

The POINT!

E-Letter of the Western Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies
Vol. 8 No. 8
August 2015



Report: Wide Disparities In How States Define Proficiency.

The [Washington Post](#) (7/9, Brown) reports that according to a new report from National Center for Educational Statistics, there is a wide disparity in how states define “proficiency” for the purposes of math and reading scores under No Child Left Behind. The piece notes that this disparity has been cited by Common Core proponents as a reason why common standards are needed. The [Huffington Post](#) (7/9, Resmovits) also covers this story, quoting Education Secretary Arne Duncan saying, “This report shows that leaders and educators throughout the country continue to do the hard but vitally important work of raising expectations. The report is also a reminder that much work remains.”

Proficiency ?

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Reporter Views Test Scoring At Pearson’s Facility.

[NPR](#) (7/8, Sanchez)(*National Public Radio*) reports on standardized tests under the Common Core to show “who makes them and how they’re scored,” which it says “is a mystery.” The reporter went to Pearson’s in San Antonio, Texas, a major test-scoring facility, to meet some scorers and watch them work. • • •

Inside the cavernous 58,000-square-foot space, folding tables connected end to end fill the room. About 100 scorers from all walks of life work in silence, two per table.

They’re here scoring PARCC tests — a test aligned with the Common Core Standards — aimed to replace old state exams. PARCC, short for **P**artnership for **A**ssessment of **R**eadiness for **C**ollege and **C**areers, is one of two testing consortia that has helped states develop these new tests with \$360 million in federal funding.



How socio-economics affect college, career

(Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images)

Family income may influence a student's choice of college major, according to a review of National Center for Education Statistics data. The review found that lower-income students are more likely to study computer science, math and physics. Students from higher-income families more often major in history, English and the performing arts. [The Atlantic online](#) (7/6)



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 an understanding 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.

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



Wine Tasting at the Bradford House • August 14

The **Bradford House Museum**, in partnership with **The Washington Winery** and **Chicco Baccello**, will be holding its second wine tasting event on Friday August 14, 2015 from 5 – 7 pm at the Museum, 175 S. Main Street, Washington, PA. Tickets are \$25 per person for advance registration or \$30 at the door. Register at The Washington Winery, 415 S. Main St. or mail payment (with name, email address and phone number) to: Bradford House Historical Association, PO Box 537, Washington, PA 15301. Ticket includes wine sampling, 18th century appetizers, a house & garden tour and a glass of wine. All proceeds benefit the Bradford House Museum. You must be 21 years of age to attend. Questions? Contact Angela, 724-222-WINE or Tracie, tracielib@comcast.net. Visit www.bradfordhouse.org for details.



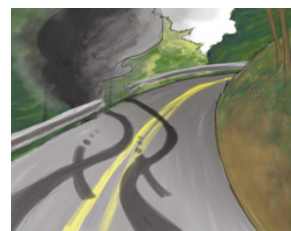
The Bradford House is a National Historic Landmark, celebrating its 50th anniversary this year as a museum. Copies of the museum's new book, relating the history of the house, its owners, and the Whiskey Rebellion, will be available for purchase

Popular Pittsburgh

<http://popularpittsburgh.com>

Interesting website that provides info about many places in and around the city, including profiles of people, places to see, legends and folklore, such as “the Green Man,” “Jack the Ripper,” “13 Bends Road” and many other bits and pieces of little known info. See the “Strange Side of Pittsburgh” at the link below.

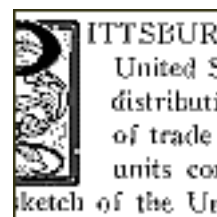
<http://popularpittsburgh.com/pittsburgh-urban-legends/>



Historic Pittsburgh

digital.library.pitt.edu/pittsburgh/

Historic Pittsburgh is a comprehensive collection of local resources that supports personal and scholarly research of the western Pennsylvania area. This Web site enables access to historic material held by: (see list)



Fear builds walls to bar the light.” -- Baal Shem Tov, rabbi

The Point

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Social Studies

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The Point is the

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Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Program

Announcing the launch of the 2016-2017 [Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching \(DA\) Program](#) Online Application for K-12 teachers!

Are you a U.S.:

- Primary and/or secondary classroom teacher?
- Guidance counselor?
- Curriculum specialist?
- Curriculum head?
- Talented and Gifted coordinator?
- Special Education coordinator?
- Media specialist/librarian?

You may be eligible to participate in a unique international professional development opportunity for 3-6 months through the Fulbright Program!

By conducting educational research abroad, U.S. teachers gain new skills, learn new instructional methods and assessment methodologies and share best practices with international colleagues and students. Teachers also have the opportunity to expand their understanding of other cultures and international education systems that will enrich their U.S. schools and local communities with global perspectives.

