I would like my first order of business as CCSS’s new president to publicly thank David Bosso for his many years of fine leadership for our organization. Dave’s vision, passion for social studies, graciousness, and attention to detail served CCSS well. He helped increase our visibility among state leaders, allowing us to be more effective in our advocacy efforts; he developed productive partnerships with other social studies organizations, allowing us to create and deliver valuable professional development opportunities to our members; he encouraged active involvement of members of our board; and his accomplishments as an educator - most recently his induction into the Teacher Hall of Fame - inspire each of us to do a little more. I would also like to personally thank Dave for his support, guidance, and friendship over the years. I am honored to have him as a colleague and friend. He leaves big shoes to fill!

What makes taking on this responsibility a bit less daunting is the knowledge that I am surrounded by exceptionally talented, committed, hard-working and creative CCSS board members and officers. We are all ardent supporters of a robust social studies education in our Connecticut schools and universities and work effectively together to fulfill our mission.

I visited my in-laws in Australia this summer (winter) and watched quite a few movies on the very long flight. At the start of each film, Delta showed a one minute video called Close the Gap (available on YouTube) that speaks to how people often assume those from other regions / countries are very different until they have a chance to interact. Although Delta may be using the film to promote travel, each time I watched it, it reinforced my mission as a social studies teacher. I want my students to seek other perspectives, to embrace the diversity of the human race, to recognize that every individual deserves respect, and to seek to understand how cultures developed over time. I want them to ask questions, to wonder, to challenge, and to work to make the world a better place.

Welcome back. And welcome to another year of challenges for social studies and social studies teachers. This issue opens up discussion of some of those challenges – a discussion we hope you will want to continue at the CCSS Fall Conference on October 4. Information on the conference has likely reached you already, but you can find information scattered in the early pages of this issue along with a special broadside on page 6.

What are some of the challenges we face? There is pressure from some who argue that social studies can best make its case by preparing students for vocations and a career. What are the jobs for which our subject can open up opportunities? One can respond by noting that we have a special obligation to prepare students for active responsible citizenship – a job and career every citizen must accept in a democracy. That preparation is best accomplished by presenting students with challenging, and often controversial, issues and material and promoting thoughtful and probing consideration of those issues. One such challenge has been raised again this summer in The New York Times with its publication of material from Project 1619. See pages 7-10 for information about some of the proposals that have come from the recognition of the 400th anniversary of the first appearance of enslaved African laborers on our shores.

All that said, as we seek to be inclusive, social studies teachers must consider the extent to which our discipline becomes the “solution” to every social problem raised by interest groups and lobbies. Over the years, teachers, administrators, and the public through their legislators, have all had a hand in determining what of the myriad of possible content and topics should be included in our discipline. A major question arises as to the extent of the increasing demands on teacher’s instructional time. See page 11 for one current debate.

Along these same lines we have an excerpt from an interesting article on the concerns raised by the Theodore Roosevelt statue in front of the Museum of Natural History in New York City. Those of us who “tut-tutted” as southerners wrestled with the placement of statues of southern Civil War
President’s Message - continued

little better each day.

The work that CCSS does supports educators like me by advocating for the social studies to local, state and national officials, delivering relevant and effective professional development, recognizing excellence through our annual awards, and providing networking opportunities.

There is a lot ahead for our organization. Our annual Fall Conference - to be held on Friday, October 4th at Central Connecticut State University - will be an engaging and informative event. We are grateful for the tireless efforts of our co-chairs, Laura Krenicki and Annie Tucci, along with many other of our all-volunteer board members who are selecting and scheduling workshops, recruiting vendors, coordinating the facility, organizing the program, planning registration, and all the other parts of pulling together an event of this kind.

Our theme of Creating Citizens: Every Grade, Every Year speaks to our priority of getting social studies back into elementary schools across our state. It is essential that we begin developing our future citizens and leaders early. There will be sessions relevant to all grade levels, along with a panel discussion on women’s rights from suffrage to #MeToo, as well as unconferencing opportunities, a wide selection of vendors, and recognition of our 2019 CCSS award winners. Registration is open.

We also look forward to working with our new governor, commissioner of education, and other elected officials on social studies issues. We welcome your input on where we should set our priorities in our advocacy work. Please complete this brief survey by the end of September.

I hope your school year is off to a good start and that we will see you in October.

Join CCSS . . .
And be eligible for reduced rates for conferences
See Membership Form on page 18

Editor’s Note - continued

heroes are now confronted with a “sauce for the goose….” moment! What do you think? And what do your students think? See page 17

Students were also active this summer. See pages 14-15 for the wonderful results achieved by Connecticut students at National History Day in Washington DC. Likewise, a group of students worked “in the trenches” as a part of a World War I program in France. Pictures and description on pages 16-17. Students were not alone. Karen Cook, department head at Norwich Free Academy, has been included in the top ten candidates for selection as National History Teacher of the Year by the Guilder-Lehrman Society. In addition, on pages 4 and 5 you can find the award recipients for this past academic year’s CCSS awards. All those recognized have set an inspiring standard of excellence for social studies teaching, support and leadership.

So, read . . . and join us at the CCSS conference on October 4 at CCSU.

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

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The Connecticut State Department of Education is sponsoring several programs that recognize schools and students that demonstrate competency in social studies activities and skills. These programs include:

- **The Red, White and Blue Schools Program**: this program recognizes schools and school districts that do an exceptional job of promoting civic education. This year’s theme is “Women’s Suffrage and Voting Rights in Connecticut”. Elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools are all eligible for this program.

- **The Veterans Recognition Program**: this program recognizes schools and school districts that do an exceptional job of teaching about veterans in social studies and other classes. Schools recognized do not just teach about veterans on Memorial Day and Veterans Day; education about veterans takes place throughout the year. Elementary schools, middle schools and high schools are all eligible for this program.

- **The Global Competency Certificate Program**: this program recognizes high school students who demonstrate a superior knowledge of the content and skills necessary to be a global citizen. Students who are recognized should demonstrate civic competency through coursework, extracurricular activities, and through a student-designed project. High school students are eligible for this program.

