

# Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies

Fall 2016

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# Mission Statement

**The Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies promotes quality Social Studies Education from kindergarten to higher learning by:**

*Advocating the Social Studies at all levels of education in Pennsylvania.*

*Promoting the analysis, dissemination and valuation of Social Studies materials.*

*Examining and recommending certification requirements for teachers.*

*Assisting educators in organizing local Social Studies councils for professional development.*

*Cooperating with schools, districts, intermediate units and other interested parties on Social Studies projects.*

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# Nutley Students Attend AP Boot Camp

*By Hasime Kukaj*



**A group of Nutley students received an "edge" in learning last week when they participated in the school district's first advanced placement boot-camp summer class for U.S. history at the high school.**

"We wanted to build a culture where students feel supported and can expand their academic opportunities with AP [courses]," Nutley High School Principal Denis Williams told the Sun.

Williams credited NHS social studies teacher Joseph Dwyer for researching the best practice for AP scores in high-achieving districts. It was discovered that the more exposure students have to the test, the better they perform, the principal said.

"This is the starting point, so we want to use this and see, build and expand moving forward," Williams said. "I think the key thing is for people to see the validity of it."

In addition to history, an AP physics course took place. Each AP course, which ran two hours for five days, costs \$100 and was sponsored by the Academic Booster Club.

Williams said that parents should realize that the course is an investment in their children.

"I think in the future, we're going to try to hopefully expand it to have more offerings and enrollment," Dwyer said, praising the administration and booster club.

On Friday, the last day of the boot camp, 10 students in Dwyer's AP history class participated in exercises regarding historical events, in prepara-

tion of the same course they will take in September.

"They'll take the AP test next May. They're really getting a head start, which is good," Dwyer said. "I think they're enjoying it. I think they're able to practice some things that they otherwise wouldn't be doing on their own."

Dwyer, who is an NHS alumnus, took the same AP history course and wished he received the same opportunity of the boot camp. "We're giving them more opportunities," he said.



*From left: Ellie McCreesh, Miranda Madrazo, Michaela Skelly and Laura Feraco, all juniors, participate in Nutley High School's summer AP boot camp.*

Class topics included a broad spectrum of U.S. history, contemporary issues, historical issues and the upcoming presidential election.

Dwyer said that one of the goals was to encourage the students to "master all of U.S. history, which is what they have to do for the AP test."

## Student Activity

The boot camp provided students with a first look at what an AP course entails.

Junior Ege Dogan said that he thought the course was overwhelming at first; however, he said it was "really important to have an edge over some kids, so I could do better on the AP tests."

In addition to AP U.S. history, Dogan will be taking AP calculus in September and hopes to get into the medical field.

"I learned a lot about how the test is formatted, and important skills and stuff," Dogan said.

Joey D'Alessio, who aspires to be an engineer, said that the course prepared him to get a 4 or 5 to pass the AP test. He also signed up for AP physics in the fall.

Juniors Laura Feraco and Michaela Skelley will be taking AP English together, in addition to the AP history course, once school opens.

Skelley said the course helped them learn what the College Board is looking for, and said she and Feraco had Dwyer as a teacher this past school year.

"He's the best," she said. "He really broke down every as-

pect of the class."

*Cover Photo: From left, Pooja Mehta, Ayur Loikov, Patricia Res-sell-Deras and Barbara Benda, discuss a problem with teacher Joe Dwyer during a summer boot camp for advanced placement class work this fall.*





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# The Long-Term Effects of Social-Justice Education on Black Students

*By Melinda D. Anderson  
via The Atlantic, July 19, 2016*

## **A new study shows such courses prompted self-exploration and openness in marginalized kids.**

Last summer, the high-school English teacher T.J. Whitaker revised the reading list for his contemporary literature course with the addition of a new title—*The Savage City*, a gritty nonfiction account of race and murder in New York City in the 1960s. The 24-year teaching veteran said he chose the book to give his students at Columbia High School in Maplewood, New Jersey, a chance to read “an honest depiction of the Black Panther Party and the corruption that existed in the NYPD during the ‘60s.” In a school where black students are half of the student body—and a photo of two white peers in blackface caused an uproar in May—Whitaker’s classroom is a space for students to examine issues such as oppression, classism, and abuse of power. And it’s yielding results.

When the South Orange-Maplewood School District recently considered restoring school resource officers, law-enforcement officials assigned to school campuses, the move was met with sizeable opposition from juniors and seniors in Whitaker’s class. They organized fellow students to attend the public forums and testify on their experiences with local police—both in school and the community. And notably, they relied on Whitaker’s class discussions to bolster their arguments.

Transformative social-justice education is often viewed as a path to more equitable classrooms and cross-racial understanding, at a time when public-school classrooms are increasingly segregated. Most frequently associated with the Brazilian educator and theorist Paulo Freire, it is an approach growing in popularity and interest nationally. But for students from marginalized and disenfranchised groups—those most in need of upending the status quo—what is the payoff? And how can teachers steeped in this method affect their learning?

