

The POINT!

E-Letter for Western Pennsylvania Social Studies Educators
Vol. 13 No. 12
December 2020



The 2020 National Council for the Social Studies Conference is virtual this year and PCSS wants as many Pennsylvania educators to attend as possible. Scholarships are available for first timers attending the conference (see below).

2021 marks 100 years of NCSS service to social studies teachers, administrators, and professionals.

To celebrate this moment in the history of social studies education, NCSS is planning a year-long experience of signature events, **starting with its first-ever NCSS Virtual Conference: Advancing Social Justice from December 4-6, 2020.** The American Bar Association's Division for Public Education and the National Council for Geographic Education are partnering with NCSS, the Virtual Conference to provide innovative learning online for social studies educators of all levels and disciplines.

Registration Rates

Members

- Regular Registration \$175
- Student Registration \$80
- Retired Registration \$95

Registration Rates

Non-Members

- Regular Registration \$265
- Student Registration \$150

NCSS has a First Timers Scholarship Fund. So far, NCSS has raised enough money for 20 scholarships for early career social studies teachers who have never been able to attend NCSS.

[Here is the link to the FTS application](#) for all applicants. **NCSS has extended the deadline to Sunday Nov 22** for the online application.

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, like all places where people congregate, is not open to the public at this time. Please visit on line: soldiersandsailorshall.org



ClassroomS Without Borders

Menachem Begin: Peace and War"

Thursday, December 3, 2020 • 3 PM Eastern Time

Zoom | [Click here for more information](#)

RSVP to receive a link to the film prior to the discussion.

[RRSVP HERE](#)

From Fredrick Douglass to Ta-Nehisi Coates:

An educators' workshop series exploring race using texts as a window into history with Susan Stein

Join us for the second session in this series:

On Slavery: Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, Huck Finn

ALL LEARNERS ARE WELCOME

Wednesday, December 9

4:00PM Eastern Time

Zoom | [Click here for more information](#)Interfaith Clergy

Panel Discussion

[RRSVP HERE](#)

Resilience and Miracles in Judaism, Christianity and Islam

Moderated by Imam Jihad Turk, founding President and Dean of Bayan Islamic Graduate School Thursday,

December 10, 2020

4 PM Eastern Time

Zoom | [Click here for more information](#)

Join us in Israel- virtually!

[RRSVP HERE](#)



I invent nothing, I rediscover.

Auguste Rodin, sculptor

The Point

For
Western Pennsylvania
Social Studies Educators
EDITORS
Leo R. West
John Lerner

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

Leo West
11533 Clematis Blvd.
Pittsburgh, PA 15235-3105

Teacher: Poet's visit is highlight for online class

Remote learning has caused Neema Avashia, an eighth-grade civics teacher in Boston, to shift from a traditional curriculum to going deeper into issue-based units. In this blog post, educators offer some highlights of the school year, including Avashia sharing how a tweet prompted poet Danez Smith to join her class on Zoom to discuss poetry for a unit on resistance. **Full Story:** Education Week Teacher (tiered subscription model) (11/11)

Teacher: Social media habits affect students' writing

Students' use of social media is affecting their academic work -- including using "social media speak" in classwork -- according to Lauren Gehr, an English teacher at a South Carolina high school. In this article, Gehr shares tech tools to help students drop certain habits from their work, such as abbreviating words, using slang and writing too quickly. **Full Story:** eSchool News (free registration)

Teacher: Why students need to learn news literacy

Students are prepared to get behind the wheel and navigate busy roads but not to navigate a complicated information superhighway, writes Liz Ramos, who teaches history and US government at a California high school. In this commentary, Ramos writes that the most recent US election has highlighted the importance of teaching news literacy in schools so students learn to think critically and be informed, engaged citizens. **Full Story:** EdSurge (11/7)

Teacher: 7th-graders model respectful political debates

A class of middle-schoolers recently engaged in respectful discussions about the election without devolving into unkind rhetoric, writes seventh-grade teacher Eric Stinton. Writing about the experience in this commentary, Stinton suggests the possibility that the nation's adults could follow students toward "restorative unity." **Full Story:** Honolulu Civil Beat (11/15)

