

The POINT!

E-Letter of the Western Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies
Vol. 10 No. 9
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Make Social Studies the Core of the Curriculum

As school resumes, it is time to emphasize the importance of **Social Studies education**. Over the past several years, the emphasis on testing has sometimes de-emphasized the teaching and learning of civics and history. Today's news is a reflection of some of this neglect and calls for renewal of efforts to educate students to become knowledgeable and active citizens. This means a concentrated effort to get students involved in discussion of issues, investigating primary sources and critically thinking about historical and current events. There also needs to be a rethinking about the teaching of cursive writing as many students today could not read an original copy of the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution, not to mention numerous other documents from earlier times. Schools often tend to remind students that education prepares them to make a living. Perhaps it is time to focus more attention on learning how to live together and get involved in society.

Social Studies can bring the curriculum together. It certainly involves reading. Math is used in comparing population density, area of cities and countries, as well as distance from one place to another. Some knowledge of science enters into discussions of issues and writing of essays and speaking provides the use of language. Social Studies unites the curriculum.

SOCIAL STUDIES MATTERS



Don't Forget

The 64th Annual Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies Conference

October 19—October 21, 2017

Red Lion Hotel Harrisburg East • 4751 Lindle Road
Harrisburg, PA 17111

Conference Theme: *Social Studies: More Important than Ever*



In promoting our mission to focus on local and family history, WPCSS annually presents two \$100 Savings Bonds for the best local or family history exhibit in both Junior and Senior Entries of the local National History Day competition at the Heinz History Center.

Soldiers & Sailors Hall!

Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum houses a vast collection of primary and secondary documents and military artifacts. It is their mission to promote the use of these educational items and create novel understandings for all groups who visit the museum. They provide a rich learning experience for all people by exploring the deeds and sacrifices of ordinary citizens during extraordinary circumstances.

Soldiers and Sailors offers guided tours to all groups. Tours may be booked for groups of all sizes and ages, including schools, colleges, veterans' organizations, and senior groups. Tours last about an hour and are led by an experienced docent. A tour can encompass the entire museum or be focused on a particular area of study. Cost of a tour is \$5.00 per person. School chaperones are free.

The Education Dept. 412.621.4253 Tim Neff x 219
<http://www.soldiersandsailorshall.org/education.html>

Social Studies Symposium & Showcase

October 19, 2017 - 9:00am – 1:00pm

The Allegheny Intermediate Unit is pleased to be hosting the first-ever Social Studies Symposium and Showcase! This new event is intended for all who have an interest in renewing, rewriting, or revising K-12 Social Studies curricula.

In Our Showcase: Join us for a morning filled with a wide variety of local, state, and national organizations, institutions, and vendors who are looking to partner with schools and districts to make Social Studies connections that meet the needs of contemporary school settings.

In Our Breakout Sessions: Take part in a selection of inquiry-themed power-talks (25 minutes each) that are aimed at stimulating ideas about making Social Studies relevant to 21st Century students.

Gather with us: The Symposium & Showcase will be held at the Allegheny Intermediate Unit 475 East Waterfront Drive Homestead, PA 15120 at the beautiful Waterfront Shopping Complex.

Register now: <https://2017inquiry.eventbrite.com>

The Symposium is **FREE** but we ask you to register in advance for planning purposes.

WQED HOSTS FREE SCREENING OF KEN BURNS THE VIETNAM WAR

Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall | Pittsburgh

Wednesday | September 6 | 2017 | 6:30 p.m.

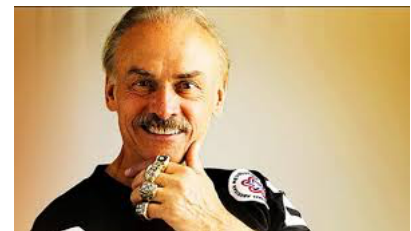
Panel Discussion | 8:00 p.m.

Vietnam Veteran and Former Pittsburgh Steeler Rocky Bleier to Speak

This screening is made possible through the support of UPMC and Bank of America.

Paid parking is available at Soldiers & Sailors parking garage. Doors open at **5:30pm**. More information and registration for this **free event** is at

<https://www.eventcombo.com/e/vietnam-screening-28939>



The Point

Western Pennsylvania Council for the
Social Studies
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Secretary / Treasurer
The Point is the
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Professional Development Providers Institute: Waynesburg

September 28th – November 2nd, 2017

Thursday Evenings 5:30-6:30 ET

Whether you coach colleagues or lead groups of fellow teachers, PDPI will prepare you to deliver high-quality teacher professional development focused on Library of Congress digital archives.

- Weekly 1-hour interactive sessions online
- Search and save loc.gov primary sources
- Self-paced reading and project development (about 2 hours/week)
- Design a PD activity to share TPS with local educators
- FREE!!

“PDPI was very helpful and gave me a wider knowledge of how to use sources available from loc.gov. It was also great to see what others are doing around the country.”

Register Today!

Earn 25 CEUs with an option to earn 10 more through post-course follow-up. Offered by the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Eastern Region, coordinated by Waynesburg University.