A new study from Pennsylvania State University seeks to answer these lingering questions. Marinda K. Harrell-Levy, an assistant professor of human development and family studies at Penn State Brandy-

wine, set out to explore the long-term impact of a transformative social-justice course on black adolescents. The class, a junior-year requirement, intended to motivate students to become social agents in their schools and communities, and included a service learning component. In 2010, as part of a larger research project, Harrell-Levy followed up with 13 black students who graduated from an urban parochial high school in 1995 to 2009, and, though the sample size was small, she found that the benefits of their mandatory social-justice class extended well into adulthood.

“We know that if you teach ... anything related to civic development, it’s very likely that within the next week or two after taking the course, students are going to have a positive feeling about their experiences,” she said. “[But] how do they feel ... years later? Is it still resonating?” Harrell-Levy’s goal was to discover how the social-justice

## *Transformative social-justice education is often viewed as a path to more equitable classrooms and cross-racial understanding, at a time when public-school classrooms are increasingly segregated.*

class helped a socioeconomically diverse group of black teenagers see themselves in society. What the study revealed was a deep-rooted link between the course, career choices, and the former students’ civic and social-justice values.

Black alumni of the class, many years after graduating, uniformly credited the social-justice course for provoking a process of self-exploration that altered their sense of justice and influenced their self-identity. Eleven of the 13 reported identifying or revising career interests while taking the course, prioritizing professions to improve their community. Helping convicted felons return to the workforce, pursuing a degree in social work, and working in the education field all flowed from their enrollment in the social-justice class.

“Jenna” (pseudonyms were used in the

study to protect the identity of the student participants) pointed to the course as giving her “a different moral standpoint and a different conception of justice.” Her knowledge of civic issues like capital punishment increased, she said, inspiring her to enroll in law school “to contribute to a socially just world.” Likewise, conversations with participants like “Patricia” showed how the social-justice class ignited “the power of her own agency”—a sentiment widely shared, in which students saw themselves as capable of changing conditions in their own lives as well as larger institutional injustices.

The former students were very forthcoming, said Harrell-Levy, sharing all types of experiences they were going through, from “My father was in jail” and “My mother was addicted to drugs” to “I was in a foster home during half of my time at the school”—underscoring how their teachers incorporated those experiences into the learning process. “They felt that they were relevant. That their experiences were relevant. There was this nexus of culture and pedagogy that was happening with the students and with the teachers that made the learning process that much more meaningful for everybody,” said the study’s lead author.

Additionally, the research showed that the race of the teachers was not an impediment to the course’s mission—a crucial takeaway given that just over 8 out of 10 public schoolteachers are white. “They didn’t ignore the fact they are white,” said Harrell-Levy, stressing that “colorblind ideology” was rejected. Instead, recognizing that her students looked at her as “this privileged white lady who had the luxury of illuminating about issues [of diversity],” the teacher brought the students’ reluctance into the classroom discussion as a learning point.

An unexpected outcome for the researchers was how the course allowed students to unravel issues of advantage among black students based on class—an aspect that seldom surfaces in social-justice discourse. The predominately black Catholic school included a mix of students attending through school vouchers, athletic scholarships, academic scholarships and other financial means. According to Harrell-Levy, the combination offered

A unique opportunity for the teachers to challenge intra-racial stereotypes. Participants who described themselves as “privileged” or “sheltered” revealed that their opinions of the “black poor”—and more generally, those living in poverty—were effectively confronted through the social-justice curriculum.

“All of these ... thought-provoking conversations made them consider, or reconsider, their own perspective on what it meant to be black. Their own perspective on what it meant to be poor and black. Their own perspective on what it meant to be [economically advantaged] and black. That was a type of conversation that teachers willingly let [happen].”

Leigh Patel, an associate education professor at Boston College and a sociologist of education, characterized the study as a nuanced take on race and class, and a departure from the study of blackness and black youth as a monolithic topic. She cautioned, however, that understanding the full scope of transformative social-justice education should extend beyond the individual to the collective impact.

teachers in the study, on a regular basis, had to expose themselves in order to connect with the students. At the very least, teachers need to understand the impact that they're having on students' identity. Whether it's intentional or unintentional, it's happening.”

In the wake of recent fatal police shootings of black men,

*Participants who described themselves as “privileged” or “sheltered” revealed that their opinions of the “black poor”—and more generally, those living in poverty—were effectively confronted through the social-justice curriculum.*

the Black Lives Matter Movement, and heightened interest in how black youth are processing these events, Harrell-Levy said the time is now to revisit the role of teachers and schools. “There’s a lot of emotion surging through a lot of [youth] right now, who don’t have any experience on what to do with it, and how to deal with it,” she said.

