

The POINT!



E-Letter for Western Pennsylvania Social Studies Educators

Vol. 12 No. 11

November 2019

PCSS Conference

The 66th annual Conference of the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies at the Red Lion Hotel in Harrisburg was a great success. Youth Court Sessions filled the Thursday sessions morning and afternoon. Thursday evening Awards ceremony's was well attended as the following awards were presented.

President's Award by PCSS President Amy Cheresnowsky
Christine Woysner, Ph.D., Temple University Lynne Cherry, Young Voices for the Planet

Outstanding Social Studies Project Award
Claudia Chacona, Barbara Carl, Brenda Yeakel and Carrie Smith
(Elementary) - 3rd Grade Career Fair
Ariel Goodman and Christy Halcom (Middle School) -Community
Heritage Interactive Map Devin Carosi (High School) - Read, Return, Repeat Project

Outstanding Teacher of the Year
Joseph Welch (Middle) - North Hills Middle School
Social Studies Future Leader
Kyle Hynes—State College Area High School

Rendell Friend of Social Studies
Beth Twiss Houting - Historical Society of Pennsylvania

The Leo West PCSS Award for Social Studies Awareness & Promotion
Amy Cohen - History Making Productions

The Ruth Stas PCSS Award for Social Studies Sustainability
Craig Dean - We the People PA

The Kay Atman PCSS Award for Social Studies Innovation
Marc Brasof, Ed.D. - Arcadia University

Ira Hiberan Award for Social Studies Excellence
Lindsay Bowman, Ph.D. - Harrisburg Academy

Student Teacher of the Year
Roy Lynn (Middle School) - Indiana University of Pennsylvania Jacob Maneval (High
School) - Lycoming College

Friday sessions on the theme of *Discovering What We Share in Common* were well attended and an impressive collection of exhibitors rounded out the program. Think about joining the group next year..

**All Social Studies teachers in Pennsylvania
are automatically members of PCSS.**



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.

S&S is pleased to announce that we have once again received funding to support our Bus schoolshipo Program.

Don't forget contact S&S about VIP Tours and Footlocjer program.

For more information visit our web site:

<https://soldiersandsailorshall.org>

Citizenship Challenge at Heinz History Center

[2019 Citizenship Challenge](#)

Now is the time to get your 4th or 5th grade class involved! Our submission deadline is November 15, 2019.

This Year's Challenge Question: The Founding Fathers are considered to be brilliant in relation to the government they created. **Which part of the Bill of Rights, do you think is the most important and continues to exert the greatest impact on Americans today?**

The Rendell Center looks forward to receiving your 2019 submission.. If you have any questions or need additional guidance, please email me directly at bspecker@rendellcenter.org. Email me for lessons to help you begin your discussions.

World War I Database

The National World War I Museum in Kansas City is fabulous! But even if you don't live near there, you can access their database of primary source documents, use the museum lesson plans, and/or subscribe to the educator newsletter. Find all of these at: <https://www.theworldwar.org/learn/educators-students>

National Council for the Social Studies and National Council for Geographic Education (combined). Nov. 22-24.

This year, the National Council for the Social Studies is combining with the National Council for Geographic Education and the Texas Council for the Social Studies to put on a mega-conference! There are wonderful sessions, speakers, and an exhibition hall where I spend hours browsing each year (in addition to other hours helping run a booth!). The conference is from November 22-24 in **Austin, TX** (with pre-conference clinics on November 21). For more information and registration, go to: <https://www.socialstudies.org/conference>



You can't expect to communicate with anyone if you're a bore.

John Cheever, writer

The Point

For

Western Pennsylvania
Social Studies Educators

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The Point is the
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WPCSS was a non-profit 501c
organization dedicated to promoting
the teaching and learning of social
studies in Western Pennsylvania

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Study: How to support black, male students

African American male students enrolled in a California high-school, culturally supportive program show improved on-time graduation rates, according to a study by researchers at Stanford University and the University of California at Irvine. The program -- part of the Oakland Unified School District's African American Male Achievement initiative -- includes courses taught by black, male teachers with a focus on black history and culture, and offers personalized career and college guidance.