Facing Our Confederate Past

The recent events in Charlottesville, Va., demand that Americans rethink how we teach the Civil War, writes historian Melvin Patrick Ely. [Read more.](#) (Education Week)

Yes, Race and Politics Belong in the Classroom

Ten tips for constructively engaging students on divisive political, social, racial, and economic issues, from H. Richard Milner IV.

Last year’s presidential-election season and the subsequent presidency of Donald Trump have recentered serious issues of gender, race, immigration, and social class for people in the United States and beyond its borders. . . .

Middle and high school teachers continue sharing with me that their students, too, are grappling with such issues during those moments of stark opposition on political, social, racial, and economic issues. . . . [Read more.](#)

Pennsylvania Bill Would Give Education Funds To Parents Of Eligible Students.

The [Philadelphia Public Schools Notebook](#) (8/17, McCorry) reports on an “education savings account (ESA) bill that would allow thousands of students in the state to use public money to pay for private school tuition.” The bill could end by “siphoning away about a fifth of the state’s overall support for public schools.” . . . “funds now allocated for support of public schools would be deducted from state coffers and made directly available to parents” for education expenses “including private school tuition, textbooks, industry certifications, and tutors.” The bill “aligns with the priorities set forth by President Trump and U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos.” In Philadelphia, “at least 85,000 students in 146 schools would be eligible.”

The first thing teachers should do when school starts is talk about hatred in America. Here's help.

Lessons plans, resources, etc. By Valerie Strauss • [Read more »](#)

[#CharlottesvilleCurriculum](#): That's the new Twitter hashtag for educators, parents and anyone else looking for resources to lead discussions with young people about the violence that just erupted in Charlottesville, when white supremacists, neo-Nazis and Ku Klux Klan members marched and clashed with counterprotesters. One woman was killed and 19 were injured when a car rammed into the counterprotesters, and two state police officers assisting in the response died when their helicopter crashed on the outskirts of town.

3 projects for real-world learning

(Pixabay)

Learning may be most effective when there are real-world applications, asserts Suzie Boss, a project-based learning advocate. In this blog post, she shares three projects to try with students during the school year. [Edutopia online](#) (8/17)



Reworking Social Studies for Participatory Democracy

(Prove It: Math and Education Policy)

As colleagues at [Harvest Collegiate High School](#), Andy Snyder and I talk a lot about the way humans develop. In this essay he presents a vision for how to reform social studies curriculum, one that I have seen him enact with good results: students who are engaged, thinking critically, and actively developing meaningful skills. Regardless of what you teach, and especially if you teach social studies, your students could also benefit from his ideas, written below, that help students engage in meaningful disciplinary skills.—JRTM

Imagine a basketball coach with no hoops and no ball who provided a textbook history of basketball, showed video of some of the greatest games, and imparted a passion for teamwork. But she never held a practice and the players never bounced a ball. How would her team do in a game?



Ethnic Studies Movement Gains Momentum.

The [NPR](#) (8/13) "NPR Ed" blog reports on efforts in San Francisco "to teach courses centered on the perspectives of historically marginalized groups. Just last year, California passed a law mandating a model ethnic studies curriculum." The piece reports that the ethnic studies movement "has been expanding on the west coast and in pockets across the country" and says teachers in such programs "argue that these courses give students a pathway to break the cycles of poverty, violence, and incarceration that so many communities of color face." The piece describes programs on legislation promoting ethnic studies around the country, and says interest has grown "partly in response to an Arizona law that banned the curriculum."



N.Y. district pairs social studies, English

(Kevin Mazur Photography/Getty Images)

A New York school district has revamped its middle school curriculum to teach language arts and social studies together as a humanities unit, and provide students more accelerated learning options in math and science. The humanities unit will begin with a lesson focused on the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

[Herald Community Newspapers \(Garden City, N.Y.\)](#) (8/24)





Teaching in a World Filled With Fear

As the United States becomes more politically divided and some students face bigotry and hostility, teachers must create inclusive environments in their classrooms, argues educator Precious Crabtree. [Read more.](#) (Teacher)



How to inspire students to become active citizens

(landrachuk/Pixabay Images)

Civic education requires practice working with others to take action, writes Andy Snyder, a New York City high-school social studies teacher. In this blog post, he shares how the C3 Framework encourages students to ask questions and take steps to engage in the world as active citizens. [Education Week Teacher \(tiered subscription model\)](#) (8/8)



Is There Really a 'Skills Gap'?

Millions of jobs are going unfilled because U.S. employers can't find workers with the right skills. What's really behind companies' hiring difficulties? Experts debate whether a "skills gap" is the main culprit. [Read more.](#) (Education Week)

Can handwriting come back from the dead?

(Pixabay)

Penmanship and cursive instruction are returning to classrooms as a result of studies that show writing out words by hand is linked to better long-term retention, organization and idea creation than typing notes on a keyboard, Ephrat Livni writes. "Laptop note takers' tendency to transcribe lectures verbatim rather than processing information and reframing it in their own words is detrimental to learning," according to a Princeton University study. [Quartz](#) (7/25)



Study: How student beliefs shape outcomes

(Pixabay)

Some students in low-income families who grow up believing that hard work always is rewarded may be more likely to engage in risky behaviors and have diminished self-esteem, according to a study by researchers at New York University's Steinhardt School. Researchers say that such students can become disillusioned over time.