Additional information on program qualifications will be posted soon on the webpages of these programs. For information, contact State of Connecticut Social Studies Consultant Stephen Armstrong at Stephen.Armstrong@ct.gov

The **Hearst Foundation United States Student Youth Program** recognizes two students from each state each year; these students receive a week-long experience in Washington D.C. as well as a $10,000 college scholarship. High school students that apply must demonstrate school and community leadership. For application information, go to https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Social-Studies/ussyp_letter_and_application.pdf?la=en

We are continuing the work of two committees that began work last year to create curriculum materials; we are also creating one new committee. We are looking for volunteers for all three committees. One committee will be working to create a civics portfolio that can be used in high school civics classes. Another committee is working to create curriculum materials and to create several webinars on the topic of using music in the social studies classroom. A third committee will be working to create curriculum materials and webinars on the women’s suffrage movement. If you are interested in serving on one or more of these committees contact State of Connecticut Social Studies Consultant Stephen Armstrong: Stephen.Armstrong@ct.gov.
# CCSS Annual Award Recipients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award</th>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellence in Social Studies Education</td>
<td>Katelyn Botsford Tucker</td>
<td>Shelton School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 Recipient:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Katelyn serves the Shelton School District as a classroom teacher, coach, mentor, and collaborative colleague. Regardless of the setting, Katelyn demonstrates enthusiasm, open-mindedness, daring, and respect.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pamela Bellmore Gardner Social Studies Leadership Award</td>
<td>Bryan Watson</td>
<td>Bethel Middle School</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019 Recipient:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;As a building leader, Bryan encourages teachers to take risks in the classroom. He wants our students to participate in real-world, authentic tasks, that are centered around critical thinking and promote our active engagement in the world.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Service Excellence in Social Studies Education</td>
<td>Joseph Grabowski</td>
<td>Central Connecticut State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019 Recipient:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;[Joseph’s] academic achievement and community leadership to date are but the start of what will be an outstanding teaching and civic-minded career.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Projects Award</td>
<td>Witness Stones Project / Dennis Culliton</td>
<td>Elisabeth C. Adams Middle School, Guilford</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019 Recipient:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;The Witness Stones Project challenges students to analyze primary source documents in an effort to restore the history and honor the humanity and contributions of the enslaved individuals who helped build your local communities.&quot;</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## CCSS Service Award
To recognize an individual or organization who has shown dedicated, continuous service to further the goals of the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies.

**2019 Recipient:**
**CCSU History Department**

“The CCSU History Department has sponsored many social studies programs and activities; Matt Warshauer and John Tully have done much to support social studies teachers in Connecticut.”

## Bruce Fraser Friend of Social Studies Award
In honor of the late Bruce Fraser, this award recognizes a non-teaching professional who has furthered the interests of social studies teaching and/or social studies interests in Connecticut.

**2019 Recipient:**
**Bruce Reinholdt, retired Connecticut History Day**

“For a number of years Bruce Reinholdt has been the backbone of Connecticut History Day competitions; without his work Connecticut History Day would not be what it is today.”

## John Stedman Passion Award
Given in honor of the late John H. Stedman, this award recognizes an educator students nominate who shows passion, talent and commitment in their teaching. It is unique among the awards in that nominations come only from students.

**2019 Recipient:**
**Sarah DiGiacomo**
**Foran High School**

From a student: “She really cares about having us learn, and creates activities and lessons that make us want to come to class every day.”

## Congratulations to all the recipients of the 2019 CCSS awards.
Thank you for your hard work, creativity and dedication to the social studies.

We are humbled and inspired by your efforts, and honored to recognize your achievements.

For more information on these and other annual awards, please visit the CCSS website at [www.ctsocialstudies.org](http://www.ctsocialstudies.org)
Connecticut Council for the Social Studies (CCSS), a Gold Star affiliate of the National Council for the Social Studies, is the professional state organization for social studies educators. Our mission is to advocate for and advance the teaching of social studies at all grade levels. Our board is comprised of volunteer K-12 teachers and administrators, college professors, and personnel from museums and historical/cultural organizations.

The **CCSS Annual Fall Conference** brings together educators and administrators from elementary, middle and high schools, along with university social studies education students and instructors, and professionals from museums and historical/cultural organizations. The variety of workshops, panel discussions and exhibitors provides ample opportunities for professional development, networking, and inspiration. We also look forward to recognizing this past year’s CCSS award winners and their accomplishments.

**Conference Schedule:**

7:30-8:30 Check-in, networking, and exhibitors
8:30-9:45 Opening Remarks & Panel Discussion: *A Century of Progress: From The 19th Amendment to #MeToo*
10:00-10:50 Concurrent Sessions A
11:00 - 11:50 Concurrent Sessions B
12:00 - 12:45 CCSS awardee recognition / lunch (provided)
1:00 - 1:50 Concurrent Sessions C
2:00 - 3:30 Leadership Sessions & Unconferences

**Sample Session Topics:**
EDTPA Session, Shifting to Inquiry, Civic Engagement, Addressing Climate Change in the Classroom, Student Voice/Choice, Life During the Holocaust, Engaging K-5 in the Excitement of Election Season, Colonial Connecticut, Communicating Across Political Divide, and more.

**Opening Panel Discussion:** *A Century of Progress: From The 19th Amendment to #MeToo*

Panel participants: Megan Torrey (WAC) - Moderator, Denise Merrill (CT Secretary of State), Sarah Lubarsky (Connecticut Women’s Hall of Fame), Nancy Steenburg (UCONN & ASCH), Carol Reimers (League of Women Voters)
Most schoolchildren can recite the founding date of the United States of America: July 4, 1776. But a searing project from the New York Times Magazine changes that date to August 20, 1619—the day 20 enslaved Africans first arrived on Virginia soil. The 1619 Project is a collection of essays and literary works observing the 400th anniversary of the beginning of American slavery. “No aspect of the country that would be formed here has been untouched by the years of slavery that followed,” the project begins.

But as Nikole Hannah-Jones, the project’s lead author, writes, the prevailing narrative taught in schools is that black Americans’ history begins with enslavement and they had contributed little to the founding of this nation. Instead, she writes, “it is we who have been the perfecters of this democracy.”

To bring this groundbreaking project into the classroom, the Pulitzer Center created a curriculum for teachers of all grade levels. The curriculum asks students to examine the history and the legacy of slavery in the United States, as well as our national memory. A report last year from the Southern Poverty Law Center, a civil rights and advocacy organization, found there’s no systematic approach to teaching slavery in schools—and lessons often miss crucial components to understanding this fundamental American topic. It’s taught as a Southern phenomenon, rather than something originally sanctioned in the Constitution, and the voices and experiences of enslaved people are generally left out. And just over half of the teachers surveyed said they spoke about the continued legacy of slavery.

Many teachers surveyed said they were concerned about terrifying black children or making white children feel guilty. (There are also teachers who do slavery simulations, like a mock slave auction or a game about the Underground Railroad, to try to convey the brutality—but experts and educators say that these simulations can minimize horrific events and cause emotional trauma to black students.)

Even so, frank conversations about the legacy of slavery are important. In her keynote essay for the 1619 Project, titled “The Idea of America,” Hannah-Jones writes that she had been taught in school “through cultural osmosis” that black Americans didn’t have a strong claim to the American flag.

“I wish, now, that I could go back to the younger me and tell her that her people’s ancestry started here, on these lands, and to boldly, proudly, draw the stars and those stripes of the American flag,” she wrote. “We were told once, by virtue of our bondage, that we could never be American. But it was by virtue of our bondage that we became the most American of all.”