*We’ve got to give them the tools...to process in ways that are healthy and will actually build our democracy.”*

“Are we transforming individuals' [career] pathways [or] are we transforming a collective population's realities of wellness and suffering?” asked Patel, noting that the drawback to focusing primarily on “individualistic, live-your-best-life” measures is that inequities are never experienced exclusively by individuals. By contrast, Patel cited United We Dream, the Dream Defenders, and We Charge Genocide as “explicit projects of social transformation” that are “fundamentally collective.”

Where Patel and Harrell-Levy found firm agreement was on the critical need to rethink teacher training and professional development to incorporate transformational social-justice teaching. “What's required here is a certain vulnerability that you don't really expect [and] teachers don't generally want,” said the Penn State researcher. “The

“There’s a mental toll to ... literally seeing life leave bodies on YouTube, again and again. We’ve got to give them the tools...to process in ways that are healthy and will actually build our democracy.”

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*By Melinda D. Anderson*

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Cover Photo: Jason Redmond / Reuters





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# Inspiring Kids by Teaching Them They 'Can'

*By Tara García Mathewson*



## Experiential learning projects give kids the chance to figure out how they can change the world.

Kristen LaScola teaches a song a week to her third grade students in Hudson, OH. As a musician, she sees the value of incorporating music into her classroom. One song that she taught her students two years ago has sparked a movement that spread from the third grade that first year up to the fourth and fifth grades last year, with plans already in place to get the entire K—12 district involved this fall.

The song is called "We Can," by Philadelphia native Jesse Ruben. It's about how people can make a difference in the world, and educators across the United States and Canada have embraced the message and the experiential learning approach inherent to it. More than 125,000 students at the elementary, middle and high school levels have participated in "I Can" or "We Can" projects since 2013, when a teacher from Vancouver Island emailed Ruben and told him that her students were inspired by his song.

Ruben later connected with other educators to design and create The We Can Project, which LaScola and other teachers have come to see as a highlight of the academic year — along with parents and students, too.

"The first time we did it was two years ago, and I still have parents reach out to me and say, 'This was life-changing for my kid,'" LaScola said.

Her 8- and 9-year-old students, when faced with the challenge of creating projects that capitalize on their ability to change the world, have chosen to form a basketball league, raise money to help dogs find good homes, create a recycling facility, raise money for cancer awareness and research, say something kind to someone different every day, and donate time and toys to children who are "bored" in the hospital.

LaScola has incorporated The We Can Project into her curriculum in a lesson about researched opinion writing, which is part of the Common Core. Students research their ideas, argue their opinions about why they are important, and describe how they were going to make the change.

*"The students are most empowered, engaged and motivated when they use their many gifts to enrich the lives of the others around them."*

Kevin Reimer, principal of Lake Trail Middle School in Vancouver Island, says the program allowed kids of all ages to understand that they can positively impact their community.

"They have come to learn that leading from where they stand is about making a commitment to improve the lives and the circumstances of the people around them," Reimer is quoted as saying on The We Can Project website. "The students are most empowered, engaged and motivated when they use their many gifts to enrich the lives of the others around them."

LaScola certainly found this to be true in her classroom. A group of her students who have behavioral problems and learning disabilities struggled throughout much of the school year. While working on their We Can projects, however, they were completely engaged. And their success instilled a level of confidence in themselves they may not have gotten otherwise.

"Watching those kids struggle throughout the year and end up on top has been awesome," LaScola said.

Now the principal of LaScola's school is ready to turn the challenge on teachers.

*If kids can come up with ways to change the world, what can they do?*



# Students Participate in Global Games

*By Justin Strawser*

TREVORTON – The deafening roar of hundreds of Line Mountain Elementary students echoed off the school auditorium walls Wednesday morning as teachers prepared the children for the Olympics.

"Russia! Russia! Russia!" the fourth-graders chanted.

"Jamaica! Jamaica! Jamaica!" the first-graders countered.

The kindergarten students represented France; second-grade students represented Brazil; and the third-grade students represented Canada in the competition. The school held 11 activities for kindergarten through fourth-grade students, including archery, standing long jump/running, relay and individual hurdles racing, shot put, fencing, canoe sprints, javelin, synchronized swimming, triathlon, hobby horse race and basketball.

Line Mountain's last day of school is today for all students in kindergarten through 11th-grade due to two teacher strikes this school year. Seniors, who attended several Saturday sessions, graduated on June 17.

"We want them to have worldwide knowledge," elementary Principal Jeanne Menko said. "The Olympics are coming up and a lot of countries are going to be there. They will watch now and know which country is which and which athletes to watch."

The activities on Wednesday will keep the students "more engaged" in the news of the world and how it feels to participate in the Games in a small way, Menko said.

Second-grader Casey Hotzman, 8, of Dalmatia, said she was having a lot of fun. She said she learned that Brazil was the largest country in South America.

First-grader Cara Moyer, 7, of Dalmatia, said she loved canoeing. She learned that Jamaica had "hoops of fire" and she liked the Jamaican flag of yellow, black and green.



Over the last few school days, the students learned facts about their country and presented what they learned on a PowerPoint project.

