

# The POINT!



E-Letter of the Western Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies  
Vol. 8 No. 9  
September 2015

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## PCSS returns to Harrisburg

Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies returns to Harrisburg for its 62nd Annual Conference October 15-17, 2015.

PCSS will explore *Conceptual Teaching and Learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Social Studies Classroom*. Join educators young and old from across the Commonwealth as we examine the importance of our field in a time of change for the field. The 62nd annual conference promises to be meaningful to all who care about the social studies.



**Membership in PCSS is FREE!** Simply go to  
[pcssonline.org](http://pcssonline.org) to register as a member.

### CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Thursday, October 15, 2015	Friday, October 16, 2015	Saturday, October 17, 2015
PCSS Pre-Conference Session	Registration	PCSS Breakfast
Early PCSS Registration	Continental Breakfast	PCSS Board Meeting
Awards & Presidential	PCSS Conference & Exhibits	Experience Reception
PCSS Luncheon and Speaker	Dauphin	
PCSS Presidential Reception & Dinner	County	
Contact: Ira Hiberma <a href="mailto:hiberman@verizon.net">hiberman@verizon.net</a>		

Here are a few of the benefits to being a PCSS member:

- News and announcements for PA Social Studies teachers
- PCSS Newsletter
- PCSS Journal
- Updates from the field
- Network of Social Studies Educators
- Sponsor resources



## Hurry to Harrisburg!

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>

### Soldiers & Sailors Presents

#### Warriors Rock Concert Benefits Operation Strong Vet & Harry Panos Fund

September 11, 2015 7:00pm [Read more](#)

#### Jimmy Beaumont & the Sky Liners

September 17, 2015 [Read more](#)

#### POW - MIA Vigil

September 20, 2015 [Read more](#)

#### U.S. Navy Band Commodores Jazz Ensemble

October 25, 2015 7pm [Read more](#)

### Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Main Line Canal Greenway ...

[www.altoona.psu.edu/ccbs/greenway.php](http://www.altoona.psu.edu/ccbs/greenway.php)

The Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Main Line Canal Greenway™ is a 320-mile corridor that follows the historic path of the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal.

### Fort Roberdeau

[www.fortroberdeau.org/](http://www.fortroberdeau.org/)

Fort Roberdeau, also known as The Lead Mine Fort, is a historic fort located in Tyrone Township outside of Altoona PA. It was built in 1778, during the American Revolution and was occupied until 1780. Initial efforts were made in 1939-41 to reconstruct the fort by concerned local agencies with support from the National Youth Administration. The stockade was finally reconstructed as a Bicentennial project in 1975-76.

### Tour-Ed Coal Mine & Museum - Home

[www.tour-edmine.com/](http://www.tour-edmine.com/)

Learn the history of mining by a visit to this educational coal mine with tours run by real coal miners. A popular field trip for school children and groups. Route 28, Exit 14, Tarentum 724-224-4720



*There are no shortcuts to anyplace worth going.* -- Beverly Sills, opera singer

*The Point*

**Western Pennsylvania Council for the  
Social Studies**

**Richard Williams**

**President**

**Leo R. West**

**Secretary / Treasurer**

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## LearnSphere Launches At Carnegie Mellon University.

The [Ed Surge](#) (7/28, Barshay) reported Carnegie Mellon University will be housing LearnSphere, a new federally funded project that aims to become “the biggest open repository of education data” in the world. The project leader Ken Koedinger acknowledged LearnSphere was similar to inBloom, a non-profit funded by the Gates Foundation that shut down in 2014 over concerns about violating students’ privacy. LearnSphere hopes to make it “easier and faster for researchers to analyze big datasets” to improve student learning.

## **Pennsylvania Alliance for Geographic Education** **Geography: For Everyone, Every Day!**

### Quick Links

- [Join the PA Alliance](#) for FREE!
- [Request](#) the Giant Map of PA for your school!
- [National Geographic Bee](#): sign up your school!
- [Join NCGE](#) (National Council for Geographic Education)  
for only \$50
- [\\*Map Library](#): Online map library for classroom and personal use.
- [\\*Classroom Stream Monitoring Kit](#): Request a kit!
- [\\*The Story of Pennsylvania](#): Online lessons about PA history and geography
- [\\*National Geographic Teaching Resources](#) - tools for every grade level!

