President’s Message

We have made some progress over the years to help legislators, administrators and the general public understand the importance of a sound education in civics. For democracy to function effectively, citizens need to know the government’s structure and process, and need to be active participants in those processes. It is good to remember, of course, that the origin of public education was to develop informed citizens. We face different challenges today for becoming ‘informed’. There are far fewer obstacles for gathering information; the hard work today is finding unbiased (or at least less biased) news sources and keeping ourselves out of “like-minded bubbles” that polarize society by preventing us from accessing and understanding others’ views.

There have, however, been discussions about whether teaching history - at the elementary, secondary and/or university level - is important or relevant in today’s world. Social studies programs at many primary and secondary schools have been whittled away as more time is spent on reading and mathematics instruction; or remain a social studies class in name alone, having been diluted into non-fiction reading courses with another name. History departments at universities are finding their enrollment levels down and their purpose being called into question. With content so readily accessible, some argue, why bother offering history courses and majors?

At the same time, there are more and more initiatives to get people talking with each other again: listening to each other; making a concerted effort to understand each others’ stories and how we have come to our different points of view, rather than shouting over each other to win a point. These initiatives encourage participants to find common ground that might allow us to move forward on controversial issues, and that reinforce common values that hold us together as a society. Educators are making a more concerted effort to develop those skills and mindsets in our classrooms, in schools, and in communities across the state.

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

Exploring the past has always been such a fascinating and enlightening passion for me that I find it hard to fathom the question of why history courses and majors should exist, and struggle to respond in a way that adequately reflects the myriad impacts these studies have had on my life. And then, one of my former students, in a response to a request for History Day participants to describe what the program means to them, wrote the following:

“Something I have learned when doing History Day is that history is not irrelevant, and there are many things to learn from it and create a future from what we learn. There are times I have thought to myself, What is the purpose of learning about history and doing projects on it if I am not going to take some lessons from it and apply them to my own life? I have learned that intolerance and unacceptance have, in many cases, led to tragedy and hostility between groups and individuals. While learning about this, I have tried to change my life such that I do not make the same mistakes other people and groups have made in the past. I have tried to listen to and understand people and their views on different topics. I have tried to be more open to new ideas, and not shut others off because their opinions are not the same as mine. I would love to continue to learn about the past, and see what we, as humans, can do in order to create a better future.”

Social studies matters. Studying history matters. Listening and learning from each other makes a difference. Best wishes for a new year filled with empathy, respect, appreciation for diversity, and hope for the future.

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

Editor’s Note - continued

Tucci and Laura Krenicki. And, as always, a big shout out to CCSU for hosting the conference. NERC conferences have often proven even more valuable given the likelihood of a larger audience with a larger number of exhibitors and presenters. We urge all of you to set aside time to attend this special anniversary 50th conference on April 6-7 in Boston. And don’t hesitate to submit a proposal to present a program at the conference.

One other special reminder. On page 15, we include a flyer announcing the awards given each year by CCSS to celebrate teaching and leadership excellence in our field. If, after reading the list of awards, you believe you know someone who might qualify, please go on line at ctsocialstudies.org and follow the nomination guidelines

Finally, we wish each of you a safe, restful and rewarding holiday season. May 2020 prove to be an exciting year for social studies teaching and learning.

Tim  thomas.weinland@uconn.edu
Dan  danielcoughlin@charter.net
Legislation Establishing African American/Latino Studies Course of Studies

The following was established in legislation passed last spring:

1. SERC (State Education Resource Center) will be creating a full year African American/Latino Studies high school elective course.
2. Beginning in the 2021-2022 school year, all school districts must include African American/Latino Studies in their curriculum. The legislation does not say where or “how much”: it simply states that all districts must include it. If a district wants to utilize the SERC-created elective course (which will be completed by the end of the 2020-2021 school year) they can do that.
3. Beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, all high schools in Connecticut must offer the full year African American/Latino Studies course that is being created by SERC.
4. Legislation states clearly that all districts must OFFER this as a one year elective: there is nothing that states that every student must take this elective course. Each school has requirements for how many students must be in a course for it to run: that requirement is also in place for this course.
5. Legislation states that each high school must offer the specific course that is being created by SERC. High schools cannot replace the SERC created course with locally created courses or units.
6. The Department of Education has been given the responsibility of seeing that this elective course is being offered in each high school in Connecticut.

In Addition

There are three programs co-sponsored by the Connecticut State Department of Education that may be of interest to your schools and to your students:

1. The Red, White and Blue School program honors individual schools and districts that do an exemplary job of teaching and having student engaged in civic education. This program is co-sponsored by the Connecticut Secretary of State’s office. This year’s theme is “Women’s Suffrage and Voting Rights in Connecticut.”
2. The Global Competency Certificate program awards certificates to students who demonstrate interest and accomplishments in global education. This is a high school award: to receive the certificate students must demonstrate achievement in academic courses with an international component and be involved in an extracurricular activity with an international focus. They also must complete a project with an international theme. This program is co-sponsored by the Connecticut World Affairs Council and by the CAPSS International Education Committee.
3. The Remembering Our Heroes: Teaching about Veterans program recognizes schools and districts who do an exemplary job of teaching about the history of veterans and the role of veterans in American society today. This program is co-sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Additional information about all of these program is available on the Social Studies page of the Connecticut Department of Education website:

https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Services/K-12-Education/Academics/Social-Studies

For additional information, contact State of Connecticut Social Studies Supervisor Stephen Armstrong at Stephen.Armstrong@ct.gov.
Conference co-chairs Ann Tucci and Laura Krenicki.