Nearly 40 students from the National Honor Society and the junior/senior high school volunteered their time to help during the events.

The 2016 Summer Olympics will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from Aug. 5 to Aug. 21.

*Photo: Line Mountain first grade student Caydence Lenker, 6, of West Cameron Township, throws a "javelin" through the Olympic logo Wednesday morning at the elementary school in Trevorton.*



# 3 Ways the Flipped Classroom Leads to Better Subject Mastery

*By Aaron Sams and Justin Aglio*

*Flipping is more than a buzzword. It helps teachers personalize lessons, assessments, and reporting.*

Now that the buzz about flipped learning is calming and the novelty is wearing off, the time has come to dig a little deeper into the natural outcomes of flipping. Specifically, flipping can change the type of work students complete and the way in which class time will be used; it can modify the nature of assessment, and it can alter the way in which teachers will report student work.

First and foremost, we should define some terms. On the most basic level, flipped learning occurs when instructors make use of video lectures outside the class in order to bring what was being done in the homework space back into the classroom. In short: lecture at home, homework in class.

Much of the conversation about flipping has focused on using teacher-created video as an instructional tool, but the real benefit of flipping the classroom does not come from video. The true benefit comes from using videos as a teaching tool to deliver direct instruction at home so teachers are free to reinvent classroom time.

## **Truly Personalized Learning**

Inevitably, a teacher who is new to flipping will use materials from previous years. In fact, beginning flippers often change only the time and space in which content is delivered and practice is completed. One main benefit of this basic form of a flipped classroom is that, instead of students completing homework assignments outside the observation of the teacher, they now complete all work under the direct supervision of the classroom teacher. Thus, in a flipped class, the time that a teacher once spent delivering new content can be used catching and correcting each student's misconceptions.

One way to foster student engagement and to facilitate active learning is to give students the opportunity to choose what they will do to learn and practice. But teachers should also use professional judgement in the extent to which they offer choice. Limited choices are more appropriate for most learners than absolute autonomy. One practical way to facilitate limited choice is through choice boards or selecting from a list.

Flipped classrooms give students the time to explore what they need to learn, and new ed tech programs are helping teachers give students choices both in and out of the classroom. For example, software like ClassFlow allows educators to create and deliver lessons, assignments, and assessments. When students have anytime, anywhere access to content, learning can take place beyond the classroom and become truly personalized.

## **Bringing Student Choice to Assessment**

Following a reevaluation of what students are working on, flipped

class teachers are also reconsidering how to evaluate students. Does every student need to take the same test or performance evaluation for the instructor to assess them fairly and accurately? Or can each student participate in the process of deciding how they will be assessed?

Some students who do not know anything outside this paradigm may choose to take a traditional exam, but others (especially students who may not typically express their comprehension well through a tightly constructed exam) may elect to demonstrate their content knowledge or skill competence through some other project or product.

Teachers concerned with fairly assessing a traditional exam versus a project could use the same evaluation rubric to assess both the exam and the project. By abandoning the [POINTS SCORED]/[POINTS POSSIBLE] approach to grading a test and instead looking at each answered question as evidence of mastery of a particular objective, teachers can evaluate any form of assessment fairly and with confidence that the reported score is reflective of the student's understanding of the material.

## **Reporting Mastery Instead of Points**

When learning, rather than point acquisition, becomes the goal, teachers face a difficult reality. To put it bluntly, compliance does not equal learning; point acquisition does not equal learning; busyness does not equal learning. To report these things as if they do reflect learning is unfair and inaccurate. The natural consequence of this reality is a move toward a standards-based grading system. When the grading system's focus shifts to students' mastery of objectives—rather than compliance with arbitrary scoring systems—the classroom focus shifts toward learning.

Transitioning away from a compliance-based and points-driven learning culture is not a necessary consequence of flipping, but it is a natural consequence. This transition in assessment practice causes both teachers and students to reevaluate the motivating factors behind school, making learning, rather than scoring, the focus.

A reader may note, at this point, that this article has been less about a flipped classroom than it is about rethinking student work and its assessment. So, why bring up flipped learning at all? Is flipping a necessary step to implementing active learning, objective-based planning, or standards based-grading? Or are these outcomes simply logical results of flipping a class?

The latter is the obvious choice. Many schools successfully use standards-based grading without flipping. Many classrooms are active and engaged without being flipped. Many teachers plan using objectives and would never consider flipping their class. However, if any school leadership is facing resistance to any of these classroom approaches, they should consider the flipped approach as a first step to facilitating the transition.



# Explaining the Presidential Race In School

*By Mike Valente*

*HARRISON COUNTY, W.Va (WDTV) - As kids get back into the swing of the school year, the election season is heating up.*

At Nutter Fort Intermediate School, students will participate in a mock election. They will follow the presidential race as it progresses.

"We just encourage them to stay

watching the news or just sitting around, they're immersed."