Engaging Students

The Pulitzer Center curriculum offers discussion questions and guided reading, as well as activities that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Fareed Mostoufi, the senior education manager for the Pulitzer Center, said Hannah-Jones and editors at the New York Times were eager for educators across grade levels to reconsider how slavery is taught.

The reading guide for the issue includes broad questions that can be posed to students even if they’re not ready to read the full project, he said. And the Pulitzer Center pulled out quotes and key names, dates, and terms from each essay in the 1619 Project, so educators can identify which ones are right for their students.

The one full lesson plan in the curriculum is based on Hannah-Jones’ essay «The Idea of America.» It asks students to consider the values stated in the Declaration of Independence and how they work—and fail—in American society today.

Then, students would read the essay and consider their own prior knowledge of slavery and the contributions of black Americans to U.S. society. They could use one of two provided graphic organizers to guide their reading. There’s a list of questions for students to discuss as a class, including: What did you learn about major figures in U.S. history, like Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, and why do you think this information wasn’t included in other historical resources?

Other activities to engage students include creating a new timeline of U.S. history, starting with the year 1619, and creating an infographic that visualizes racial inequity in the United States and its links to slavery. Students can also construct their family history based on interviews with their parents and grandparents—but they can also imagine their ancestry, claiming descent from “intellectual, artistic, or spiritual parents, siblings, cousins, grandparents.” Another activity asks students to research black American innovators.

And the Pulitzer Center has put out a call for educators to share their own lessons developed from the 1619 Project. The center will highlight select lessons and student work in the coming months. “I’m curious to see how it goes, and I’m excited the issue really makes the case for opening this topic up and really embracing the discomfort,” Mostoufi said.
A dark legacy comes to light

By Joe Heim
AUGUST 28, 2019 Washington Post

Pacing his classroom in north-central Iowa, Tom McClinton prepared to deliver an essential truth about American history to his eighth-grade students. He stopped and slowly raised his index finger in front of his chest.

“Think about this. For 246 years, slavery was legal in America. It wasn’t made illegal until 154 years ago,” the 26-year-old teacher told the 23 students sitting before him at Fort Dodge Middle School. “So, what does that mean? It means slavery has been a part of America much longer than it hasn’t been a part of America.”

It is a simple observation, but it is also a revelatory way to think about slavery in America and its inextricable role in the country’s founding, evolution and present. Ours is a nation born as much in chains as in freedom. A century and a half after slavery was made illegal — and 400 years after the first documented arrival of enslaved people from Africa in Virginia — the trauma of this inherited disease lingers.

But telling the truth about slavery in American public schools has long been a failing proposition. Many teachers feel ill-prepared, and textbooks rarely do more than skim the surface. There is too much pain to explore. Too much guilt, ignorance, denial.

It is why, just four years ago, textbooks told students “workers” were brought from Africa to America, not men, women and children in chains. It is why, last year, a teacher asked students to list “positive” aspects of slavery. It is why, even in 2019, there are teachers in schools who still think holding mock auctions is a good way for students to learn about slavery. Misinformation and flawed teaching about America’s “original sin” fills our classrooms from an early age.

And yet as issues of race and prejudice and privilege continue to roil America, an understanding of how slavery forged the country seems all the more necessary.

Many of the Democratic presidential candidates say the nation should explore whether to pay some form of reparations to descendants of enslaved people — an issue that has been off the radar in previous presidential campaigns. And the rise of violence and vitriol fueled by white supremacy over the past decade — from the Charleston, S.C., church massacre to torchlight marches and murder in Charlottesville to the casual racism of public officials and leaders — reinforces the need for a deeper understanding of how slavery fostered and upheld that belief system.

A range of critics — historians, educators, civil rights activists — want to change how schools teach the subject. The evidence of slavery’s legacy is all around us, they say, pointing to the persistence of segregation in schools, the gaping racial disparities in income and wealth, and the damage done to black families by the U.S. criminal justice system. According to a 2018 report to the United Nations by the Sentencing Project, a nonprofit organization that advocates reducing racial disparities in prison sentences, American judges will send one in three black boys born in 2001 to prison in their lifetimes, compared with one in 17 white boys born the same year.

The failure to educate students about slavery prevents a full and honest reckoning with its ongoing cost in America. Teaching the truth about slavery, critics argue, could help remedy that. But that means acknowledging and exploring slavery’s depravity. It means telling the personal stories of enslaved people, the physical and psychological cruelty they endured, the sexual violence inflicted upon them, the separation of husbands and wives, parents and children.

The difficult truth means explaining to students not just how this practice of institutionalized evil came to be but also how it was accepted, embraced and inculcated in American daily life since enslaved Africans were brought to Jamestown, Va., 400 years ago. Slavery was not accepted by everyone, of course, but by enough that it was protected by laws, reinforced by practice and justified or excused in all corners of the country.

For the 50 million students attending public school in America, how they are taught about America’s history of slavery and its deprivations is as fundamental as how they are taught about the Declaration of Independence and its core assertion that “all men are created equal.” A deep understanding of one without a deep understanding of the other is to not know America at all.

McClinton wanted the hard lessons about slavery to sink in as he led students through course work that didn’t shrink from describing its horrors. He showed them a photo of an enslaved man so severely whipped that his back was more scar tissue than smooth skin. They watched Hollywood actors read devastating personal accounts of former slaves, some of whom had been separated from loved ones they would never see again. They discussed resistance, escapes, uprisings.

“A lot of times we forget that as soon as slavery started, enslaved people were fighting back,” McClinton told the students, a lesson that contradicts the idea, often taught in the last century, that enslaved people endured their lot complacently, sometimes even happily. Later, McClinton, who is white, urged his students to examine how white supremacy allowed slavery to flourish, and he asked, “Is our idea of white supremacy different now than it was then?”

The history of slavery McClinton teaches bears almost no resemblance to the history he learned as a middle school and high school student a little more than a decade ago. Then, he said, teachers spent a day or two on slavery. It was discussed primarily as a factor in the Civil War. Not much else.

In many ways, McClinton’s experience as a student was, and still is, typical. But it is not the approach the Fort Dodge Community School District has embraced. Two years ago, the district started teaching slavery as fundamental to America’s growth, wealth and identity rather than as a tangential part of the country’s history. Slavery would be emphasized and fully explored, not avoided or downplayed.

Throughout the 20th century, textbooks often glossed over slavery, treating it not as central to the American story but as an unfortunate blemish washed away by the blood of the Civil War. Students rarely learned that slavery had for a time been prevalent in the North or that the economy of the North was long reliant on the South’s slave-labor production. The enslavement of Native Americans, which predates the arrival of the first enslaved Africans, was mentioned only in passing, if at all.

continued on page 9
Many baby boomers were fed tales in school that masked the reality of slavery. Some teaching even emphasized the idea that Africans brought here in chains were actually better off.