Above:
CCSS Leadership: Elyse Poller, Nora Morcarski and Louise Uchasczyk

Below
Opening Panel: “A Century of Progress: The 19th Amendment to #MeToo”
Participants included Denise Merrill, Megan Torrey, Sarah Lubarsky, Brittnex Yancy, Carol Reimers, and Nancy Steenburg
Preparing Students to Hold the Office of Citizen

April 6-7, 2020
Location: Boston, Massachusetts     Venue to be announced

We are now accepting proposals for workshops for our 50th Northeast Regional Conference for the Social Studies (NERC50)!

The theme of NERC50 is “Preparing Students to Hold the Office of Citizen.” Social Studies is a large academic field that includes history, geography, economics, civics and government, archaeology, and the behavioral sciences such as psychology and sociology. Collectively, Social Studies is intended to prepare students to hold the “Office of Citizen” and is essential for responsible citizenship in areas such as history and government, geography, economics, sociology, and communication. Social Studies creates opportunities for students to apply critical thinking and content knowledge to analyze information on complex issues and to seek solutions to real-world problems.

Monday, April 6, 2020  Monday, April 6, 2020 will be a day-long conference that will consist of a general session and concurrent one-hour workshop sessions in the morning and afternoon, similar to our fall one-day conference schedule. We are considering adding a fourth session in mid- to late-afternoon. At this time, we are planning 6 to 7 concurrent workshops per session. If you are interested in proposing a workshop for Monday, April 6, 2020, click here. We may offer some workshops on Tuesday pending space availability.

Tuesday, April 7, 2020  For NERC50, we are going to try something different. On Tuesday, April 7, 2020 Mass Council will pilot a day (morning, afternoon, or full day) where several workshops will take place at participating host sites in Boston and eastern Massachusetts, including historical societies, historical sites, state and national parks, libraries, museums, and institutions. We are looking for a variety of place-based learning professional development opportunities throughout Massachusetts. If you are interested in hosting a NERC50 workshop at your site, please click here.

Applicants will be notified no later than March 1, 2020 if they will host a NERC50 workshop at their site.

DEADLINE TO SUBMIT PROPOSAL: January 15, 2020
Many students — and parents — have gotten used to the flurry of activity that takes place around spring standardized testing. Pizza parties, rallies, gift cards and door-to-door campaigns to students’ homes are a few of the strategies and incentives schools use to make sure students are in their seats on test days, ready to give it their best. But even if all students take the test, educators have long complained that end-of-year, “summative” assessments are not useful because the results are not available until fall when their students have moved on to the next grade.

“It is too late to make any instructional adjustments,” says Michael W. Huneke II, director of assessment for Marietta City Schools in Georgia. The Marietta district, however, is one of nine in the state that, next school year, will begin using an assessment program intended to phase out reliance on that end-of-year test. The “through-year” assessment is a new test from nonprofit NWEA — a computer-based assessment that adapts to students’ responses. The new system will collect achievement data throughout the year reflecting students’ growth as well as their proficiency levels.

Teachers in the consortium — called GMAP — will receive the feedback they need to “help inform instruction,” Huneke says, while still meeting the federal requirement for a summative test for accountability purposes. The Nebraska Department of Education also will implement the new assessment model in grades 3-8 — but not until the 2021-22 school year. Jeremy Heneger, the agency’s assessment director, calls it “a hybrid” of MAP Growth and the state’s summative Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System, also developed by NWEA.

More or less testing?

Over time, districts have added interim assessments, such as MAP and i-Ready, to address educators’ needs for more information on how their students perform on state standards. The increase in the use of those other measures, however, has led to what many described as “overtesting” — one of the issues addressed by increased flexibility allowed under the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Giving states an opportunity to try new models was the purpose behind ESSA’s Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority. Georgia, with its GMAP consortium, is one of the states participating in the program.

Whether the new approach in Georgia and Nebraska — and eventually on the market in 2022 — will reduce testing, however, depends on what districts were already doing. In Georgia, for example, those already giving interim assessments will see a drop in the amount of testing, explains Huneke, but those that don’t will be giving the same number of tests — just spread out over the school year. “The experience will be better for students and instructors because they will sit for shorter amounts of time, although three times a year,” he adds. The model would also reduce the need for a separate assessment for gifted screening purposes because it would provide a national percentile rank score.

If the “comparability studies come back as hoped,” he says, students would stop taking the summative Georgia Milestones exams in English language arts and math by the 2021-22 school year and no longer take the science exam during the 2022-23 school year.