Does geography affect how Civil War is taught?

(Pixabay)

What US students learn about the Civil War varies according to where they live, some educators and experts say. The way schools approach these lessons, which often begin in the fifth through eighth grades, can differ among states and even among districts. [The Associated Press](#) (8/22)

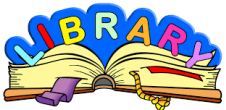
2 librarians develop "information prescriptions" for students

School Library Journal (8/25)

Have you ever had a student arrive at your desk and your gut tells you they need more help than they are letting on? If so, [information prescriptions](#) may provide a remedy.

Our inspiration came one evening after we caught a news feature about a local university teaching hospital offering information prescriptions, which doctors give to increase their patients' understanding of a diagnosis or condition.

FRAME^{OF}REFERENCE



How Charlottesville can reshape the teaching of history

. . . What is needed is not just day-after or week-after lessons, but a chance to reexamine what children learn about history – and themselves – all year long. This work needs to begin in elementary school, where students’ ideas about their place in the world are shaped. . . .

- We must assess our own knowledge and perspective as educators. We cannot teach what we do not know.
- We must reframe the teaching of U.S. history.
- Key to critical literacy is exploring who tells history, what events are memorialized, and why those choices are made.

History in Dispute: Charlottesville and Confederate Monuments

(CHOICES)

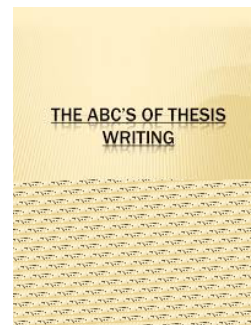
In this free online lesson students will:

- Understand the idea of historical memory.
- Contextualize recent events in Charlottesville within a larger historical controversy.
- Apply the concept of historical memory to the controversy over Confederate monuments.
- Appraise media sources that express a range of views on Confederate monuments.

[USE THIS LESSON](#)

Thesis writing activities for elementary students

Just like students write hypotheses in science class, they should be writing evidence-based thesis statements in early grades. Use these graphic organizers and station-based activities to help young students generate thesis statements and eventually, outline an essay based on their argument. Activities involving blocks, maps and puzzles inject hands-on fun and a sense of play into what can be a daunting task.



Secondary teachers: Consider doing one of the following national-level programs/competitions:

- 1. National History Day** – This is an amazing research-based competition. Students work in groups or individually to research a subject of their choice, compile an annotated bibliography with primary and secondary sources listed separately, create a project (website, documentary film, performance, exhibit, research paper), and defend it before judges. <http://nhd.org/> and explore the topics under the “Teachers” tab at the top. And there are 2 divisions in the competition: “Junior” for middle school students, and “Senior” for high school students.
- 2. Model Arab League** – For more information, go to: <https://ncusar.org/modelarableague/>
- 3. Model U.N.** – <http://www.unausa.org/global-classrooms-model-un/how-to-participate/getting-started>



(Continued on Page 7)

MORE PROGRAMS . . .

4. National high school essay competition by the American Foreign Service Association – This is the newest iteration of the U.S. Institute of Peace Essay competition. It’s very challenging – something for honors’ classes – but really worthwhile. <http://www.afsa.org/essay-contest>

5. Doors to Diplomacy is a State Department-organized competition in which teams of middle school or high school students create web-based projects about the importance of international affairs and diplomacy. For more information, go to: <http://www.globalschoolnet.org/gsndoors/>

6. K-12 teachers: Get on the list to be notified when these yearly FUNDED competitions open. They are all amazing – and U.S. government-funded.

a. Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching short-term program: Allows U.S. K-12 teachers to engage in a 2-6 week project abroad, developing projects in with schools, non-profits, or teacher training institutions overseas. For more information and to GET ON THEIR LIST for applications for next year , go to: <https://www.fulbrightteacherexchange.org/>

b. Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching long-term program: This allows U.S. K-12 teachers to go overseas for 3-6 months to work on a teaching project. For more information and to GET ON THEIR LIST for when applications for next year, go to: <https://www.fulbrightteacherexchange.org/>

c. Teachers for Global Classrooms is a U.S. State Department program! Do an online program, participate in activities with foreign teachers coming to the U.S., and then spend 2 weeks overseas. Everything is totally paid for. To find out a lot more and GET ON THEIR LIST for when applications for next year become available, go to: <https://www.irex.org/project/teachers-global-classrooms-program-tgc>

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
Western Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Phone _____

e-mail address _____

School or Institution _____

Position and Grade level _____

Dues: \$10.00 Amt. enclosed _____

Check made out to WPCSS

*** NOTE: Most communication will be handled by e-mail. Please include e-mail address in order to be informed of coming events. Also, check with your school tech director to see if the fire wall will allow you to receive *The Point*, usually about is size 10 mb. Some firewalls reject attachments over 2 mb.**

**Send application and dues to:
Leo R. West Treasurer • 11533 Clematis Blvd. • Pittsburgh, PA 15235**