"With all the drawbacks of slavery, it should be noted that slavery was the earliest form of social security in the United States," students read in Alabama history textbooks of the 1950s, '60s and '70s. And there was this: "A jail sentence or the execution of a slave was considered to be more of a punishment for the master than for the slave, because the slave was such valuable property."

A Virginia textbook of the same era told students that Virginia "offered a better life for the Negroes than did Africa. In his new home, the Negro was far away from the spears and war clubs of enemy tribes. He had some of the comforts of civilized life."

The punishment of enslaved people was described as rare and unfortunate, but necessary. "Most masters did not want to punish their slaves severely," the Virginia textbook read. "In those days whipping was also the usual method of correcting children. The planter looked upon his slaves as children and punished them as such."

These benevolent depictions of slavery were not a matter of happenstance. They were a direct result of efforts by Confederate apologists in the early 20th century to remove negative portrayals of the South from textbooks and history books. In 1920, Mildred Lewis Rutherford, an educator and historian of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, wrote "A Measuring Rod to Test Text Books, and Reference Books in Schools, Colleges and Libraries," a guide distributed throughout the South that proposed strict rules for what could be included in books for Southern students.

"Reject a book that says the South fought to hold her slaves," Rutherford wrote. "Reject a book that speaks of the slaveholder of the South as cruel and unjust to his slaves."

It was a reeducation campaign that made lies of truth. In fact, states that seceded from the Union made clear that they fought to hold their slaves. Soon after his election as president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis said: "We recognized the Negro as God and God’s Book and God’s laws, in nature, tell us to recognize him. Our inferior, fitted expressly for servitude ... You cannot transform the Negro into anything one-tenth as useful or as good as what slavery enables them to be."

By the last two decades of the 20th century, many of the more egregious falsehoods and excuses regarding slavery were removed from textbooks. But getting at the truth was still elusive. The narrative of slavery became more notable for what it didn’t say than what it did.

[What children learn about slavery depends on where they grow up]

Philip Jackson, an American history teacher in Montgomery County, Md., remembers learning little about slavery when he attended public school in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the same county where he now teaches.

U.S. history teacher Philip Jackson teaches the history of slavery to his eighth-graders at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in Germantown, Md., in February. (Ricky Carioti/The Washington Post)

"Pretty much all anyone knew about slavery was 'Gone with the Wind,' " Jackson, who is African American, said in his classroom at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in Germantown, Md., a growing suburb north of Washington. "I don’t remember ever going into any depth about slavery other than that there was slavery. The textbooks were pretty whitewashed. We never talked about the conditions of slavery or why it persisted."

For Jackson and many students of the time, the most in-depth learning they had about slavery came from watching "Roots," the 1977 miniseries — based on the Alex Haley novel — that was shown for years in classrooms throughout the country. Jackson's experience is similar to that of several generations of Americans. If they remember being taught about slavery at all, they don’t recall its importance being emphasized, and they certainly were not told that slavery was part of the foundation on which America was built.

It would be some solace to know that the dubious scholarship and outright lies that informed instruction about slavery for millions of students throughout the 20th century were things of the past. But false or misleading lessons about slavery aren’t confined to dusty tomes or the classrooms of yesteryear. A textbook used by a Texas public charter school chain in the 2000s taught: "While there were cruel masters who maimed or even killed their slaves (although killing and maiming were against the law in every state), there were also kind and generous owners ... Many [enslaved people] may not have even been terribly unhappy with their lot, for they knew no other."

And rarely a semester passes without news of students being taught about slavery through a reenactment of a slave auction, a physical education class that requires kids to run an obstacle course while pretending to flee slavery, or a math problem that asks third-graders such questions as: "A tree had 56 oranges. If eight slaves pick them equally, then how much would each slave pick?" and "If Frederick got two beatings per day, how many beatings did he get in one week?"

These incidents almost always prompt outrage and are followed by apologies. And yet they continue. That they have not disappeared, critics say, is a sign that lessons aren’t being learned and that many teachers lack a critical understanding of slavery and how to teach about it. The furor that erupts also points to how incendiary the issue is and, in many ways, how little the country has done to reconcile with its legacy.

[When should kids learn about slavery? It’s a complex balance.]

"Teaching about slavery is a loaded subject, and it’s loaded because everyone knows that it’s not really about the past," said Maureen Costello, director of Teaching Tolerance, a civil rights education project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. The nonprofit released a study last year examining how students are taught about slavery and suggesting ways to improve that education.

The study, "Teaching Hard History," found that students were not learning nuanced and many-layered lessons about slavery. And they were often not learning basic facts. Included in the report was a survey of high school seniors that revealed a fundamental lack of
knowledge about various aspects of slavery. Few identified slavery as the primary cause of the Civil War. And the majority of respondents were not able to identify the middle passage as the transatlantic journey endured by 12 million Africans who were brought to the Americas and Caribbean, chained together and crammed into the holds of ships. Even fewer who took the survey correctly answered that it took a constitutional amendment to bring slavery to an end.

The “Teaching Hard History” report called out American schools for failing to teach the “breadth and depth” of how slavery came to be and how it continues to manifest itself in America. It issued a withering rebuke of a dozen middle and high school textbooks for their inadequacy in explaining slavery and its ongoing impact. And it offered guidance for teaching that addresses the experiences of enslaved people, the economics behind the enterprise, the rationales for its existence, including white supremacy, the resistance it spawned and how its legacy remains with us.

A Washington Post-SSRS poll this summer showed that just under half of Americans know that slavery existed in all 13 colonies. As for the Civil War, 52 percent said that slavery was the main cause, while 41 percent said it was something other than slavery. If slavery hasn’t been particularly well taught, Americans still believe that its legacy continues to be felt. Sixty-seven percent said slavery affects U.S. society today either a great deal (31 percent) or a fair amount (36 percent). Eleven percent said it has no effect today.

Exploring that legacy has been eye-opening for many students The Post interviewed.

“Obviously, there’s not slavery anymore, but the effects of it and the racial tensions, we still see today,” said Alexandra Steffens, who graduated in June from Concord Middle School in Concord, Mass.

Steffens, who is white, spent a large chunk of her eighth-grade history class studying the history of slavery in America.

“A lot of times, you learn about slavery, but you don’t learn about the actual cruelties of it, and you just kind of see it as a big thing and not in individual acts,” she said.

Amari Bennet, who graduated in May from Ramsay High School in Birmingham, Ala., said that instances of police brutality toward African Americans and mass incarceration of blacks reinforce her sense that the past is still very much with us.

“Studying slavery kind of shows how we ended up where we are now,” said Bennet, who is black. “Even though we’ve progressed to such a vast extent from slavery times, we still have issues with civil rights that we’re dealing with today.”