In Nebraska, Heneger says, students currently taking both MAP Growth and the summative test in the spring would now take one test in the spring and get results back for both “formative” and summative purposes.

How it works

The three tests spread across the school year will “culminate” in a score after the spring assessment, explains Abby Javurek, NWEA’s senior director of large-scale assessment. The assessment for each student is based on his or her performance from the previous test, she adds, noting if a student mastered a standard in the fall, the next interim assessment would move on to more in-depth questions. But if a student hasn’t mastered the standard, they would have until the spring assessment to do so.

The model is similar to how North Carolina — also part of the ESSA innovative assessment pilot — is now approaching its end-of-year assessment. Students’ results on interim assessments, what the state is calling “check-ins,” will be used to determine which “route” they will follow, meaning which items they will be assessed on at the end of the year. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction worked with North Carolina State University to develop what Tammy Howard, the state’s director of accountability services, calls “through-grade assessments.”

One question regarding interim assessments, however, is whether teachers actually use the data to re-teach or adjust instruction for students as state and district leaders say they do. In a 2016 research brief from the Institute for Education Policy at Johns Hopkins University, researchers Alanna Bjorklund-Young and Carey Borkoski suggested there’s no proof either MAP or i-Ready help teachers “know which specific skills their students know or do not know.”

Even if an interim assessment predicts how students would perform on the end-of-year test, that information is not enough to “determine whether these formative assessments are valid for the purposes of changing teacher instruction,” they write. But
they also noted the need for more “external research studies commensurate with the widespread use of these assessments.”

Others note positive impacts of formative assessments, but refer in more general terms to the value of feedback to students. “The formative assessment that has documented benefits for student learning is the kind where students are aware of what they are trying to learn and, with their teachers, use the evidence in what they do, make, say or write to understand what they know now and chart their next steps,” says Susan Brookhart, a professor and assessment expert at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.

A 2017 paper written for the Council for Chief State School Officers notes the idea of replacing one summative test with interim assessments has been around since before ESSA, and the shift comes with multiple trade-offs and challenges — one of which is reaching agreement over what should be included in interim assessments.

“Expectations about student learning during the academic year, and the scope and sequence of instruction that supports those expectations, vary from teacher to teacher, school to school and district to district,” the authors wrote.

They also recommended states interested in moving this way start small and take their time to build “capacity and knowledge.” For that reason, the experiences Georgia, Nebraska and North Carolina have as early adopters of the approach will likely get a lot of attention.

“A bit of a challenge”

Huneke and Heneger also note there will be hurdles as districts shift away from a summative test.

“We as a nation have been utilizing end-of-the-year assessments for decades, and changing that philosophy is a bit of a challenge,” says Huneke.

And Heneger says the new format will limit some flexibility districts have over assessment. “One disadvantage is that districts will have less autonomy when administering the interim assessment,” he says. “For instance, there will need to be more standardization in test windows, accommodations, test retake policy and security.”

But Heneger notes the results of the interim tests will also now include reports telling teachers how students are performing against grade-level standards. “This information will better inform teachers on where students are in terms of grade-level proficiency and how to help students master those skills,” he says.

Another model

Another question about the shift away from using just end-of-year data is how states will determine participation and whether students would need to be present for all three interim assessments for the results to count, suggests Scott Marion, executive director of the Center for Assessment based in Dover, New Hampshire.

Using interim assessments, however, is not the only way to phase out a summative test.

The schools and districts participating in New Hampshire’s Performance Assessment of Competency Education consortium — also part of the federal pilot program — replaced some summative tests with teacher-developed performance assessments, but only in specified grades and subjects.

Third-graders, for example, still take a summative English language arts test, and 4th-graders still take an end-of-year math test. Another “guardrail” says Julie Couch, administrator for the New Hampshire Department of Education Bureau of Instructional Support, is 8th-graders take the summative test in both subjects.

Currently, six districts and parts of four more are members of PACE. And while the state is required to expand the consortium under the federal pilot, that’s proving hard to accomplish.

“One of the reasons for that is the additional time that teachers need to devote to this project,” Couch says. That includes collaborating with teachers in other districts to develop the assessments, submitting reports for end-of-year competency scores, and participating in professional development.

But the state, Couch says, is now creating an online, collaborative platform for storing student work and working with colleagues on the assessments so teachers won’t “miss time away from their students.”

Do you know someone whose teaching, leadership or contributions to our field merits special recognition?

Turn to page 15, examine the list of CCSS awards, and go on line at ctsocialstudies.org to learn more about how we can reward and promote social studies excellence
Ways students learn to change due to new social studies standards

By Austin Koeller

Nebraska students will be learning new social studies curricula as part of social studies standards adopted by the state earlier this month.

According to reports from both The Associated Press and the Omaha World-Herald, the new social studies standards, approved unanimously by the Nebraska State Board of Education Nov. 8, will encourage students to look at history from multiple perspectives, including those of religious, racial and ethnic groups, women, LGBTQ people and Native American nations.

The standards are a revision of the 2012 standards currently in place.

