

# The POINT!



E-Letter of the Western Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies  
Vol. 11 No. 9  
September 2018

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## Does WPCSS Have a Future?

The front page announcement about the difficulties facing WPCSS in the August POINT has stirred some replies. Many agree that it may be time to shut down. Teachers in general are over taxed as critics continue attacking education and schools.

Social studies in particular has been down sized in many districts. Finding time to participate in programs of interest after school is difficult. Weekends are generally devoted to family activities and not a popular time to meet.

A suggestion that came from several sources was to have a “last hurrah” reception sometime in the fall and invite any and all social studies teachers **free**. Food and beverages would be provided. For this to occur, we would need commitment from a great number of people. Attempts at gatherings in the past few years have garnered responses from no more than five individuals at any one time.

The primary aim of such a gathering would be to provide closure and end the existence of the oldest social studies organization in Pennsylvania and to ascertain if there is any reason to continue the organization. Are there people willing to take over? If the organization is to survive, it must be led by active social studies teachers who see the need for a healthy exchange of ideas and the support of social studies education.

The Faux Chinese Curse “*May you live in interesting times,*” certainly fits the current age. The political climate, especially on the national level, is very hostile. On the local level there is much ignorance to be overcome. The emphasis on testing over the past few years has de-emphasized social studies education in a great number of schools. While people such as Sandra Day O’Connor have campaigned for more civic education, their cries have gone unheeded in many places. Spot interviews of people on the street as to their knowledge of history makes for amusing TV but it certainly paints a poor picture of what people have learned about the past.

Social studies is important. Math and science can help students learn how to make a living. Social studies teaches them how to live! But memorizing lists of facts does not promote knowledgeable citizens. We need to re-emphasize the teaching of Civics and History in a way that gets students involved. A strong local organization where educators can share information is a way to help promote stronger social studies curriculum in local schools.

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

## Opinion: Civics education benefits from civic engagement

The Hechinger Report (8/27)

by [JOAN GILBERT](#) and [EVE RIFKIN](#) August 27, 2018

‘Students have a lot more on their minds than memorizing the three branches of the U.S. government’

School systems are failing their students with outdated and inconsequential civics education that is only focused on facts and memorization.



## Evaluating John McCain's legacy on education

Education Week (tiered subscription model) (8/26)

As a two-time Republican candidate for president and for years perhaps the nation's most famous member of Congress, McCain defended the No Child Left Behind Act, the landmark federal education law signed by President George W. Bush in 2002—calling it a "major milestone." However, as time went on, he also understood its shortcomings and unintended consequences, and called for the law to be revised. McCain also supported merit pay for "master teachers," and fought to expand choice, specifically for students enrolled in Bureau of Indian Education Schools.



### The 65<sup>th</sup> Annual

## Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies Conference

October 18—October 20, 2018

Red Lion Hotel Harrisburg East

4751 Lindle Road

Harrisburg, PA 17111

Conference Theme: **PCSS: *Where It All Comes Together***

Social studies are the axis around which all other subjects revolve; math, science, language arts, music, dance and visual arts. The incorporation of knowledge from all of these subjects in our society is what defines our history, our culture and our future. Social studies encourage students to utilize information and skills from a variety of content areas to formulate ideas and opinions, apply processes and express their conclusions, concerns and solutions.

For information, Contact:

[Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies](#)

*No matter that patriotism is too often the refuge of scoundrels. Dissent, rebellion, and all-around hell-raising remain the true duty of patriots. -Barbara Ehrenreich, journalist and author (b. 26 Aug 1941)*

## 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>

### Spotlight On: WWI 100th Anniversary -Noretta Willig Author

#### “Carl’s Story”

Soldiers & Sailors Museum

Nov 8 @ 6:30 pm – 7:30 pm

November 8: Noretta Willig, Author “Carl’s Story” Lecture & Book Signing  
 WWI 100th Anniversary of the end of WWI (November 11, 1918)

### National History Quiz Competitions

If your students love history, encourage them to participate in the [National History Bee & Bowl](#). See how these competitions enrich students' lives and promote history education and literacy.

**The History Center is proud to coordinate and host the region's annual National History Day competition, scheduled for March 30-31, 2019.**

The **National History Day** (NHD) program allows students in grades 6-12 to choose historical topics related to a **theme** and conduct extensive primary and secondary research through libraries, museums, and oral history interviews. Students present their work in a medium of their choice: papers, websites, exhibits, performances, or documentaries.