"Children do it with any type of media," said Dr. Amy Root, associate professor of Child Development & Family Studies at West Virginia University. "If they're listening to the news, they very well could echo back what they've heard on television or radio."

discussing current events with kids.

"If they're in a civics class and they're talking about an election year, then the parents can maybe engage their child in a similar sort of rhetoric," said Dr. Root.

Dr. Manchin agrees that controversy on the campaign trail can sometimes serve a purpose in the classroom.

*"We just encourage them to stay open-minded and to listen to both sides, and then to come to their own conclusions on what they think is important and how it affects them."*

open-minded and to listen to both sides, and then to come to their own conclusions on what they think is important and how it affects them," said Lillie Junkins, a fifth grade teacher at Nutter Fort Intermediate School.

But when weighing their options, are kids paying attention to some of the rhetoric from the candidates?

"There is a 24-hour news cycle, there's always something," said Dr. Mark Manchin, superintendent of Harrison County schools. "When these kids go home and they're

Personal attacks have been thrown around frequently on the campaign trail. Faculty say that when they talk about politics, it's hard not to acknowledge the current political climate--even with nine or ten-year-olds.

"They've seen things that have happened that maybe aren't the most up-standing," said Junkins. "So, they come to their own conclusions about those things. But, to expose them to any current event is good."

Dr. Root says that teachers and parents should work in tandem when

"We refer to it as 'teachable moments,' said Dr. Manchin. "If a student says something inappropriate because they heard it on TV--and students are very impressionable--our job, and that of the parent, we try to encourage them to treat people with respect, be courteous of other people, and be courteous of other peoples' differences."

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[Follow the embedded link here](#)  
for a video of Mike Valente's conversation with Dr. Manchin.

# Why Some WA Teachers Won't Teach the 2016 Presidential Election

*By Taylor Mirfendereski*

**SEATTLE** — *When students return to Dustin Leithold's American government class next week, the 2016 presidential election won't be a lesson on their syllabus.*

"I don't see a lot of substance or policies or actual plans by either candidate, so it's hard for me to set up sort of a debate or a discussion," said Leithold, a high school social studies teacher in the Aberdeen School District.

This year, the teacher said he won't ask his students to put on a mock presidential debate, and he won't facilitate talk about candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

"I know where the debate could go, and I know it could make other students uncomfortable," he said.

Leithold's classroom is not the first to skip out on the race to the White House. Teachers in Washington state and across the country are scrapping their traditional lesson plans and grappling with how to teach about one of the most polarizing and unconventional elections of modern time — where the campaigns are full of charged, divisive language that isn't allowed in most classrooms.

While some teachers are dodging the topic altogether, other educators said they are forced to modify the way they've historically taught, taking extra precaution to avoid chaos inside their classrooms. There are also some educators who are taking advantage of the unique campaigns in their classroom lessons.

"Some of the quotes are extreme. Some of the back and forth reactions on how they are responding to the other candidate are not as professional. It's a little bit awkward for teachers to cover things that are not as polite," said Debi Koch, an elementary school teacher in the Federal Way School District.

Should teachers avoid controversial class discussions

about this year's election or should their lessons model the way they've taught about previous presidential campaigns? It's a question that has civics education advocates and some teachers divided. They disagree about which solution creates more harm than good for students.

"It makes me worried — very worried. I think (not teaching about the election is) dangerous. I think that all of us — as citizens, as policy makers, as parents, as pro-

*Should teachers avoid controversial class discussions about this year's election or should their lessons model the way they've taught about previous presidential campaigns?*

fessional educators — have to be vigilant to make sure that if this in fact a trend that it's reversed as soon as possible," said Diane Douglas, executive director of the Seattle CityClub, a non-partisan group that focuses on civic engagement.

The issue has also raised some eyebrows inside the state's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, prompting a response from both the woman who supervises K-12 social studies teachers across the state and a program supervisor at Washington's School Safety Center.

## **A Shift in Focus**

Instead of teaching his students about Clinton and Trump's presidential campaigns, Leithold said he'll focus on teaching his civics class about the process of becoming president.

"I was thinking about doing a set of survey questions that would guide students to what party they might agree with the most," he said.



Sarah Treworgy, an 8th-grade teacher at Alderwood Middle School in Lynwood, said this year she won't teach the same election unit she whips out every four years.

"I feel like I have a responsibility to teach about the election, but I am going to take a more historical approach to it. 'This is how these candidates ended up here. This is what the constitution says,'" Treworgy explained.

Maureen Costello, who leads the Teaching Tolerance program at the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama, said many teachers have reported taking that same approach — spending less time talking about the candidates and extra time teaching about the structure of

School District, hopes she landed on a teaching solution that would minimize the volatile language into her classroom.

The 4th and 5th-grade teacher said she will ask her students to research both candidates' stance on education — a topic she said is less emotional and more relatable to the students than the other issues on the table.

"I don't want to talk about Clinton's e-mail and how they are responding to the accusation that one candidate is saying about the other candidate," she said. "I didn't really want to get into the extreme issues."