Grand Island Public Schools Curriculum Director Brittney Bills said under the new standards, “students will learn to apply knowledge in civics, history, economics, financial literacy and geography in order to address meaningful issues within our society and will learn to practice civil discourse between opposing interests.”

Grand Island Senior High history teacher Tracy Jakubowski said the new social studies standards will look at certain historical figures and see why their stories are typically told, versus others of their time who did similar things. She added the standards also expose students to lesser-known historical events such as the Stonewall Riots.

“It is not that I am going to tell students that this was right or this was wrong. I am going to tell them what happened, the cause of it and the effect of it,” Jakubowski said. “Those students are able to see history reflected in their backgrounds and I think that is pretty powerful to what the state wants to do in the new standards. They focus on that.”

Bills said the biggest changes between the current social studies standards and the new standards will be at the middle school level. The new standards are also written to be for grades K-8, versus the current standards that are written for grades 6-8.

“This change was made in an effort to provide equitable experiences for our students across the state,” she said. “In the 2016-17 school year, 4.23% — or 13,500 students — were classified as ‘highly mobile’ according to state data. This data was a major catalyst for the 2019 Social Studies Standards to be grade-level specific in grades K-8, offering more focus and guidance for middle school instruction.”

Jakubowski said what is currently taught in seventh and eighth grade “will be squished back into eighth grade,” meaning eighth grade will be a lot faster paced and eighth-grade social studies teachers will have new content to teach.

Jeanette Ramsey, director of teaching and learning for Northwest Public Schools, said the new standards will also change the curricula in her district as they shift the topics of study.

“Grades six and seven are more centered around world history and eighth grade is U.S. history, whereas before, sixth grade was mostly world history and grades seven and eight were U.S. history,” she said. “For our other grades, I think it will be a matter of looking at the rigor of the standards. I think what students are being asked to do with this information is more in-depth and they have added more communication and presentation skills to the social studies standards.”

Bills said the new social studies standards are more rigorous and they will change how students think in their social studies classes.

“The standards lend themselves to students having deep discussions that will need to be grounded in evidence and taken from a variety of perspectives,” she said. “The standards also make really great connections to math, English language arts and science, allowing for interdisciplinary connections and planning.”

Ramsey said more rigorous and in-depth learning is something Northwest strives to have in its curricula. She likes how the new social studies standards ask students to do “higher-level thinking.”

“We are asking students to do more of it with more compare and contrast, analyzing, communicating and presenting information,” she said. “The previous standards were a lot of just describing or listing, so I feel the (new) standards are asking students to do more application of the information that they learned.”

Jakubowski said the new standards will require students to “go deeper into history,” rather than simply memorizing facts.

“What are you going to do with that memorization of those facts? How do they make it applicable to them in the context of their own lives today?” she said. “It also helps them to understand where we came from.”

In her classroom under the new social studies standards, Jakubowski said, she will present students with facts so they can make evaluations based on the time and see how history changes how they look at historical events.

“For example, at one time, segregation was legal. So when we look at that same idea today, are there things that are legal or illegal that shouldn’t be and what guides those decisions?” she said. “The values of the people at the time. We are really looking at the average American lives and how those traditional or modernist values influence policy and law, and what that does for equality.”
Committee worked to develop new standards

Prior to adopting the new social studies standards, the Nebraska Department of Education assembled a revision committee of education professionals from across the state to review the then-proposed standards.

Bills, Jakubowski and Barr Middle School social studies teacher Jason Weaver were all part of the social studies standards revision committee.

Bills said educators interested in being on the committee were asked to apply to be on it.

Jakubowski said the committee also featured a wide range of schools, from large schools to small schools, private schools to public schools. As the committee met for two days last October, its members broke off into subcommittees based on the areas they teach.

“For example, I was on the United States history (subcommittee) because that is what I teach and that is my wheelhouse,” she said. “We each had our specific areas and we broke off into our areas, which were by (grade) levels. Jason Weaver represented the middle school level. Since he teaches American history, he was also in the middle school history area and Brittney (Bills) was at the elementary level.

Bills said that before the committee’s revision process began, it worked to develop its vision for the social studies standards, reviewed laws and policies that influenced the standards’ development and learned about the best practices in the social studies standards.

From there, she said, the committee began drafting the standards, reviewing stakeholder feedback and refining the standards based on that feedback.

“Social studies educators in Nebraska are very passionate about the content that their students learn and that is reflected in these standards,” Bills said. “Our standards revision committee felt it is critical our students are prepared for college, career and civic life. As a result of their social studies education, we want our students to value civic engagement and participate in society as informed and thoughtful citizens.”

When the standards review committee met, Jakubowski said, it looked at the disciplines the standards cover: civics, economics, geography and history — and the “anchors” in which they are taught, such as continuity, multiple perspectives and historical inquiry and research.

“One of the changes of the 2012 standards broke out the historical analysis and inquiry piece into research,” she said. “They were different ones and we tried to combine those, so that students were coming up with their own questions in the inquiry and then creating their own research. We used the C3 framework — college, career and civic ready. We had that lens on as we went through and revamped to make them (standards) more applicable to students and more rigorous.”