## Covering the curriculum

"Deep learning can't happen with micromanaged details, nor can it happen with our insistence upon covering everything," writes curriculum expert, Michael Fisher. In his recent ASCD EDge blog post, Fisher tackles the discussion about the legitimacy of covering an entire curriculum. He highlights reports from a meeting with middle school ELA teachers in Northern New York State, where they found, of the teachers who covered as close to 100% of the curriculum, their students scored at a level of 25% proficiency. [Read more.](#)

## Teachers: Know When to Stop Talking

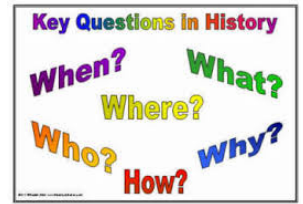
It's tough for educators to withhold judgment of a student's response, but Thomas Newkirk argues that it could help deepen student understanding. [Read more.](#)

*Feedback ♦ ♦ ♦*

*Excellent August issue. Great Links. K.A..*

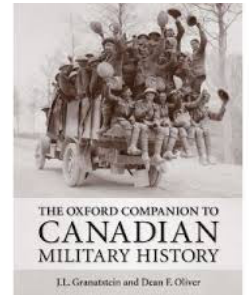
## How to plan history lessons with a focus on developing skills

Social studies educators gearing up for the school year have the opportunity to focus their school department on skills needed for the 21st century. In this blog post, middle-grades teachers Jody Passanisi and Shara Peters share their plan for determining what skills their students need to learn for success now and in the future. [MiddleWeb](#) (8/16)



## Historical nonfiction books increasingly popular among students

Historical nonfiction books that give insight into the lives of key personalities and events such as the Civil War are growing in popularity among young readers, according to this article. Some observers attribute the boost in interest to the Common Core State Standards, which promote the reading of nonfiction in texts across subjects. [CNN](#) (8/4)



## A Written Test Can't Measure Effective Teaching

*(Walt Gardner's Reality Check)*

The issue was whether the Academic Literacy Skills Test, which is one of four tests new teachers in New York State must take to receive a license, discriminated against minority applicants. Judge Kimba Woods had previously held that two earlier exams called the Liberal Arts and Sciences Test had a disparate impact and, therefore, could not be used. . . .this time, she ruled that the "content of the ALST is representative of the content of a New York State public-school teacher's job."

. . . all that matters is whether the test in question has predictive value for teachers of *any* race. Woods relied exclusively on assurances made by New York State and Pearson, which designed the test. Neither is hardly a disinterested party. . . .



## **Pa. standardized test opt-outs tripled in 2015**

Lancaster Online By KARA NEWHOUSE | Staff Writer Tue Aug 11, 2015.

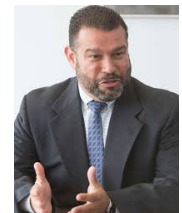
The number of students opted out of state tests tripled in 2015, according to data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. PSSA math opt-outs rose to 3,270 students from 1,064 in 2014. PSSA English language arts opt-outs rose to 3,245 from 1,068



## **Pa. secretary of education tells Inquirer: PSSAs are here to stay**

Monday, August 10, 2015, 6:32 PM

HARRISBURG - Teachers are right, says Pennsylvania's education secretary, Pedro Rivera - the goalposts keep moving, and it's not fair to them.



*Euphemism is a euphemism for lying.*

*-Bobbie Gentry, singer & songwriter*





**Register now for the 2015 PASCD 65<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, Leading and Achieving in an Interconnected World, to be held November 15-17, 2015 at Pittsburgh Monroe Convention Center.**

<http://www.pascd.org/>

The Conference will Feature Keynote Speakers: Meenoo Rami – Teacher and Author “Thrive: 5 Ways to (Re)Invigorate Your Teaching,”

**Here Are The 10 Worst Disasters To Ever Occur In Pennsylvania History**

<http://www.onlyinyourstate.com/pennsylvania/pa-disasters/>



**MAP of Modern US Tribes**

America is divided into 11 nations or tribes. To which do you belong?

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/govbeat/wp/2013/11/08/which-of-the-11-american-nations-do-you-live-in/?postshare=6381435561849837>

**How to Teach the Subject of Religion Without Being an Expert**  
(Global Learning)

Have you ever had to teach a subject you weren't very familiar with? Outside of class, you were reading the textbook just ahead of your students, asking other teachers and community members for help and looking for digestible summaries of topics when trying to prepare.