### Harder to Stay Neutral

*"I am working hard to keep my personal politics completely out of this. But that's something that's harder for me to do."*

Even in classes where the presidential election will be included on the syllabus, some teachers said it will be difficult for them to hide their personal biases.

U.S. government and the checks and balances that exist. Others are spending more time teaching media literacy and debunking statements from presidential candidates, she said.

In April, Costello surveyed 2,000 teachers across the country about how the presidential election has impacted the nation's schools. In the five-question survey, more than 40 percent of the teachers who responded said they were hesitant to teach about the 2016 presidential election.

For Treworgy, the tone of the presidential campaign and a lack of "substantive" policies, is what makes her less than thrilled to teach about the election this year, she said.

"I have a lot of students who were very vocal about some of the candidates last spring, and I don't want to get into a big classroom banter or argument about it. It kind of feels tiring," she said.

That's the same concern many teachers share. Some have reported increased bullying, anxiety and fear in class as a result of the charged presidential campaign rhetoric.

Koch, the elementary school teacher in the Federal Way

Tom Colman, a high school social studies teacher in the Central Kitsap School District, said he's recently had to bite his tongue more than ever in his 31-year teaching career.

"I am working hard to keep my personal politics completely out of this. But that's something that's harder for me to do," he said.

His 12th-grade students — soon-to-be-voters — are divided over their political choices, and Colman said the conversations between them aren't always nice.

"There's a lot more antagonism and just ill will between the students who consider the candidates. I mean, there's a definite dividing line and we have to really practice civility," he said.

### How Could They Not Teach It?

Civics education advocates don't disagree that the 2016 presidential election is hard to teach.

"There's such a level of crassness and vicious attacks. It doesn't serve the idea of civil debate," said Margaret Fisher, director of Washington's iCivics program. "Teachers who have never had the training in how to deal

with teaching about elections are going to have a very difficult time."

But the prospect of teachers avoiding it in their lesson plans is making some experts nervous about the fate of Washington students.

"It's a very dangerous sign of our civic health," said Douglas, who leads the non-partisan group Seattle City-Club.

Washington high school students are required to take a semester of civics to graduate, but the 2016 presidential

*"Teachers have noted an increase in incidents of harassment, intimidation and/or bullying directed at students whose backgrounds are targeted by the rhetoric."*

election is not necessarily included in the curriculum at every school. That's up to local districts to decide -- not the state. So it is possible some districts will be learning about civics this fall by looking closely at the election.

Douglas said teaching about elections is critical because it's directly related to whether or not children will vote when they become adults.

That means controversial conversations need to happen, she said.

"The language of violence and hate that has been stirred up around this election makes it more delicate, tough and fearful to have conversations, but that's exactly why it's so important to have them. We should try to model for children how to talk about difference of experiences, race and point of view in a civil, respectful way," she said.

That's how Will Linser sees it, too. The Bellevue High School social studies teacher said he will heavily focus on the 2016 election in class simply because it's so out-of-the-box. He's especially talking about the unconventional Trump campaign, which has broken historical campaign norms.

"I think it's a unique opportunity. We've never seen quite a campaign like this," Linser said. "He's not following the traditional realm. There was no advertising, and it took forever to put the campaign structure together."

## State Education Officials Chime In

Carol Coe, who supervises the state's social studies teachers, is alarmed by teachers' hesitance to talk about the 2016 election in class. She said she'll bring up the issue with the state's social studies teachers at a meeting in mid-September, and she'll direct educators to tools that can help them teach about complex political issues.

"What if a student brings up in class what they heard a candidate say on television last night? What if a student brings up in class some of the tweets that are being broadcast? Do you just ignore that? Do you pretend it's not happening? Or do you allow students to discuss the value of that — the impact that they think it's having on forming opinions?" Coe said.

"I guess I want kids to grapple with that which they are being exposed to in what I call the 'safer' environment of the classroom."

But she's not the first state official to weigh in on how the presidential election is impacting schools.

In a June e-mail, a Washington state education supervisor suggested to some of the state's K-12 teachers that they should take preemptive action to protect students from getting hurt by the 2016 political rhetoric, specifically from the GOP nominee.

Mike Donlin, program supervisor at the School Safety Center, sent the note to a list of harassment, imitation and bullying experts in Washington's K-12 schools.

"Teachers have noted an increase in incidents of harassment, intimidation and/or bullying directed at students whose backgrounds are targeted by the rhetoric," Donlin wrote. "There have even been stories of families moving or students transferring from one district to another, which they perceive as safer, more inclusive."

He warned teachers to anticipate that those situations will "only intensify" when the school year kicks off. He also encouraged educators to create "safe places" for students and teachers to talk, and to "build discussions into lessons" across school subjects.