Bills said the state’s Department of Education has outlined a timeline for districts to implement the new social studies standards. Beginning next school year, school districts are expected to adopt and explore the social studies standards. They should also identify and select instructional materials, and determine local curricula.

The 2021-22 school year will be the first year in which districts implement the new social studies standards.

“From now until fall 2020, GIPS will begin unpacking these new standards and working on a recommendation for standards adoption for fall 2020,” Bills said. “We will also need to begin exploring instructional resources that will best support our teachers in teaching the standards as intended. It is exciting to me that the 2019 standards are a great complement to the work that we are already doing.”

Ramsey said Northwest has two middle school social studies teachers and five high school social studies teachers who will meet with her and other district administrators to review the new standards.

“We will meet together and they (teachers) will take some time in their professional learning communities to start to break down the standards,” she said. “But we will meet more formally. Typically, we do that work in the summer months when we can take a few days to really go through them and compare them to what our current practice is.”

Ramsey said it is the intent of the district that the Northwest Board of Education vote to adopt the new social studies standards into the district’s curriculum.

“We have a year to adopt the standards, so we have until next (school) year to adopt them,” she said. “Within that year, they (NDE) give us a year to 18 months to study the standards in order to implement. We know we need to make some changes, especially in our middle school, so that is probably where our first focus of change will be. Whatever changes we make in sixth and seventh grade is going to have an effect on our eighth-graders.”

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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 2019-2020 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.
There’s much in the Knight Foundation’s recent report “Student Views on the First Amendment” that raises serious concern. Girls and students of color, for example, are more likely to agree that “the First Amendment goes too far in the rights it guarantees.”

But the report also gives reason for optimism. The survey data indicate two positive trends regarding civics education. First, the percentage of high school students reporting that they have taken courses that provide instruction on the First Amendment has increased over time and seems to be holding steady, with roughly two-thirds of respondents reporting that they have taken such courses. Another reason for optimism: instruction seems to make a difference. As the report notes, such coursework has a significant impact on student support for First Amendment rights and protections.

This outcome is not at all obvious. Another Knight Foundation survey, for example, finds that teachers may not be completely on board, with only 45% favoring First Amendment protections for school newspapers reporting on controversial stories. Further, high school is a time when students start exploring topics, like math and language, in significant depth. And for the first time they have the opportunity to take courses—from child psychology to fashion design—that engage their budding career interests. With this as the competition, it’s not obvious that government and civics courses—the proverbial spinach of the high school curriculum—would rise to the challenge and make a dent in students’ sensibilities.

Given this less-than-obvious result, it’s worth thinking what might be behind it. No doubt, curricular content plays a role. Consider, for example, that a 2017 Brookings study found a majority of students surveyed did not know that “hate speech” is constitutionally protected. Clearly, teaching students what the First Amendment does and does not protect is an essential step to close gaps in basic knowledge.

While pundits wring their hands over such results, the experienced and artful teacher knows how to turn a knowledge gap like this into genuine surprise that sparks discussion. Discussion leads to aha! moments. All this suggests that curriculum is only part of the story. To make a difference, we can’t expect that teaching First Amendment content (alone) will do the heavy lifting. In all likelihood, the teachers who are the biggest difference are those who introduce and help students practice “First Amendment Thinking.”

By First Amendment Thinking, I mean the habit of seeing how the rules of the game play out when the details of the situation conform and do not conform to one’s own concerns. It’s likely, for example, that female students and students of color are less supportive of the First Amendment because they are thinking of a time when they have felt the pains of exclusion, discrimination, harassment, or fear because someone else was exercising his or her First Amendment right to be a jerk. Teaching First Amendment content (alone) conveys the lesson that, except in rare circumstances, one has to tolerate such speech. This can be a fairly bitter pill for anyone who feels as though they are already disadvantaged and marginalized within the dominant society. To always be the person expected to check their emotions and maintain a posture of tolerance in the face of bigotry gets old.

And in the face of such bigotry, the case for censorship can seem compelling. It’s the artful teacher who encourages students to develop the discipline of First Amendment Thinking by, for example, inviting students to imagine whether someone, somewhere, might take offense at a text that the student considers profound. It doesn’t matter what the text is—a poem by Maya Angelou, a theory advanced by Albert Einstein, a Margaret Atwood novel, the Bible, the Qur’an, a Harry Potter film. It doesn’t take long before students realize that the speech they consider most sacred will be offensive to someone. By flipping the script in this way, the artful teacher helps students understand why offense cannot serve as justification for censorship without catching them in the censor’s trap as well.

Further, First Amendment Thinking encourages students to adopt Nobel laureate James Buchanan’s famous dictum, which is to understand government oversight “without romance.” As applied to state censorship, Buchanan’s insight reminds us that it is dangerous to assume that people who have the power to censor others will always exercise that power in the best interest of the public. First, the “public interest” is a tangle of competing interests, so even a well-intentioned political actor will not be able to live up to the challenge. Second, because people who hold the power to censor have interests of their own, it is unlikely that they will have a strong incentive to protect the interests of those who do not hold such power. This includes marginalized minority groups who have historically borne the brunt of political and cultural oppression.