Why these schools assign seats in the cafeteria

The University School of Milwaukee in Wisconsin has a longstanding policy of randomly assigning students to a table of eight at lunch, a move that helps counteract the development of lunchtime cliques. Another local public elementary school started using this method a few years ago and found it curbed problems with bullying. [WUWM-FM \(Milwaukee\) \(text and audio\) \(10/24\)](#)

Ideas to boost student engagement in lessons

Teachers can help increase student engagement in lessons by identifying the topics and interests that resonate with students, Rann Miller writes. Miller also suggests teachers can liven up content students perceive as dry by making it culturally relevant or connecting it to real-world scenarios. [Edutopia \(10/22\)](#)

Political Cartoon Analysis: Understanding Brexit

With the deadline looming for the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, this new *Teaching with the News* lesson on Brexit helps students understand the arguments supporting and opposing the United Kingdom's membership in the EU using an analysis of political cartoons.

Use This Free Lesson

Gaps in teaching remain for students with dyslexia

Scientists and educators know a lot more now about dyslexia and how to help students with the condition, but instructional gaps persist, experts say. Studies indicate that a lack of specialized teaching causes some students with dyslexia to become discouraged and drop out of school.

[Asheville Citizen-Times \(N.C.\) \(tiered subscription model\) \(10/14\)](#)

Life starts all over again when it gets crisp in the fall.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, writer

Effort to help teachers educate students on voting

A nonpartisan voter registration program launched by former first lady Michelle Obama is expanding to focus on encouraging students to vote. The "My School Votes" initiative -- part of "When We All Vote" -- will offer plans to organize voter registration drives, lesson plans and training for educators. Education Week (tiered subscription model) (10/24)



Students build website to promote US history lessons

Del Mar Times (Calif.) (10/24)

A trio of Torrey Pines High school students hopes to make learning U.S. history more user-friendly and interesting by creating their own website that uses visuals and images to tell the story of America. The educational website called Pictoria (learnushistory.org) invites students to click and learn about the past at their own pace, done as an independent summer project by Long Tran, Anthony Chen and Ly Tran.



Slavery, African American history added to some national parks

Some parks managed by the National Park Service are starting to offer more exhibits and presentations about slavery and African American history, a move that is sparking push-back by some critics. Caroline Janney, a University of Virginia historian, says more honest portrayals of US history can be helpful in confronting "those ugly parts of our past." USA Today (10/16)



Resources to help students learn about impeachment

Tech & Learning online (10/16)

Yup. You're gonna have to talk about it. 22 impeachment resources that can help
By Glenn Wiebe 10 days ago

If you're not having classroom conversations about both current events and political issues focused on impeachment, you're probably doing it wrong.



Curriculum revised to help Pa. students spot fake news

The Morning Call (Allentown, Pa.) (10/15)

The next time you aren't sure whether a statement in a news story is a fact or opinion, you might want to ask an East Penn eighth-grader.

In revising the middle school and high school social studies curriculum, East Penn teachers are including lessons showing students how to analyze a news story or other media reports for bias and to fact-check stories.



Never say 'no' to adventures. Always say 'yes,' otherwise you'll lead a very dull life. Ian Fleming, writer, journalist, British naval intelligence officer

From. **CHOICES** • • •

Free videos explore life during the French Revolution

Choices recently uploaded fifteen new videos to our website! Brown University historian Joel Revill discusses life in pre-revolutionary France, dissatisfaction with the Old Regime, and the roles various people played in the Revolution. The videos are a great addition to our curriculum unit, *The French Revolution*.

WATCH THE VIDEOS

Why did some people support the revolution and others oppose it?

What role did ordinary people play in the French Revolution?



A new approach to social studies

Social studies teachers in the Baldwin-Whitehall School District say they're concerned that they aren't preparing students to be contributing citizens. Social studies is often taught as one class, but it covers a broad range of topics. It's an area of education in Pennsylvania that's not assessed by standardized tests. Sarah Schneider reports [that's why educators wanted to change their approach to the class this year](#).