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**Grades 5 – 8 Can Now Learn the Real History of Connecticut**

**Narrative of Formerly Enslaved Man Published in 1798**

**Reveals the True Story of Connecticut’s Founding**

Hartford, Connecticut, September 6, 2019—As the United States commemorates the 400th anniversary of the first enslaved Africans’ forced arrival in the American colonies, students in Connecticut will be able to study Connecticut’s founding story through the words of Venture Smith. *Venture Smith’s Colonial Connecticut* is a new print and online book created by *Connecticut Explored*, the publisher of the state’s magazine of Connecticut history and *Where I Live: Connecticut*, the social studies resource for grades 3 – 4 introduced in 2017 and now in use by half of the towns in Connecticut.

Venture Smith was kidnapped and enslaved as a young boy in West Africa. He was bought by a New England sailor as his “venture.” After being sold three times to three owners, he bought his freedom and that of his wife and children. When he died in 1805, he owned more than 100 acres, numerous boats, three houses, and a fishing business in Haddam, Connecticut. By any measure, he had overcome the cruelty of slavery to become a successful farmer, fisherman, and trader in the Revolutionary era. Smith’s compelling narrative was published in New London in 1798.

Smith’s narrative provides an exceptional opportunity for today’s students to learn that Connecticut’s story is not just the story of its Puritan settlers. Connecticut’s story is of three main groups of people: the Native Americans who were a constant and dynamic presence from before the colony’s founding through the colonial period; the European settlers and traders, dominated by the English Puritans; and the Africans—both enslaved and free, who, though small in number, contributed mightily to the economic success of the developing colony.

Slavery was legal in Connecticut for more than 200 years, until 1848. Connecticut was one of the last New England states to abolish slavery, and at the time of the American Revolution had the largest number of enslaved people of any New England state. Earlier histories and textbooks have incorrectly portrayed slavery as more benign in New England. As students will learn, Smith’s own words quickly debunk that myth.

*For more information, visit [VentureSmithColonialCT.org](http://VentureSmithColonialCT.org) or contact Elizabeth Normen at publisher@ctexplored.org or 860-233-5421.*
Four States Now Require Schools to Teach LGBT History
By Sarah Schwartz on August 12, 2019 2:31 PM Education Week-Teacher

Starting next school year, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender history will be part of the curriculum in Illinois public schools. Democratic Governor J. B. Pritzker signed House Bill 246 into law Aug. 9, making Illinois the fourth state to mandate teaching LGBT history, after California, New Jersey, and Colorado. The Illinois legislation takes effect in July 2020.

The law mandates that history classes in public schools “include a study of the roles and contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in the history of this country and this State.” Any textbooks bought with state funding must cover “the roles and contributions” of LGBT people, and can’t include content that is discriminatory to any particular gender or sexual orientation.

Nationwide, LGBT history often doesn’t make it into the curriculum. Just under a quarter of students say that they have learned about LGBT-related topics in their classes, according to 2016 research from GLSEN, a national advocacy group for LGBTQ students.

In some states, teachers face restrictions on how they can discuss issues of gender and sexuality in the classroom. Six states have anti-LGBT curriculum laws that apply to sexual health education. Advocates say that the way these laws are written leaves room for them to be misapplied to other parts of school life, including curriculum in other classes or extracurricular activities, like a Gay-Straight Alliance.

Recently, though, some states have moved in the opposite direction. In April, Arizona repealed a law that banned teachers from delivering any instruction that “promotes a homosexual lifestyle.” New Jersey and Colorado’s laws, requiring schools to teach LGBT history, were both passed this year. In June, The 74 wrote that “the tide is turning” when it comes to LGBT-inclusive curriculum.

Still, these laws have seen some pushback. The mayor of Barnegat, N.J., Alfonso Cirulli, criticized the state’s new legislation at a township committee meeting last week. “The government has no right to teach our kids morality,” Cirulli, a former assistant principal, said, according to the local Ashbury Park Press.

Implementation Questions

While the new Illinois law mandates the teaching of LGBT-inclusive content, it doesn’t specify exactly what that content should be. In this respect, the state isn’t alone. Though California passed its law mandating LGBT history in 2012, the state’s education department didn’t create standards for the subject until 2016. My colleague Stephen Sawchuk covered the state’s slow implementation process in 2017, as history and social studies teachers were still trying to figure out how to integrate the new topics into their classes.

Similar challenges may be on the horizon for districts in the states that passed legislation this year. New Jersey’s law leaves it up to individual schools and districts to decide what to teach, and how. School boards will individually update their social studies standards in advance of the 2020-21 school year, when the law takes effect, the North Jersey Record reported.

Illinois’ schools and districts will also implement the law locally, said Jackie Matthews, a spokeswoman for the Illinois State Board of Education, in an emailed statement. “ISBE does not endorse certain textbooks or curricular programs over others,” she said. “However, ISBE will work with partners to ensure that curricular and content resources are available and that public schools and districts have an opportunity to review and search curricula that best meets their needs.”

In the Prairie State, LGBT rights organization Equality Illinois suggested potential topics of focus in a past statement. The group, which supported the bill, named social worker Jane Addams and civil rights activist Bayard Rustin as famous LGBT Illinoisans and noted that the nation’s first gay rights organization was founded in Chicago.

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, or wish to submit an article for publication, please contact the editors at thomas.weinland@uconn.edu
How 3 States Are Digging In on Civics Education

Education Week, July 3, 2019
By Stephen Sawchuk

What can states do to develop better citizens? CivXNow, a coalition of some 90 organizations spearheaded by the online curriculum group iCivics, has some ideas. The group recently unveiled a policy menu: Revise social science standards to prioritize civics. Align tests to them. Improve teacher training. Give youth a voice at schools and in local government.

K-12 education has been down this road before, without a lot of progress to show for it. An early-2000s push organized by many of the same players did not dramatically change the landscape.

What's different from before, the coalition says, is the context. There are now success stories from states that have pioneered new civics education laws. There's a research base on civics education that, while young, is increasingly robust. Finally, there is public recognition that something has gone deeply wrong in the state of American civil discourse, and that schools play some role in mitigating it.

Indeed, there are some signs of a legislative appetite for additional reforms. More than 80 pieces of civics education legislation were introduced across 30-odd states in the 2018-19 legislative session, according to Ted McConnell, the executive director of the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, one of the CivXNow coalition members. And last year, the National Conference of State Legislatures counted nearly 115 civics education-related bills.

Getting the best ideas to the finish line is another story.

ABOUT THE CITIZEN Z PROJECT

U.S. public education is rooted in the belief by early American leaders that the most important knowledge to impart to young people is what it means to be a citizen. If America is experiencing a civic crisis now, as many say it is, schools may well be failing at that job.

To understand the role of education in preparing the next generation of citizens, Education Week began a series of articles, surveys, and projects in early 2018. This article is the latest installment in that initiative.