In short, First Amendment Thinking helps students understand why we have a Constitution in the first place. Constitutional constraints like the First Amendment are not put in place to advance the interests of a particular group. On the contrary, the Founders put these constraints in place to protect the rights of every individual from unconstrained power. What the Knight Foundation report shows is that there’s nothing obvious or easy about thinking like an informed citizen. It takes patience and artful teaching.

Emily Chamlee-Wright is President and CEO of the Institute for Humane Studies (IHS), which works with scholars who advance a deeper understanding of ideas in the classical liberal intellectual tradition.
This question was on an online exam given recently to more than 3,000 American high school students. I think it exposes a threat to both our education system and our national security.

“Below is a screenshot of a Facebook page from October 2016. . . . You can watch the video from the post here: (Note, there is no audio.)” The grainy video showed election workers surreptitiously stuffing ballots into bins. The video said this happened during a Democratic primary election in 2016. Across the screen it said: “Have you ever noticed that the ONLY people caught committing voter fraud are Democrats?”

Students were asked: “Does the Facebook post provide strong evidence of voter fraud during the 2016 Democratic primary election?” They could check the video for evidence and search the Internet for relevant background.

The correct answer was no. The clips actually showed a polling place in Russia, which the students could have verified online. Yet 52 percent of that large and representative sample of American youths — children of the Internet Age — said yes. A quarter of them rejected the video but could not say why. About 9 percent gave a relevant explanation for their doubts, such as lack of context. Only 3 out of 3,119 respondents found the BBC news story that exposed the Russian fraud.

This is only part of a distressing study, “Students’ Civic Online Reasoning: A National Portrait,” released by Stanford University researchers Joel Breakstone, Mark Smith and Sam Wineburg. Results from other questions — on the validity of websites on gun control and on global warming, of a tweet on National Rifle Association member opinions and differentiation of advertisements and stories on Slate — were similarly disappointing.

In another survey, the researchers found 60 percent of a group of Stanford freshmen thought the socially conservative 500-member American College of Pediatricians was a more reliable source than the mainstream 64,000-member American Academy of Pediatricians.

The study concluded that these failures to catch falsehoods in social media are not from lack of intelligence but from lack of training. When asked to navigate unknown websites, professional fact-checkers acted very differently when the researchers compared them with Stanford freshmen and university professors at four different institutions given the same tasks.

The fact-checkers left the site they were supposed to examine quickly and “opened new browser tabs to search for information about the trustworthiness of the source,” the study said. “In contrast,” it said, “the students, as well as the academics, typically read vertically, examining the original site’s prose, references, About page, and top-level domain (e.g., .com vs. .org) — features that are all easy to manipulate.”

I asked Wineburg, Margaret Jacks professor of education at Stanford, if the many high school students who thought the fake primary election video was legitimate might have been too lazy or unmotivated to take the exam seriously. After all, it wasn’t affecting grades on their report cards. Wineburg said he didn’t think so. He said the students were volunteers and rated themselves highly as Internet researchers, on average 7.31 points out of 10 in that skill.

“In most cases, unless it is directly pointed out to them,” Wineburg said, “students have no idea how lacking they are in the evaluation of digital material. . . . You’ll find very few civics/government classes in this country that are explicitly teaching students how to become reliably informed citizens using the medium of a screen.”

The study revealed that school lessons on Internet use commonly don’t tackle real sources. Instead, students are given multiple-choice questions or true/false items, and not asked to investigate actual online material.

How about creating a ninth-grade social studies lesson in online sleuthing required of every student? A month of examining fake videos and attractive but inadequate Web pages, and being forced to see their errors, might have an effect. Break the class into teams. Make it a competition. There are an infinite number of fraudulent pages on the Web, ready for detection by teenagers whose energetic skepticism, in that case, could improve their grade.

The COR curriculum was developed by the Stanford History Education Group as part of MediaWise—a partnership of SHEG, the Poynter Institute, and the Local Media Association. The MediaWise collaboration is supported by Google.org as part of their Google News Initiative.

The goal of MediaWise is to provide educators with tools to help students evaluate online information. It is based on classroom research that shows that students in COR classrooms gain significantly in the knowledge and skills needed to determine the trustworthiness of digital content. https://cor.stanford.edu
MINNEAPOLIS—ON THE heels of the National Indian Education Association’s conference held in Minneapolis earlier this fall and just in time for Native American Heritage Month, the nearby Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community announced a $5 million philanthropic campaign to fund resources, curriculum, and training on Native American heritage for teachers and administrators across Minnesota, according to the Star Tribune. “We’re hoping we can move the needle in the narrative in Minnesota and be a model,” Rebecca Crooks-Stratton, the secretary-treasurer for SMSC, told the newspaper.

A recent report by the National Congress of American Indians highlights the need for initiatives like SMSC’s. Summarizing states’ efforts to bring content about indigenous peoples and communities into K-12 classrooms across the country, the report found that 87% of state history standards include no mention of Native American history after 1900, and 27 states don’t mention Native Americans in their K-12 curriculum.