Our NHD Kickoff event, scheduled for Sept. 26, offers students and teachers a day of workshops aimed at helping students to get started on projects.

**Learn more.**

For more information about National History Day, please contact Amanda McAllen, School and Teacher Programs Coordinator, at [aemcallen@heinzhistorycenter.org](mailto:aemcallen@heinzhistorycenter.org) or 412-454-6314.

### Act 48 Teacher Workshop Opportunities

#### **Intersections of History and Pop Culture**

**Location:** Heinz History Center **Act 48 Hours:** 4 hours

**Date:** Saturday, Nov. 10 **Time:** 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

**Cost:** \$15 for History Center members and \$20 for non-members.

Additional \$3 fee applies to receive Act 48 hours.

**Audience:** Suitable for all educators

As we near the end of the 50th anniversary of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," join the History Center for a discussion of the show's impact with Smithsonian curator Ryan Lintelman. Visit original set pieces from the show, now housed in the History Center's *Special Collections Gallery*, and explore how other elements of popular culture, such as films and sports, can be used effectively in the social studies classroom.



*The Point*

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Social Studies

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## Advisory Board

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**Making lessons memorable: The 5 Episodes of Effective Instruction**

Want to design lessons that support each stage of the learning process and ensure knowledge lasts? To make teaching memorable, a method called "The Five Episodes of Effective Instruction" allows learning to unfold over time and encourages students to think about attention, focus, consolidation and active reflection. This process prompts students to look back on and celebrate how far they've come.

**Tips for teaching history to middle-schoolers**

Teaching history to today's middle-school students can be challenging for educators, partly because of generational differences, writes John Scudder, director of Title I programs in an Arizona district. In this commentary, he offers tips to engage students, including helping them understand why they are learning history and making it relevant to them.

**Use of artifacts encouraged for hands-on history**

The National World War I Memorial and Museum in Missouri has developed a curriculum and fellowship program aimed at helping educators teach about war that started in 1914. History teacher Laura Huffman says that since attending the program, she uses artifacts including jewelry and a medal to help teach lessons about the war.

[Education Dive](#) (8/22)**Remains of an ancient city discovered in Kansas**

The remains of what may be the ancient city of Etzana has been discovered in Arkansas City, Kansas, where it may have been home to as many as 20,000 people between 1450 and 1700, according to anthropologist and archaeology professor Donald Blakeslee of Wichita State University. Using technology and documents written more than 400 years ago by Spanish explorers, the site is being excavated and some suggest a future with a visitor's center.

[Los Angeles Times \(tiered subscription model\)](#) (8/19)

*The problem with being sure that God is on your side is that you can't change your mind, because God sure isn't going to change His. -Roger Ebert, film-critic (18 Jun 1942-2013)*



## Hate in Schools

Swastikas on bathroom stalls. Chants of 'Build the wall.' Notes that say 'Go back to Mexico.' *Education Week* found hundreds of reports of hate and bias in schools.

Three swastikas were scrawled on the note found in the girls' restroom, along with a homophobic comment and a declaration: "I Love Trump."

Found inside the backpack of a Latina student, a note that said: Go back to Mexico.

Two other hate-filled incidents—invoking Donald Trump's name and using swastikas—were also reported that same day.

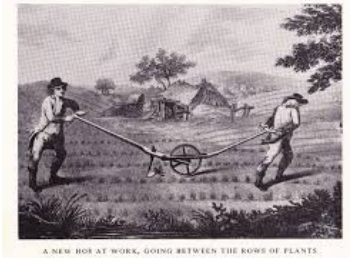
The school: Council Rock High in this mostly white, affluent Philadelphia suburb.



## CHOICES A New Nation

The story of the founding years of the United States is often told from the perspective of the elite political leaders who crafted the country's founding documents. While these individuals played major roles in the early history of the United States, the contributions and experiences of other important groups and individuals are often overlooked. *A New Nation* engages students with this range of experiences, asking students to consider the opportunities, hardships, aspirations, and questions facing people across society in the early years of the new nation.

[Buy this Unit](#)



drawlin'? out of character  
boul - person."  
ocky fake, not authentic.  
finna to go  
timbs Timberland boots

## Philadelphia students write slang guide for new teachers

PhillyVoice (Philadelphia) (8/20)

High school students from Philly public schools' Student Leadership Internship Program are introducing first-year teachers to real student life by guiding them through learning-positive perception...and Philly slang.