Some of the state legislation focuses on having all students take the same citizenship test used as part of the naturalization process—an approach most of the CivXNow coalition members believe is too narrow. (The Scottsdale, Ariz.-based Joe Foss Institute, which has pushed for the use of the test, is notably absent from the coalition.)

But inertia is probably the biggest challenge

“It's rare you're going to have anyone against civics, but fundamentally it's just not a priority,” said Shawn Healy, the director of democracy initiatives at the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, a key player in Illinois’ civics education efforts.

CivXNow says states can pick and choose from among the policies, though they’re most powerful in concert. It will also consider putting out model legislation in the future to guide states.

So how will the coalition know its push is succeeding?

“I wouldn’t measure success in one legislative session; it will take two to three years. We want to call back the time that's been taken away from civics and social studies over the last 20-something years,” McConnell said, referring to the standards and accountability movement many civics advocates blame for focusing schools too narrowly on reading and math at the expense of history and civics. “... When a critical mass of states have done that, we'll know we've had success.”

In the meantime, the civics and social studies lobby will need to beef up its own advocacy. Potentially, they could take a page from arts education advocates, who have been much more successful at making a research-based case for the importance of those subjects—such as by inserting the arts into the ubiquitous discussion of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), now often called “STEAM.”

“My hope is that we can get our act together on that front,” Healy said. “It’s been a bitter irony for me that the civics and social studies community has done a pretty bad job of advocating for ourselves.”

Below, Education Week briefly profiles three states at various stages of revising civics education requirements in their states—and what they’ve learned along the way.

Florida | Illinois | Massachusetts

Florida: The Trendsetter

The Sunshine state is often lauded for its cohesive push for civics education, thanks to a 2010 law bearing the name of the legendary Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor. The law required a new middle school course and an aligned test to measure civics knowledge that makes up nearly a third of each student's grade in that subject. It covers four main prongs, including the origins and purposes of law and governments; citizens’ rights and responsibilities, the political process, and the organization and function of government.

The state remains one of the few to emphasize civics at the middle school level. In most states, formal civics education begins at high school. Whatever students get before that is taught within a generic social studies or history class—often in a nuts-and-bolts or overly sentimentalized, patriotic way.

In a sense, Florida’s traditional standards-and-assessment approach to civics owes something to the same reform movement that
culminated in the federal No Child Left Behind Act—the test-heavy law that many civics experts now blame for reducing time spent on the subject. But there is some truth to the adage that what’s tested gets taught, and scores on the middle school test have risen on the exam across the state since its introduction in 2013-14, and just over 70 percent of students earn passing scores.

A lesser known factor in Florida’s work is the central role played by the Lou Frey Institute at the University of Central Florida. Although not formally part of the state’s K-12 education bureaucracy, the center has become the de facto clearinghouse for materials and teacher training for the course.

Even before the law had been signed, the institute was laying the groundwork. In 2009, it began developing model civics lessons for teachers. In 2010, the state legislature began appropriating funds to support those efforts, and in 2011, the state education department gave the institute a grant to run teacher professional development.

“I will tell you that building the kind of support system we have been for Florida is crucial to success,” said L. Doug Dobson, the Lou Frey Institute’s executive director. “Otherwise you just pass a law and clap your hands and say you’re done, and whatever happens, happens.”

Districts initially struggled to unlearn some of their former practices to cover the much more extensive content requirements: “The pacing was really a hurdle for us,” said Robert Brazofsky, the executive director for social sciences for Miami-Dade county. But now, the district has two staff members devoted to civics who provide in-school supports to teachers, and thanks to the testing data, they’ve been able to target schools with lower passing rates for extra help.

Now that the law is nearly a decade old, some in Florida are trying to get their arms around its impact. The Lou Frey Institute has worked with interested counties to informally survey students at the end of the middle school course on their civic beliefs and attitudes. In Miami-Dade, Brazofsky said, most students surveyed agree with broad civic notions, like the importance of helping others in need, but there is still work to be done translating knowledge into lifelong behaviors and beliefs. For example, only about half of students surveyed said they thought it was OK for newspapers to publish freely without government approval.

“To really support and improve the civic attitudes of young people in my opinion, a test is a good thing to have, but it doesn’t always lead to the attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions you would want as an engaged citizen,” he said.

State Republican leaders, meanwhile, wants to double down on core civics knowledge. Gov. Ron DeSantis signed an order directing high schools to prioritize the U.S. Constitution, and recent legislation requires the state to review the civics course’s curriculum and test and recommend changes.

What impact that will have next on the Sunshine State’s approach to civics has yet to be seen.

**Illinois: The Apt Pupil**

Until 2015, Illinois had some of the weakest civics requirements around, leading to great differences in how the topic was being taught.

So when Illinois added a brand-new requirement for a semester of high school civics that year, those in the state knew it would take some kind of entity, like Florida’s Lou Frey Institute, to keep implementation on the rails in the state. Ultimately, that’s taken the form of a sort of gentleman’s agreement between legislators and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, which pledged $1 million a year for three years to support the new learning—partly its own funding and the remainder raised from other philanthropies and donors.

Most of that has gone to support a crop of several dozen educators who work in concert with the state’s regional offices of education to supply training, resources, tips, and ideas to teachers about how to put the law into action.

For Bonnie Laughlin-Schultz, an associate professor of history and social science teaching coordinator at Eastern Illinois University, what’s groundbreaking about the law is not just the coursework requirement but also the specificity of the course content. The law says the class must include the topics of government institutions, service learning, simulations of the democratic process, and notably, discussion of “current and controversial events”—something even well-meaning teachers tend to ignore out of fear and discomfort.

“I think good social studies teachers were already doing many of those things, but it encouraged everyone to get on board,” said Laughlin-Schultz, who is one of the mentors in southeast Illinois. “Downstate, where I live, it gave teachers the ability to say: ‘No, I need to talk about controversial topics, it doesn’t matter what the political landscape is or whether administrators think it’s a good idea. It’s written into the law.’”

She said teachers have struggled most in understanding what service learning means in a civic education context.

“It’s not just a traditional ‘volunteer somewhere and keep a log of your hours’ thing—it is a much more intricate and authentic kind of experience. But that is intimidating to teachers,” she said.

To help them grasp the content, she hosts daylong civic engagement sessions at her university, where teachers and high school students from area schools meet to brainstorm steps they can take to address school issues, like presenting to the school board or writing a letter to a state representative. In effect, the workshops model the kinds of activities teachers can take back to their classrooms and enrich in a longer, more extended teaching unit.

Illinois’ entering high school freshman class of 2016, the first for whom the civics requirement took effect, begins its senior year this fall. In the meantime, Illinois is ready to expand its efforts. In May, the legislature passed a new law requiring a semester-long middle-grades civics course to complement the high school requirement. The bill, HB 2265, is currently awaiting Gov. J.B. Pritzker’s signature, and the McCormick Foundation is once again promising its financial support.