However, 90% of states surveyed reported that they are working to improve the quality of and access to Native American education curriculum, and a majority of states indicated that Native American education is already included in their content standards, although far fewer require it be taught in public schools. Despite a dearth of requirements, educators don’t have to wait for a state mandate to begin integrating Native American studies into their coursework, no matter their subject.

In recent years, there’s been a movement driven by Native American communities, such as the SMSC, as well as individual educators, institutions and states to increase the inclusion of indigenous cultures in education. Washington has been something of a leader for years. In 2015 it became the second state, behind Montana, to mandate tribal history be taught in the state’s 295 school districts. Unique to Washington, though, is the requirement that schools get input from the state’s 29 federally recognized tribes in the process.

Michael Vendiola, the education director for the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community and former program supervisor for the Washington’s Office of Native Education, sees the 2015 mandate as a significant point in the movement toward equity in Native American education. “For Native people, it’s a matter of having their story told and being accurate and having a local perspective,” Vendiola says. Further, “it severely impacts the success of tribal students in the public school system because most of the time (what is taught comes from) a very narrow point of view—totem poles from Alaska or a bit of Navajo ceremonies. There are over 500 tribes in the U.S. which are clearly more diverse than that.”

Without adequate and nuanced Native American education, it’s a slippery slope into the mascot-related issues that stem from flattened, stereotypical representations of indigenous people. According to Vendiola, these reductions also lead to notions that Native Americans don’t exist in contemporary culture.

The mandate isn’t free of challenges, particularly because it’s unfunded. While it’s required that school districts work with their closest federally recognized tribe to develop the material, “on paper that looks really good but depending on the tribe’s resources … they don’t have curriculum writers,” Vendiola says. “At best they might have a museum or archives that have some records.”

Yet there are other ways that educators can access in-depth information on Native American cultures to include it in the classroom. Last year the Smithsonian developed Native Knowledge 360 Degrees (NK360°), a national education initiative, and released three new lesson plans in September. Building off a decade of work, NK360° offers free lesson plans for teachers to use. Jennifer Bumgarner, a seventh-grade English and Language Arts teacher in North Carolina, opted to use NK360° in her classroom. “I have a passion for Native American literature and culture. By choice, I incorporate a lot of Native American studies into my instruction both for cultural and thematic value,” she says.

Bumgarner focuses specifically on the role and responsibilities of Native American individuals to their communities and the role and responsibilities of the community to its individuals. She compares that to what her students are learning about literature. “There are individual parts that make up the whole of literature,” she says.

She says her students have loved the material and she has been sharing it with other teachers in her school, though she isn’t sure if anyone else has begun to use it. She thinks a mandate could work in North Carolina “if it were presented in a way that really showed (educators) the great materials that were available and if it incorporated some of our North Carolina indigenous people who came and spoke about the importance of a new perspective.”

Please Pass It On

If you have enjoyed this issue and found it useful, please pass it on to a colleague. If you have suggestions for improving Yankee Post, please contact the editor at thomas.weinland@uconn.edu
Personal finance courses could fulfill grad requirement in Pa.

Lindsay C VanAsdalan, York Dispatch Oct. 5, 2019

Eight employees from First Capital Federal Credit Union volunteered as financial advisors for Junior Achievement’s Real Life, a financial literacy program, on Feb. 21 at Red Lion Area High School. Pictured is Sue DeStephano, First Capital FCU president/CEO, with Red Lion seniors participating in the program.

Students in York County and across the state might soon have the option of personal finance courses counting toward graduation thanks to a recent state Senate bill. The bill would not make the course itself a requirement, but it would allow one personal finance credit to be applied to fulfilling requirements in social studies, family and consumer science, mathematics or business education.

“If this can help the next generation be a little more prudent and keep them out of either credit card or student loan debt, then it’s a big win for us,” said bill sponsor Sen. Daniel Laughlin, R-Erie. Senate Bill 723, which passed unanimously in the Pennsylvania State Senate on Sept. 23, is now in the House Education Committee, and committee member Mike Jones, R-York Township, is optimistic it will pass. “There is a potentially slippery slope,” Jones said, noting that he is supportive of this bill, but legislators should be careful about getting too involved in high school curriculum. The former Dallastown Area school board member said it helped that the bill was not a mandate, but rather affords schools flexibility to use finance courses as graduation requirements.

West Shore School District is evaluating its graduation requirements now, and plans to add personal finance, but welcomes the flexibility of applying it to other subjects, said district spokeswoman Rhonda Fourhman, in a statement. “It was a little bit of a surprise to me,” Laughlin said of the overwhelming support in the Senate, but acknowledged not making it a mandate probably helped to win some over.

That’s one of the big reasons that I’m okay with it,” Jones said. “That helps get a lot of people across the line on things like this.” State Sen. Kristin Phillips-Hill, R-York, acknowledged that schools have more and more requirements of what should be taught than ever before, so this bill is a way to provide an incentive, she said. Many York County high schools have personal finance or financial literacy courses in their 2019-20 course catalogs, though not all list them as a requirement. That’s changing for some, such as Northern High School — which beginning with the class of 2022, will require students to take one of two classes with personal finance elements to graduate — one of which will count for math, and the other for a social studies credit.