Distributed by The School District of Philadelphia, *The First Year Teacher Handbook* goes through everything a teacher may need to know in their first year. With chapters like "Keep an Open Mind" to "Recognize the Positive," these high school students spent a lot of time writing and developing this heartfelt handbook for their new educators.

## States could overhaul testing under NCLB rewrite

States could reconsider how they test students -- and for how long -- under a bill to rewrite No Child Left Behind that passed in the U.S. Senate. The legislation maintains a requirement for standardized testing, but it does not include specific mandates.

Full Story: [National Public Radio](#) More Summaries: [U.S. Senate](#)



*Euphemism is a euphemism for lying. -Bobbie Gentry, singer and songwriter (b. 27 Jul 1944)*



### [Elementary school balances play, learning](#)

Elementary-school students need ample time for recess and scheduled "brain breaks," asserts Lori Koerner, a principal at Tremont Elementary School in New York state. In this commentary, she shares that students in her own school balance academics with 50 minutes of recess daily, formal yoga instruction and more breaks to help students refocus -- all while increasing instructional time.

[District Administration magazine online](#) (8/20)



### [Study: Digital multitasking can hurt long-term learning](#)

Students who multitask with devices during class -- taking lecture notes while scrolling social media -- can process information in the moment but will struggle to retain that information long term, according to a study published in the journal Educational Psychology. The researchers also report lower exam performance and risk of distracting other students. [EdSurge](#) (8/17)

### [Pa. students study ways to improve communities](#)

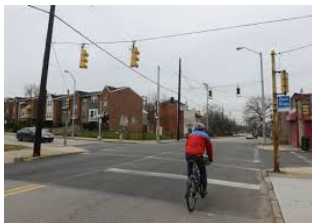
[Tribune-Review \(Pittsburgh\)](#) (8/16)

Martell Reese wants to change the world.

And he's starting in Pittsburgh's Homewood neighborhood.

Reese, 14, of East Hills, spent the past six weeks examining the factors that contribute to crime in Homewood. Along with three teammates, he surveyed over 40 Homewood residents in an effort to highlight the factors community members think would help to improve public safety.

"It shows that people do care about their community," Reese said. "And maybe they can change the world with us."



### [How does flexible seating support learning?](#)

After researching and observing how students learn, seventh-grade English-language arts teacher Brooke Markle writes that she decided to remove students' desks from her classroom. In this blog post, Markle describes the benefits of her classroom's flexible seating arrangement, such as increased collaboration.

[Edutopia online](#) (8/20)



### [Performance tasks make learning last](#)

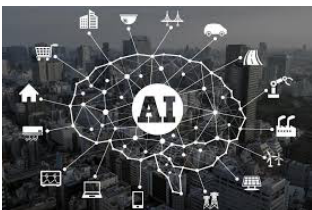
Why do students still sometimes look bored, even when teachers love what they're teaching? Helping students to reflect meaningfully on why they're learning can change that. Two educators use critical thinking and goal development related to real-world situations to develop performance tasks for students, moving them away from conventional projects to immersive experiences.



### [Students learn to use AI for good](#)

Carnegie Mellon University is partnering with the Office of Naval Research and Naval Research Laboratory on a program to help leverage artificial intelligence to better respond to natural disasters. The university also is starting an AI degree program this fall with the aim of helping students learn how to use the technology for humanitarian purposes.

[EdScoop](#) (8/20)





### No, Fortnite Isn't Rotting Kids' Brains. It May Even Be Good for Them

The popular video game holds promise, but that doesn't mean adults should ignore what kids are doing online, write two researchers. [Read more.](#)

For kids, coming home and playing Fortnite is very similar to playing army men in the woods and building forts. From purely a safety standpoint, playing digital laser tag is probably safer than having crabapple battles with garbage can lids as shields like we did, or shooting each other with BB guns.

### Why We Might Consider Teaching Less This Year

... *Teach less. Influence more.* Design learning experiences that directly involve students with compelling content. In ELA, students should spend a ton of **time actually reading**; a ton of time actually writing; a ton of time actually using their voices to discuss what they think. Humans learn by doing. If we think carefully about the things we want students to do--we can involve them in that decision making as well--and then give them plenty of time and support to get into that work, they will learn a lot more.

*In the affairs of this world, poverty alone is without envy. Giovanni Boccaccio*

## 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