**continued on page 14**
Massachusetts: The New Kid

With Gov. Charlie Baker’s approval last November, the Bay State became the first state to require each middle and high school to include at least one student-led civics project.

Massachusetts’ law is among the most specific passed in decades, specifying not just content but a particular teaching approach: The idea of civics projects reflects “action civics”—having students research and use local civics channels to solve problems in their community.

It’s the culmination of two separate efforts in the state to improve civics that have fortuitously converged.

First, beginning in 2016, the state education department started revising its history and social science standards for the first time since 2003. The completed standards, unveiled in 2018, put a much heavier emphasis on civics learning throughout the grades and features a particular emphasis on civics in 8th grade. That grade’s standards now focus on the democratic foundations of the United States and their connections to the present, but isn’t a traditional, chronological history course.

Second, after several false starts, the civics-project legislation finally gained traction last year. It was heavily supported by a state coalition, most notably by Generation Citizen, a nonprofit, and the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation. The law authorizes a Civics Project Trust Fund, to be supported with state funds and outside grants, to support training and implementation on the projects. (A down payment on that new fund is currently caught up in budget negotiations: A Senate budget bill included $1.5 million for the fund while the House’s did not.)

It’s early days yet for implementation. The state education department has held regional sessions to familiarize teachers with the framework and has given out small training grants; in the future, it aims to supply some model lessons as well. And it’s now working to craft guidelines on how to approach the new project requirements, and how they might differ in an 8th grade and high school context.

Meanwhile, many districts have traditionally taught world history in 8th grade, so the move to civics in that grade beginning this fall will be a significant one, said Gorman Lee, the social studies coordinator for the Braintree district and a past president of the Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies.

There’s some looming concern about a potential civics assessment in the 8th grade. History and social studies haven’t been assessed in the state for about a decade. So far, the state is in the early phases of convening panels of teachers to begin developing test items, including some performance-based tasks. Teachers are closely watching to see how that might end up shaping their teaching.

“What is the state exactly expecting students to do? What might that assessment look like?” said Lee. “I get concerned that assessment becomes a ‘Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?’ multiple-choice test and puts students in a passive-learning mode.”

Perhaps that’s why, he says, educators feel two ways about the changes. They’re excited about renewed attention to their neglected field and they hope it will translate into increased district resources for social studies professional development and materials.

“But at the same time, they’re very cautious,” he said.

Connecticut’s Young Historians

(for more information, see Page 15)
CONNECTICUT STUDENTS RECEIVE PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS AT NATIONAL HISTORY DAY® CONTEST

College Park, Md. – Ten Connecticut middle and high school students received prestigious awards today, Thursday, June 13 at the 2019 National History Day® Contest at the University of Maryland.

- Margo Pedersen from Wilbur Cross High School, New Haven won First Place in the Senior Paper division for her paper Malaga Island: How the State of Maine Devastated a Resilient Island Community in the Name of the Greater Good.
- Ishan Prasad from Staples High School, Westport won Second Place in the Senior Paper division for his paper Shah Bano and India's Postcolonial Predicament: Gender vs. Religion.
- Mia Porcello from Northwest Catholic High School, West Hartford won First Place in the Senior Individual Exhibit division for her project Out of the Closet and into the Medicine Cabinet: ACT UP New York's Healthcare Triumphs.
- Marlena Pegolo from Sedgwick Middle School, West Hartford won Outstanding Entry in World War I History for her project The Tragic and Triumphant “Tail” of Stubby, the Military Dog.
- Eileen Peng from Irving A. Robbins Middle School, Farmington won Outstanding Connecticut Entry: Junior Division for her project The treason of Benedict Arnold: A Tale of Triumph and Tragedy.
- Katelyn Meyers from Nonnewaug High School, Region 14 won Outstanding Connecticut Entry: Senior Division for her project The Nuremberg Doctors Trials.
- Lindsay Moynihan from Conard High School, West Hartford won a scholarship to the University of Maryland for her project Turning a Tragedy into a Triumph: Dolley Madison, the War of 1818, and the Creation of a National Identity.
- Josh Picoult from Simsbury High School, Simsbury, won the U.S. Constitution Award for his project Where Do We Draw the Line? How the Triumph of District-Based Representative Government Devolved into a Tragic Distortion of American Democratic Ideals. Picoult also placed 9th in the nation for his project.

For winning prizes at the individual senior level, Pedersen and Porcello were also granted scholarships to the 2020 National History Academy, a residential program for high school students with a passion for learning about the foundations of Democracy.

Other Top 10 Finalists from Connecticut include:

- 6th place - Iniya Raja from Timothy Edwards Middle School, South Windsor for The Eugenic Roles: Dead Souls and Birth Control.
- 8th place - Emma Losonczy Lucia Wang, Mallika Subramanian, Rhea Choudhury, Sharmila Green, from Bedford Middle School, Westport for Lise Meitner: A Woman’s Determination and Scientific Triumph Through Personal and Societal Tragedy.

In addition to racking up the awards Thursday, on Wednesday, June 12, contest officials extended a special invitation to a Connecticut student to display her project at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. Morgan Geisinger, from Vernon Center Middle School, Vernon exhibited her project, Triumph Over Tragedy: Newsies Stop the World, along with 56 other invited students.

“I’m in awe of my students,” said Cyndee McManaman from Vernon Center Middle School. “They bring such diverse topics to life in ways I could never have dreamed of.” A total of 68 students represented Connecticut at the national competition after winning regional and statewide contests earlier this spring. They joined more than 3,000 students from across the United States and overseas for the week-long competition where they met with Connecticut Senator Richard Blumenthal, toured Washington, D.C., and engaged with their fellow student historians. Inspired by the 2019 theme Triumph & Tragedy in History, high school and middle school students wrote papers, created exhibits, produced documentaries, designed websites and staged performances exploring topics ranging from Vincent Van Gogh to Sergeant Stubby to the Radium Girls.

More than 4,000 middle and high school students participated in the 2019 Connecticut History Day (CHD) competition, one of 57 affiliate programs of National History Day. Connecticut History Day is led by The Connecticut Democracy Center, with major support from Connecticut Humanities. Other supporters include the Connecticut League of History Organizations, ConnecticutHistory.org, the Gwirzicki Family Foundation, and Connecticut Explored Magazine. CHD is also supported by the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies and the Connecticut State Department of Education. To learn more about Connecticut History Day, visit historydayct.org and follow the program on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
A rusty spoon gave Josh Picoult a portal to World War I and the perilous life of a young soldier. The Simsbury High School senior was among 15 Connecticut students who traveled to France last month to restore trenches that French soldiers dug in 1914 and Connecticut soldiers occupied four years later. Coordinated by historian Christine Pittsley of the Connecticut State Library, the project was meant as a history lesson and a way to bolster ties between the state and the village of Seicheprey, where doughboys from Bristol, Hartford, New Britain and other towns fought the Americans’ first significant battle of the war.