The idea grew out of a meeting among the school and community members two to three years ago, in which financial literacy stood out as a need essential for graduation, and one that could benefit all students, said Principal Steve Lehman. “Data is showing that student debt has grown exponentially,” Phillips-Hill said. Though it will not solve the student loan crisis, knowing how to manage money will go a long way, she said. “Unless you pay it off right away, you’re borrowing much more than you think you’re borrowing,” Lehman said. South Western High School Principal Keith Downs agreed, saying personal finance courses take on areas such as debt, car mortgages and loans, and would help students better understand the long-term impact of monthly loan payments.

The high school requires seniors to take personal finance but doesn’t make it a credit required to graduate, he said, but the district would definitely be interested in doing so if the bill became law. College and career readiness is an element of the Future Ready PA Index — a success evaluation tool instituted through the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2018 — and with that push, Downs expects more districts will start to add financial literacy as a graduation requirement. Lehman remembers one student who had been considering a large investment in a top school, but it wasn’t until taking the course that she realized there were better options for her. Her parents told him they’d been having those conversations with her for months.

“That kind of stuff makes me feel like this was the right move,” Lehman said, adding that having this information in course curriculum sometimes makes students more likely to use it than hearing it at home.
NC students will learn about personal finance. But it will mean less US history.

THE HERALD SUN (DURHAM)  BY T. KEUNG HUI  DECEMBER 04, 2019 06:50 PM

RALEIGH  North Carolina high schools will likely have to reduce how much American history is taught and change the social studies requirements for current students to fit in the legislature’s new mandated personal finance course. Starting in the 2020-21 school year, high school freshmen will have to take an economics and personal finance course before they graduate.

State education officials said Wednesday that the only way to fit in the new financial literacy class is to remove one of the two now-required U.S. history courses. Additionally, officials said they’ll need to revise the social studies graduation requirements for current students to ease the transition on high schools. This will mean students will graduate the next few years taking different social studies courses depending on what their school can offer.

“Then They Came for Us,”
The issues embedded in the film are exceptionally timely, particularly as the Trump administration considers re-opening some of camps in which Japanese Americans were incarcerated over 75 years ago.

If you are a public high school teacher, we have free copies that can be requested.

Please send an email to abby@socialactionmedia.com requesting a copy of the DVD for your school. A free study guide is available to accompany the film.

Connecticut High School Geography Challenge
Central Connecticut State University’s Department of Geography is sponsoring the 29th annual Connecticut High School Geography Challenge on its New Britain campus on Wednesday, May 20, 2020. This statewide, interscholastic academic team competition will focus this year on GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE and will include geographic topics such as location, place, region, movement, human / environment interaction, as well as history, science, and current events.

Connecticut high schools may register a team of 3--5 students in grades 9--12 for this exciting and challenging day of geography competition at CCSU in New Britain. Schools may register a team online by February 1 at https://www.ccsu.edu/ctgeographychallenge or by mail by February 1 to–
Cynthia Pope, Ph.D.
Central Connecticut State University  Department of Geography Ebenezer D. Bassett Hall 417-012 1615 Stanley Street New Britain CT  06053

The registration fee is $75 and payment should be made to Connecticut High School Geography Challenge. Please contact Dr. Cynthia Pope at popec@ccsu.edu or Kathleen Ryan at Ryanzenko@aol.com for additional information on the 2020 CT HS Geography Challenge.

REGISTER TO RECEIVE FREE FILM STUDY GUIDES
The Film Foundation Curriculum, Portraits of America, Covers Immigration, American Labor, and Civil Rights
As part of its mission to increase awareness of film as historical and cultural documents, The Film Foundation has published Portraits of America: Democracy on Film. The interdisciplinary curriculum for middle and high school teachers explores how American democratic ideals have been expressed through film throughout the 20th Century. The first three modules within the film study curriculum cover issues of immigration, labor rights, civil liberties, and systems of government. Teaching material includes a film-specific teacher’s guide with pre- and post-screening activities as well as PowerPoint Presentations, a Film Reader, and assessment assignments.

The curriculum is free for educators across all disciplines who register online at storyofmovies.org. Registration allows teachers to browse the lessons and films for in-depth and download those activities relevant to their classroom needs.

The Film Foundation is a not for profit organization whose mission is the protection and restoration of classic films. The Story of Movies, of which Portraits of America is part of the foundation’s educational outreach program, The Story of Movies.

Catherine Gourley, Curriculum Writer The Story of Movies, The Film Foundation cgourley@verizon.net
Deadline for Nominations is March 1, 2020
See Description of Awards and Guidelines for Nominations at ctsocialstudies.org
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If you have always wanted to become a member of NCSS, now is the time to act. New membership subscriptions to NCSS will also give you membership benefits from Connecticut Council for the Social Studies for one year—a $20 savings. This offer applies to only new NCSS Regular or new Comprehensive members only who send in their form to CCSS. Joint member benefits include:

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