision makers - in their families, their local communities,
and the world.

The students decided they wanted to take action for more than one day. This passion and commitment led to
their creation of an after school club, called The Changemakers, that meets weekly to discuss ways to inform others and
influence change for the environment. The group got styrofoam trays removed from the cafeteria and are working to get
plastic straws banned. One committee is working on a climate crisis video to be shared to a wide audience.

Watching these kids present was one of our proudest days. This was not just about making speeches; it was about
making real change and it gives us hope for our future.
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)
- Free subscription to the Yankee Post, the CCSS newsletter
- Opportunity to apply for “mini-grants” of up to $500 for innovative curriculum in social studies and other special projects
- Opportunity to meet colleagues and develop a network of professional friends and associates
- Ability to keep up-to-date with developments in the social studies.

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

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

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

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School Name______________________________

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Home Phone________________________Work Phone________________________

Position________________________Level of Instruction________________________

Areas of Special Interest________________________

NEW NCSS Membership

CCSS Membership (July 1- June 30)

- Regular* $75
- Regular $20
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- Social Education
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