The Connecticut teenagers, from schools throughout the state, joined 16 French students in restoring the original outline of a trench in woods skirting the tiny farming village (pop. 124). Led by military historians, the students also reinforced trench walls with woven hardwood saplings, rebuilt a log-roofed abris, or shelter, and recovered numerous items left by French and American soldiers a century ago.

“Digging through the dirt, we pulled out a spoon from a French mess kit with a bullet hole through the right side of its bowl,” he wrote in an email to The Courant. “We learned that this probably happened when a soldier wanted to check for snipers and would hold up his utensil to see if it was safe. Obviously, for the soldier with this particular spoon, it was not.

“It only dawned on me later how the soldier holding the spoon that day was most likely not much older than I am now — just a boy fighting for his country and fighting for his life,” Picoult wrote. “We quickly realized that the significance of the project was far more than just a small trip for high school history lovers. It became our American duty — a chance to protect, preserve and restore not just the trenches themselves, but our longstanding connections with the French citizens of Seicheprey.”

Pittsley, who led the state’s centennial commemoration of World War I, has the bullet-blasted spoon along with Connecticut soldiers’ circular dog tags, bits of shrapnel, a brass uniform button made in Waterbury and other recovered artifacts. The three-week trip to France, she said, was life-changing for her as well. “It is the highlight of my life,” Pittsley said.

The students were chosen based on essays and interviews, and the entire project, except for Pittsley’s time, was funded by the students themselves and private donations. Before they traveled to France, each student researched the life of a soldier from his or her hometown who fought at Seicheprey.

Near the village on April 20, 1918, the 102nd came under an early morning artillery barrage. As the bombardment lifted, 3,200 German soldiers armed with flamethrowers and explosives emerged from the fog. There was hand-to-hand fighting in the trenches, and a company mess sergeant and his kitchen staff used cleavers and butcher knives to do their part against the German raiders.

The attack, according to later reports, was designed to feel out the raw troops, testing their strength and willingness to fight. By most accounts, the Germans suffered significant losses. The 102nd lost 81 dead; 401 wounded, including some poisoned by gas; and about 200 captured.

To mark the battle’s anniversary last year, Seicheprey residents read the names of the Connecticut men who were killed. A fountain in the village square, donated by the people of the state in 1923, bears this inscription:

“To commemorate the service of the 102nd Infantry ... a regiment of the American Army recruited from citizens of Connecticut, defenders of Seicheprey, April 20, 1918, in the firm belief that the friendship of Frenchmen and Americans sealed in this place in battle shall serve the cause of peace among all nations, this memorial is presented by the men and women of Connecticut.”

Over the top

On the students’ first day at the work site, a Dutch historian named Sjoerd van der Ven instructed them to line up in a trench and wait for his signal — three blasts on a whistle — to go “over the top.” Some of the kids said their hearts were racing as they crouched and waited, Pittsley said.

“It was exactly the right way to start the work,” she said. “It set the mood.”

The six boys and nine girls from Connecticut and their French counterparts started by clearing vines and weeds from a section of trench line more than a hundred feet long. They soon ran into their first hazard — hairy caterpillars that left
itchy red rashes, especially on the backs of their necks. The crews also moved “a ton of rocks,” Pittsley said, and a French word for rock, “caillou,” became a familiar cry as workers tossed stones from the trench and a caved-in shelter.

Safety was stressed, Pittsley said. If a shovel or pick hit metal, students were told to immediately call over one of the adults guiding the work. The digging did uncover several inactive grenades, both American and German, but no active explosives were uncovered, she said.

When they were done, the Franco-American crew invited Seicheprey residents to view their project. “They were in awe. They were in awe of the kids,” Pittsley said.

Besides the restoration work, the students also visited the St. Mihiel American Cemetery, where those who had researched soldiers who died in battle were allowed to lower the American flag.

Pittsley said she plans to return in April and install informational signs in English and French at the restored trench line. Continuing the cross-cultural historical exchange, in the summer of 2020, French students will come to Connecticut to work on a project here, hopefully, the Rochambeau Trail, used by French allies in the Revolutionary War, she said. And in 2021, the plan is to bring another group of Connecticut students to Seicheprey to continue trench restoration, Pittsley said.

“When we left the trenches for the last time this July,” Picoult said, “I was cognizant of the fact that we were handing off this initiative to a new generation of researchers, a new generation of learners and a new generation of those who will never forget.”

Angered by This Roosevelt Statue? A Museum Wants Visitors to Weigh In

The statue of Theodore Roosevelt by James Earle Fraser has been linked with the image of the American Museum of Natural History and for decades has been seen by many as a problematic depiction of racial hierarchy.

By Nancy Coleman  July 15, 2019  The New York Times

There’s a quote that takes up its own wall at the American Museum of Natural History’s newest exhibition: It’s more important to tell the truth about the president — pleasant or unpleasant — than about anyone else. The words were written, in fact, by a president: Theodore Roosevelt. A century later, it’s hard to know if Roosevelt expected his words could be used in a context that highlights unpleasant truths of his own.

The exhibition, titled “Addressing the Statue” and opening Tuesday, is the museum’s way of contextualizing a monument of Roosevelt that towers outside its Central Park West entrance. With the president seated high astride a horse, flanked by a Native American man and an African man standing below, people who look at the statue often see a legacy of colonialism and a visually explicit racial hierarchy.

The monument, which was designed by James Earle Fraser and installed on city property in 1940, has been defaced at least twice over the last few decades, including in 2017 when protesters splashed red liquid representing blood over the statue’s base. Another protest with red paint in 1971 was a response to the insult Native Americans took from the statue, said David Hurst Thomas, the museum’s curator of anthropology, who works closely with Native Americans.

“I was always known as the guy with that really obnoxious statue outside of his museum; I’ve never liked it,” Dr. Thomas said in an interview. “We’re supposed to be building some bridges into indigenous communities, and this is a tough way to do it.” But that said, I don’t think that we ought to just blow it up,” he added. “I think it’s a statement in time about where the museum was.”

“Addressing the Statue,” an exhibition opening at the museum on Tuesday, provides a history of the statue and some context.

You can find the complete article under Nancy Coleman, July 15, 2019  at the nytimes.com
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☐ Ability to keep up-to-date with developments in the social studies.

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☐ 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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Home Address___________________________City_____________________State_______Zip________
School Name__________________________________________________________________________
School Address__________________________City_______________________State_______Zip_______
Home Phone___________________________Work Phone_____________________________________
Position_________________________________Level of Instruction_____________________________
Areas of Special Interest_____________________________________________________

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