Minn. teacher uses Trump rally as civics lesson

A middle-school teacher in Minnesota secured media passes for several of his students to cover President Donald Trump's political rally last week. Teacher Mark Westpfahl says the event offered a unique opportunity for students to learn about civics first-hand. [Minnesota Public Radio/text and audio \(10/11\)](#),

 [KARE-TV \(Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn.\) \(10/11\)](#)



How to Talk "Taboo" Topics with Young Students

While conversations with students on difference and inclusion are not always easy, it's never too early to start building their comfort level to wrestle with topics like race, gender and stereotypes.

Pa. officials help high-schoolers become voters

Elected officials in Luzerne County, Pa., recently visited a local high school to help students register to vote. Meredith Recek, a social studies teacher at Dallas High School who helped set up the event, said the act of registering to vote -- and casting a ballot next month -- ties into the civics and history students have learned in class. [WOLF-TV \(Wilkes-Barre, Pa.\) \(10/1\)](#)

District navigates lessons on climate change, social topics

The Spokesman-Review (Spokane, Wash.) (free content) (9/29)

During (the Spring) [climate strike](#) in downtown Spokane, students weren't shy about sharing what they've learned about climate change.

Kids as young as 15 cited statistics and historical trends on everything from increasing carbon dioxide emissions to the extinction of animal species.



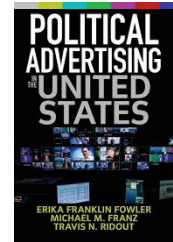
Teacher uses green screen tech to engage students

A middle-school teacher in Michigan is using green screen technology in classroom lessons. Ninoska Wiltse uses the technology in history classes to "embed" students in different places and times and says the green screen better engages students. [C&G Newspapers \(Warren, Mich.\)](#) (10/1)



How political ads can teach deeper civics lessons

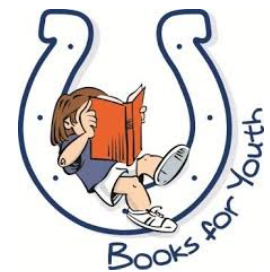
Students can research issues and write 30-second political commercial to learn how media messaging works in campaigns, writes media literacy educator Frank Baker. In this blog post, Baker outlines what a lesson could look like and describes what students can learn about civics and advertising. [MiddleWeb](#) (10/21)



What teachers can learn from reading what students read

[Edutopia](#) (10/22)

I began reading newly released books so that I might recommend them to my eighth-grade students or add them to our middle school English curriculum, but what emerged was a powerful form of professional development. The books reflected challenges faced by my students and reminded me of what was important to them. Books written for students offer windows into their lives and help me understand the variety of complex emotions and challenges experienced by adolescents in the modern era.



Cellphone pouches limit classroom distractions

Students at a California high school during class are storing their phones in special pouches designed to help limit digital distractions. Teachers say the method, implemented this year, limits their policing of classroom phone use. [Berkeleyside \(Berkeley, Calif.\)](#) (10/8)



5 tips to help students generate questions in class

[MiddleWeb](#) (5/27)

Why don't students ask more questions in school? The short answer is that most students believe it's their job to answer, not ask, questions.

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Closing the early education gap for rural families

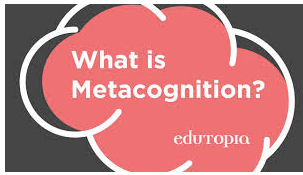
Tammy Williams

Approximately one in five Americans live in rural areas, and, according to the Center for American Progress, [59% of rural areas](#) are defined as "child care deserts." This term refers to areas that have fewer available child care spots than there are children in need of them. Even more concerning, there's no guarantee that those available spots even offer high-quality preschool instruction.



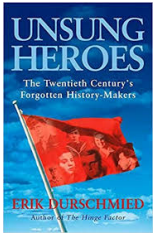
If it's not scary, everyone else would do it.