Teachers may travel to:

Botswana, Chile, Finland, India, Israel, Mexico, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Palestinian Territories, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and Vietnam.

**Countries are still pending and may change. Please visit the [program website](#) for updates.*

CLICK HERE TO START YOUR APPLICATION TODAY!

Application deadline: November 4, 2015

Eligibility Requirements: www.fulbrightteacherexchange.org

States Responding To Accusations Of Overtesting Differently.

[Education Week](#) (7/8, Ujifusa) reported states are responding differently to the ongoing debate about student testing. "The Council of Chief State School Officers says that 39 states are examining how to reduce overttesting or cut redundant tests in some fashion," while other states are leaving it up to new state commissions or local schools to address concerns about student testing. The article highlights different approaches taken by Colorado, Florida, Ohio, and other states.

Feedback ♦ ♦ ♦

Happy to hear you are back on line and have most problems solved. K.L.

Agency Fee for All Teachers Is Right

(Walt Gardner's Reality Check)

When a teachers' union collectively bargains, the benefits it derives at the table go to all teachers. Yet in *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, the plaintiff contends that collective bargaining by its very nature is political speech because in a union shop the dues paid by teachers are used for purposes with which she disagrees ("Even Teachers Are No Fans of Forced Union Payments," *The Wall Street Journal*, Jul. 16).

"This is a novel argument that I do not understand. In California, individual teachers are allowed to request a refund of the portion of their union dues used to help elect candidates and lobby for legislation. But they still must pay the portion of their union dues that funds collective bargaining (the agency fee). Rebecca Friedrichs, the plaintiff, is not satisfied with what I consider to be a fair situation, nor are 38 percent of 700 public-school teachers surveyed.

If those teachers feel so strongly, they should simply refund the portion of their salaries and other benefits that are tainted by the process." . . . W.G. • • •



The Property Tax Problem

(The K-12 Contrarian)

"Several years ago my wife was working at a rural school district in Georgia located between Athens and Atlanta along Highway 316. The district was enduring another round in a perpetual funding crisis." • • •



From "tough kids" to change agents

In this article from ASCD's summer issue of Educational Leadership, author Alexander Byland shares a unique approach to handling disruptive students -- placing them in leadership roles and empowering them to be agents of change. "If educators ignore student behavior that continually disrupts learning, these students could hinder the effectiveness of any reform initiative," says Byland. In the article, he details how one school challenged their problematic students to tap into their raw leadership talent and facilitate a change in culture.

[Read more.](#)



Freedom to Fail: How do I foster risk-taking and innovation in my classroom?

In this new ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) publication, you'll read about the many benefits of intentionally designing opportunities for students to "fail forward" in the classroom. Author and veteran educator, Andrew Miller provides strategies for teachers to establish a culture that allows for failure so students can adopt a growth mind-set and take risks in the service of greater learning. With a focus on overall growth, Miller aims to eliminate the notion that failure is detrimental. [Learn more.](#)



Educators make the case for inquiry projects

MiddleWeb (7/20)

Inquiry forms the heart of discovery and learning, from early toddlers making sense of their world to grown-ups wondering how the latest mobile app works on their device. We investigate. We try something new. We evaluate. Adapt. Reflect. Try it again.

While many educators often ask their students to go through an inquiry process — in the form of research papers, or science experiments, or even literary analysis — many teachers also need to be reminded that *they are always learning, too*, and their own classroom environment can provide the perfect setting for meaningful inquiry and research.



How philosophy lessons can help students think for themselves

The Washington Post (tiered subscription model) (7/22)

Philosophy is often thought of as a subject suitable for college students. We don't generally think that third graders would do well having to write a paper about the epistemological basis for David Hume's naturalism, but, in fact, there are methods of teaching philosophy to very young students that can help them learn to think for themselves in ways that other subjects don't.



Teaching for and with critical thinking

"If we want students to think critically, we're going to have to let them determine the questions because that's what journalists, biographers, poets, researchers, etc. usually do," writes Florida educator Mindy Keller-Kyriakides. In her recent ASCD EDge blog post, she compares the practice of "thinking" versus "critical thinking" as a student and explains how teachers must encourage their students to self-evaluate their thinking so they can begin analyzing situations critically. [Read more.](#)



Schools tap neuroscience to help students succeed

(Pixabay)

School districts nationwide -- from Indiana to Georgia to Kentucky -- are incorporating principles of educational neuroscience into teaching and learning. Trends include teaching students about brain plasticity, incorporating relaxation into the school day and applying the "growth mindset" to instructional resources and professional development. [District Administration magazine online](#) (7/17)