Teaching about religion may sound difficult if you do not have a background in religious studies or a personal affiliation. But Tanenbaum and Teaching Tolerance believe that educators are completely capable of addressing religious diversity in a respectful, informed way—expert or not! What's more, teaching about religious and nonreligious identities helps students develop religious literacy—a vital skill for the twenty-first century.



**Ways to engage students in current events, news**

(Justin Sullivan/Getty Images)

News and current events are great tools to use to incorporate nonfiction into the classroom. Teacher Andie Huskie uses "Nonfiction Fridays," in which students discuss news articles. Kelly Gallagher, a literacy specialist and teacher, assigns students an "article of the week" each Monday. [The New York Times \(free-article access for SmartBrief readers\)](#) (8/24)

**The Newspaper Has a Place in the Classroom**

Newspapers hold great promise as instructional tools for enriching English/language arts instruction, writes Joanne Yatvin. [Read more.](#)



*If you think adventure is dangerous, try routine -- it is lethal."*

*-- Paulo Coelho, novelist*

## Pa. student council distributes backpacks of supplies to classmates

(Pixabay)

Student council members at **Cannonsburg middle school** recently filled and distributed 125 backpacks with new school supplies for classmates. The council began collecting the donations and supplies in spring and sorted them this summer, with more collections taking place amid back-to-school sales on supplies. [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#) (8/21)



## **Teacher Shortages: Catastrophe or Opportunity?**

(Top Performers)

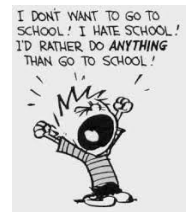
Marc Tucker says current teacher shortages will ultimately be worse than any we have faced before because the causes are structural, not cyclical. [Read more.](#)



## **You Know What Really 'Sucks' About School?**

(Finding Common Ground)

A mother's remark that it "sucks" that her daughter has to start school a day earlier than last year inspired opinion blogger Peter DeWitt to explore on what he thinks "sucks": the way we talk about school. [Read more.](#)



## **Teacher night out Carnegie Museum**

**Thursday October 8 3:30 - 8p.m.**

\$10 until October 1; \$15 after October 1. Registration includes one drink ticket.

It's a Night at the Museum for educators and school administrators at Carnegie Museum of art and Natural History! Mingle with friends, explore the galleries, and engage in dynamic activities. Join us for food, drinks and an insiders look at what the museums have to offer. Take away some exclusive teachers-only swag!



## **CHOICES WORKSHOP AT PITT**

The Choices Program is a non-profit organization based at Brown University that develops curricula on current and historical international issues. Course materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

Introductory Workshop

*Engaging Students in International Issues:*

*The Choices Approach*

Saturday, February 6, 2016

**Register Online**

Co-sponsored by: University of Pittsburgh National Consortium for Teaching About Asia Site and the Global Studies Center, University Center of International Studies, University of Pittsburgh.

First 15 people to register receive the discounted price of \$95.

***Workshops are participatory, so come ready to be engaged and inspired!***



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

**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**

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**Developing an inquiry-based classroom culture**

Meaningful inquiry starts with a positive classroom culture and project-based learning practices, author Suzie Boss asserts. In this blog post, she writes about approaches that will awaken "dreamers" in the classroom, citing the work of "I-imagine" developer Bernajean Porter, "Sparks" author Peter Benson and others. [Edutopia.org](http://Edutopia.org) (8/18)

**Professional Development Is Useless! Or Not.**

*(Teacher in a Strange Land)*

*...Why is my district / building principal forcing me to engage in pointless hours of professional development, chosen by someone else, right now, just when I need the time for tasks that are far more urgent? Work that I know, without a doubt, will make the start of the school year smoother and, you know, improve student learning right off the bat?*

**How Should Teachers Address Politics in the Classroom?**

*(Curriculum Matters)*

As the 2016 presidential campaign kicks into gear, teachers have to consider whether and how to introduce politics in the classroom. [Read more.](#)

**John Locke: An Education Progressive Ahead of His Time?**

Philosopher John Locke's advice on schooling remains relevant for educators even after three centuries, writes researcher Peter Gibbon. [Read more.](#)