## *Book Review*

# This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War (Drew Gilpin Faust, 2008)

*By Sarah White*

“The work of death”, Drew Gilpin Faust writes, “was Civil War America’s most fundamental and most demanding undertaking” (xviii). The war’s meaning went beyond counting lives lost, and its most shared experience became the reality and proximity of death itself. *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* is unique and valuable in that through each chapter, Gilpin Faust explores Civil War deaths from a multitude of standpoints, from the acts of dying and killing to the labor of burying, identifying, and numbering. The work details the people – dead and living alike – that engaged in this demanding undertaking, and how those experiences shaped politics, culture, and society into what she terms a “republic of shared suffering”. Gilpin Faust’s examination is both analytically thorough and culturally valuable, and after briefly summarizing the content and structure of her work, I will focus on two examples to illustrate how the author succeeds in proving her thesis.

*The work details the people – dead and living alike – that engaged in this demanding undertaking, and how those experiences shaped politics, culture, and society into what she terms a “republic of shared suffering”.*

Each chapter in *This Republic of Suffering* examines an aspect of dealing with death in the Civil War: dying, killing, burying, naming, realizing, believing and doubting, accounting, and numbering. In dying and killing, soldiers and their families relied on shared cultural traditions to cope with death and its aftermath, and they learned that killing was the product of human choices and perceptions. In burying and naming the dead, Americans sought to provide their fallen with proper care, iden-

tity, shipment home, and the dignity of a marked grave. Soldiers’ deaths shaped the nation in response to dehumanizing practices and the importance of individual rights. Realizing and coming to terms with death raised questions and doubts about faith, and public discussion of the dead propelled changes in military and legislative policies.

One way Gilpin Faust explores the Civil War’s transformative power is through the physical act of killing, and the ways in which it altered soldiers’ relationships with other soldiers within and across the North and South but also within soldiers themselves. Death challenged beliefs about the sanctity of life, made more questionable by practices of dehumanizing one’s enemies. The author highlights the physical and emotional tolls faced by African American soldiers, especially those who fought for the Confederacy. Black troops “represented an intolerable provocation” for Confederates, not only in terms of racial theory but in the physical act of arming and empowering men whom southern whites relied on to exert “subordination and control” (44-45). And the perspective of the war’s violence differed greatly between black and white soldiers, where the former fought out of a justified understanding of centuries of oppression, giving the war a much different meaning while allowing black soldiers to become “the agent rather than the victim of violence”. Killing thus became an act of liberation, of emancipation, a psychological transformation (55).

Efforts to identify the dead came to influence both the public and the nation as well. Hundreds of thousands of men on both sides could only be identified as “unknown”, and records filed at army hospitals were required only to be forwarded to Washington or Richmond – not to the

families (103). Voluntary civilian organizations worked to do what the government could not, with the issues of humanitarian aid and clerical order converging for the purpose of more efficient communication between the army and the citizens. Where these organizations were not available, individual volunteers offered their services, sometimes travelling to hospitals to

*Soldiers’ deaths shaped the nation in response to dehumanizing practices and the importance of individual rights.*

write letters from the dying to their loved ones. Gilpin Faust successfully links the inaccurate reporting of casualties to the growing recognition of governmental responsibility for identifying and honoring those who perished in camps and battlefields. It took the horror of the Civil War to introduce the basis for a national cemetery system – in moving the dead into the public eye, honoring the dead became inexorably linked with respecting the living (135).

Men were profoundly changed by war – they did not return the same as they had left, and the impact upon communities and the nation was undeniable, for it was not only soldiers who bore the war’s burden. *This Republic of Suffering* provides a multifaceted account of both the dead and the living that engaged in “the work of death”, the perspectives of those who sought meaning in its magnitude, and the implications that it carried in shaping public perceptions and policy. In the end, “the Dead became what their survivors chose to make of them” (269), an act which we are still engaging in to this day. Our perceptions of the dead continue to transform society in our shared experiences.

# The 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies Conference

Lodging at a special conference rate of \$105 a night will be available at the Red Lion Hotel Harrisburg East.  
Please use this special link: Pa Council Social Studies Conference 2016

## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Thursday, October 20, 2016

Pre-Conference Sessions (Act 70)

Awards and Presidential Reception

Friday, October 21, 2016

Registration

Continental Breakfast

Conference and Exhibits

Luncheon

Presidential Reception and Dinner

Saturday, October 22, 2016

Breakfast

PCSS Board Meeting

Check out <http://pcssonline.org> for more details.

All attendees must register; including PCSS officers, Board Members, and conference presenters.

Send a separate form for each person attending. Please feel free to copy this form as needed.