Ina Garten, cookbook author,



To Maximize Group Work, Make It Metacognitive

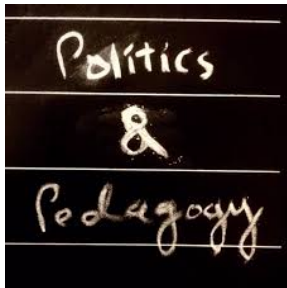
Teachers and educational researchers agree: Meaningful peer interactions fuel learning. The outdated model of a silent classroom as a sign of learning is long gone. Instead, teachers and school leaders listen for the hum and buzz of students as they explain ideas, justify their thinking, pose questions to one another, and make decisions with classmates. We have a colleague who calls this use of academic language "productive noise," as opposed to the chatter of a disengaged class.



Why we need to teach about history's "unsung heroes"

Edutopia online (4/19)

History is mainly written as though all contributions were made by the few great figures we all know about, but they were also made by thousands of people sometimes called unsung heroes—people who have contributed to our society but are not discussed much.



Why Pedagogy and Politics Must Partner

Five years ago, we started to work with education systems on "deep learning." We did this partly because increasing numbers of students were bored with regular schooling—as many as 70 percent were disengaged.

However, we also found that the world was becoming increasingly troubled because of climate change, an unclear and diminished job market, growing inequity, increased anxiety and stress, wild and unpredictable technology, deterioration of trust, increased inequity, and crumbling social cohesion.

Making School Safe



It's hard for students to learn if they don't feel known and protected. Security is about emotional as well as physical safety, say the educators in [this issue](#). They explain how schools skillfully address incidents or threats of violence, stay responsive to the needs of students suffering from trauma, build comprehensive support systems, and create spaces that affirm all students' identities and experiences



Using Community Ideas to Shape the Vision for a Career Superhighway

Setting an effective vision for the future is a tricky business. It has to start with a kernel of an idea but allow sufficient space for the community to develop it into an organic representation of the desired future state.

I don't want life to imitate art. I want life to be art.

Carrie Fisher, actress, writer

Government Funded Study Abroad

Tell your students (and other teenagers you know)

The U.S. Department of State-offers some funded study abroad programs for high school students that are U.S. citizens. NSLI-Y is a program to encourage students to learn a critical language – in this case, Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Korean, Persian (Tajik), Russian, or Turkish. Students should start thinking/applying now for summer 2020 or academic year 2020-2021 programs. (Students can even do a summer program just AFTER their high school graduation.) Applications aren't due until Oct. 30, but the application process is lengthy, and students need plenty of time to discuss this with their parents. Not only is the travel-study experience itself a life-changing event for participants, but those students afterwards have further opportunities for scholarships, careers, and participation in other U.S. government-funded programs. Check out all the information and materials at: <https://www.nsliforyouth.org/> - Be sure to click on all the boxes in the green section at the top of the page.

Resources for Educators:

K-12 teachers: CMES lesson plans has a SEARCH ENGINE. Also, find background sheets, film guides, Youtube lectures, book lists - for all grade levels. New high school lesson: "Migrations across Morocco."

Pulitzer Center for Global Educators – Facebook page sharing resources.

Excellent K-12 teacher-created lessons on geography (with literature, history, and/or STEM overlap).

K-12 book awards for multi-cultural literature

a. Middle East book awards – and information on the educators' group that gives awards.

b. K-12 book awards in other world areas, including a "new" (to me) East and Southeast Asia book award.

Free classroom sets of books of your choice for teachers/librarians. From Qatar Foundation International.

The Great Thanksgiving Listen

NCSS is proud to partner with StoryCorps to present *The Great Listen*, a national project empowering young people to create an oral history of their elders using the free StoryCorps App. [Read more.](#)

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Social studies is changing. Why aren't your instructional materials?

Social Studies education is changing rapidly. With new frameworks and state mandates paving the way for social studies as an essential discipline, reimagined with inquiry, inclusion, and civic-mindedness at its core, cutting down on social studies minutes and resources is **NOT** an option. Standards and legislation are demanding more. Districts are expecting more. The onus is falling on teachers to do more. So why aren't we asking more of our instructional materials?

You can put things off until tomorrow but tomorrow may never come.
Gloria Estefan, Cuban-American singer, songwriter, businesswoman