Rho Kappa National Social Studies Honor Society

Get ready for the school year by applying for a Rho Kappa charter. Rho Kappa is the only national organization for high school juniors and seniors that recognizes excellence in the field of Social Studies. Any accredited public or private high school can apply for a local chapter, through which individuals will be inducted into Rho Kappa Honor Society. Rho Kappa provides national recognition and opportunities for exploration in the social studies. [Learn more or apply for a charter.](#)



Study explores academic benefits of "Minecraft"

(LEON NEAL/Getty Images)

"Minecraft" can offer lessons in problem-solving, research, creative thinking and social interaction, according to a recent study. Video games paired with hands-on projects can help foster greater understanding of complex subjects, says Scot Osterweil, educational game designer and creative director of MIT's Education Arcade. [The Christian Science Monitor](#) (7/7)

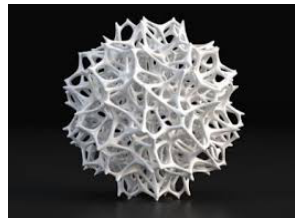


How students with learning difficulties benefit from 3D printing, hands-on learning

eCampus News (free registration) (7/7)

N.J. 3rd-graders share their concerns in letter-writing campaign

Third-grade social studies students at a New Jersey school recently wrote letters to the newspaper and others to highlighted issues of concern to them. The students chose and researched their topics before writing letters about issues including litter, exercise, solar energy and affordable child care. [The Montclair Times \(N.J.\)](#) (7/7)



How to create an academic makerspace

Eight steps can help creating a successful academic makerspace, Russ Jarowski, director of technology at a Massachusetts school, said during a recent conference. The steps include establishing a purpose, keeping the focus on students and remembering what motivates students to learn. [T.H.E. Journal](#) (7/6)



Becoming Integrated Thinkers: Case Studies in Elementary Social Studies -- New from NCSS Publications!

At a time when social studies is being curtailed in elementary schools, the contributors to this book show that it is still possible to teach social studies very well. The key strategy is one of effective integration, which requires significant planning and pedagogical knowledge, but has a tremendous payoff. [Learn more.](#)



5 elements of competency-based learning

Some school districts are shifting from a traditional course model to competency-based learning systems. Such systems often include five key elements such as course advancement upon mastery rather than upon earning a specific grade and continual assessment of student progress. [KQED.org](#) (7/9)

**Competency Based
Education**

Too much rest is rust." -- Walter Scott, novelist, playwright and poet

Fall Preview 2015

 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS **TEACHING** with PRIMARY SOURCES**Coaches Academy for Librarians ******(Level III)**

School librarians, become your school's TPS Coach! Support colleagues in effectively using Library of Congress resources to enrich student engagement and learning.

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5:30 - 6:30 pm

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Earn up to 20 CEU hours

(optional 10 more post-course)

**TPS Level I Online Institute**

Discover the millions of free resources available at loc.gov and learn strategies for effective use in your own classroom.

Thursdays Sept. 17 – Oct. 8

5:30 to 6:30pm

Online

Earn up to 15 CEU hours

**Oral History as Inquiry into the Long Civil Rights Movement****
(Level II)

Explore Civil Rights in America using recorded interviews of those who were there, along with historic documents from Civil War Reconstruction to modern day.

Tuesdays Sept. 29 – Nov.3

5:00 - 7:00 pm

Online

Earn up to 24 CEU hours

(optional 10 more post-course)

Registration: <http://tps.waynesburg.edu/upcoming-pd-events>*All workshops are free to educators.***For more information:** Sue Wise, Associate Director**TPS at Waynesburg University** swise@waynesburg.edu (724) 852-3377

**TPS advanced courses require TPS Level I completion as a prerequisite. You may be asked to complete a 12-hour independent online course before the start date. Further information provided upon registration.

IDEALS OF THOSE
AMERICAN PATRIOTS
STILL SHAPE THE
STRUGGLES OF MEN
WHO HUNGER FOR
FREEDOM.

**Waynesburg University**

How statistics, human stories can help students grasp difficult events

History educators have much to consider when teaching students about tragic news events, whether they are recent or in the past, teacher Lauren Brown writes in this blog post. She shares three ways to help students understand the significance of tragedies, and why statistics and the human perspective boost understanding.

[MiddleWeb](#) (7/26)

Using play to engage high-school students in learning

(Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images)

High-school students would benefit from creative outlets and the integration of play into classroom lessons -- just as younger students do -- educators and experts say. This article highlights several ways to use play to engage high-school students in deeper learning. [KQED.org](#) (7/24)

Data show evolution of education funding

EdSource (7/26)

Great source of comparative data! Excellent interactive graphs. How has education spending and poverty changed each year since 1970?



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