**COMPLETED REGISTRATION FORM AND ALL FEES OR PURCHASE ORDERS MUST BE RECEIVED BY SEPTEMBER 25, 2016.**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTY: \_\_\_\_\_ CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

PREFERRED PHONE CONTACT: \_\_\_\_\_

*Registration confirmation provided by e-mail, so please make sure you provide a legible email address for that confirmation.*

Please confirm your email address here: \_\_\_\_\_

### CONFERENCE REGISTRATION (Includes Awards Reception on 10/20, PCSS Continental Breakfast and Lunch on 10/21)

ADVANCE REGISTRATION . . . . .	\$110.00	_____
RETIRED/SPOUSE Registration . . . . .	\$50.00	_____
STUDENT Registration . . . . .	\$35.00	_____
LATE (AFTER September 25, 2016) or On Site REGISTRATION . . . . .	\$150.00	_____

### SPECIAL FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Pre-Conference Sessions (Act 70) Thursday, October 20 <sup>th</sup> <b>Must Register in Advance. See PCSS Website for details.</b>	REE	_____
Reception, Thursday, October 20 <sup>th</sup> (Free for Registered Conference Attendees, Presenters, Awardees and their guests)	FREE	_____
PRESIDENTIAL RECEPTION & DINNER, Friday, October 21 <sup>st</sup> (Free for Past PCSS Presidents ONLY)	\$35.00	_____
PCSS BREAKFAST, Saturday, October 22 <sup>nd</sup> . . . . .	\$20.00	_____
Donation to PCSS . . . . .	Amount	_____

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**PURCHASE ORDERS:** If registering by purchase order, please attach the PO # to this form. **Payment must follow within 30 days.**

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Cancellations will be charged a 15% processing fee: There will be no refund if cancellation occurs after September 25, 2016. ALL CANCELLATIONS MUST BE IN WRITING (or email) AND EMAIL DATE/POSTMARK WILL BE USED TO DETERMINE APPLICABLE FEES.



# Content Support for Act 70, Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Violation Education

## Presented by The Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies

**Date: Thursday, October 20, 2016**

**Location: Red Lion Hotel- Harrisburg East**

Gain insight into teaching strategies that support the implementation of Act 70 which encourages each school district to implement instruction dealing with the Holocaust, genocide, and human rights. Receive hands-on training and complimentary instructional materials that will help deliver quality implementation of appropriate instruction that meets the intent of the Act.

The workshops are **complimentary**.

**9:30AM-11:30AM—The Interwoven Web**

**11:30 AM—Lunch**

**12:15 PM- 2:15PM—Genocide Unit (Model Unit from Choices Program)**

### *The Interwoven Web*

**Presenters:** Dr. Kathryn S. Atman, Emerita Associate Professor, School of Education, University of Pittsburgh  
Dr. Darla L. Gerlach, Teacher, Gifted & Talented Education and Educational Consultant for  
Project-Based Learning, Shaler Area School District, Pittsburgh, PA

Instant communication, made possible by advances in technology, is bringing the “world” into our living rooms. The Interwoven Web is a “think-tank simulation” through which students, in small groups, can analyze global problems such as those related to the Holocaust, genocide and human rights. As students engage in the research-based IWW process, they develop intellectual skills such as deductive reasoning, evaluation of arguments and question-asking. Join a discussion of how this inquiry-based learning activity: 1) enhances each student’s understanding of essential concepts drawn from each of the social studies disciplines and 2) promotes the cognitive and affective life-skills students need to become responsible citizens in the global community.

### *Confronting Genocide: Never Again?*

**Presenter:** Dr. Mark Previte, Associate Professor, University of Pittsburgh Johnstown

This session will employ materials from *The Choices Program* to trace the evolution of the international community's response to genocide and examine how the United States has responded to five cases of genocide. The evaluation of multiple perspectives, informed debate, and problem solving strategies that are encouraged in this curriculum enable students to develop their own policy suggestions concerning the U.S. response to future genocide.



## ACT 48 CREDIT AVAILABLE

### *Content Support for Act 70, Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Violation Education*

Presented by The Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies

Date: Thursday, October 20, 2016

Location: Red Lion Hotel- Harrisburg East

Registration is limited to the first 90 people who apply. Space is limited so apply for this **free** conference before the end of the school year. Please complete the registration form below and mail it directly to:

Mr. Ira Hiberan, PCSS Executive Secretary; 5842 Shady Lane; Nazareth, Pennsylvania 18064

Questions may be directed to [pacouncilss@gmail.com](mailto:pacouncilss@gmail.com)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Educational Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Free instructional materials will be provided. Participants are asked to bring a lap top computer with them to the event.**

A luncheon is available. The cost of the luncheon is \$15. If you wish to join us for the luncheon, please enclose a check made payable to PCSS at the time that you submit your registration. Listed below are the menu choices. Please make note of your preference. A salad, beverage, and desert are also included in the price.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Meat Lasagna**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Vegetable Lasagna**



# 2016 Election Results

## **Recording Secretary**

Kristy Snider

## **Board of Directors**

Michael Healey, *East Stroudsburg School District*

Amy Cohen, *History Making Productions*

Jessica Schocker, *Penn State University Berks*

Dennis Henderson, *Manchester Academic Charter School*

Keith Baily, *Congreso de Latinos, Inc*

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***Our election results are in and we are happy  
to inform you of the results!***

*Thank you to everyone  
who ran for office and  
to those who voted.*