Pa. teacher encourages students to aim high

Being a Black man who teaches English-language arts makes Stephen Flemming a role model for many of his students, who see themselves, their futures and career choices differently. In this interview, Flemming shares why he allows students to turn off their cameras and how he encourages them to exceed others' expectations to reach their personal goals. **Full Story:** Chalkbeat/Philadelphia (11/16)



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dream
BIG
← ←
aim
HIGH

How to ask better questions in remote lessons

Educators are challenged during remote teaching to inspire students to go beyond instant internet searches and develop critical thinking skills, author and former educator Barbara Blackburn writes in this article. Blackburn outlines the FIRE model of questioning and explains cubing and other strategies that can be effective with virtual learning. **Full Story:** MiddleWeb (11/2)



Teachers walk fine line during election

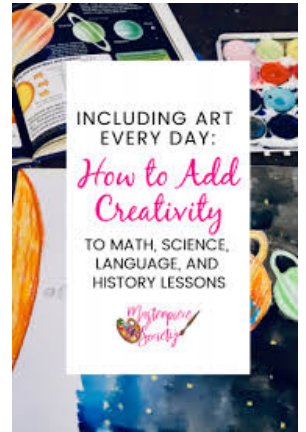
The divisive election season has some teachers reluctant to discuss the political process with their students or incorporate it into lessons. Jeffrey Knutsen, a senior producer at the nonprofit Common Sense Media, suggests telling younger students to just "go and be a kid," and for older ones, "leverage their interest to have conversations about democracy and what civil discourse means." **Full Story:** EdSurge (11/2)



Teachers explain adding art to core-subject lessons

Three teachers from a New Jersey middle school recently teamed to share how to integrate art into core topics, with lessons including Geometric Cities, the Doll Proportionality Project, Symbolic Book Covers and Screenplay Performances. Students enjoy lessons more when they incorporate art and creativity, the teachers said. **Full Story:** TAPinto/Clark, N.J. (11/2) Westward Expansion: A New History

Innovative lessons in this unit include analyzing a Kiowa legend as an historical source, examining a Supreme Court decision on the status of Indians in the United States, "reading" O'odham calendar sticks to contrast local history with the wider history of the Americas, and an image analysis lesson of a popular portrayal of westward expansion. The Perspectives Activity looks at the effects of westward expansion on various groups in Arizona in 1871. [Explore the unit](#)



Connections made as Ala. students explore history

Students in Alabama's Tuscaloosa Central High School are asked to act as historians doing research in a History of Us class. Designed by University of Alabama Professor John Giggie and a graduate student, the class is a first of its kind in the district and challenges the high-schoolers to make personal connections to history through research of sources including newspapers, databases and a genealogy website. **Full Story:** WBHM-FM (Birmingham, Ala.) (11/9)

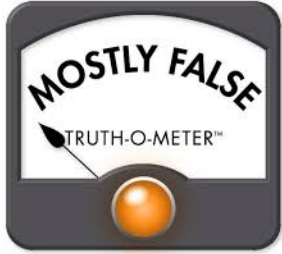


Here's every cover page of the *Washington Post* on the day after election day, since 1880.



Videos to Improve Judgment Online

Want to learn how to judge fact from fiction online? Interested in teaching your students to do the same? Our Civic Online Reasoning videos show how fact checkers evaluate digital information and how educators are teaching their students these strategies



[How Smart People Read Online ≠ How Fact Checkers Read Online](#)

What makes fact checkers expert internet sleuths? Lateral reading. [This video](#) demonstrates how to read less online in order to learn more.

[How to Use Wikipedia Wisely](#)

You might have heard that you can't trust anything on Wikipedia. If that's the case, then why do professional fact checkers often use it? [In this video](#), we break down the basics of how to use Wikipedia wisely.

[Fact checkers scan search results](#) before making a decision of where to click. This yields better information sooner.

[Watch a teacher](#) use a Civic Online Reasoning lesson to teach students lateral reading.

[Hear from students and teachers](#) as they describe how the Civic Online Reasoning curriculum helps them sort fact from fiction on the internet.

[Browse all videos](#)

Teaching Young Children Remotely

Young children need social interaction, self-determination, and play to learn. But in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, how does that translate to online learning? Psychologist and professor Wendy Ostroff suggests strategies and tips for engaging our youngest learners remotely in Educational Leadership.



Teacher who is Native American pens novel for students

English and Cherokee studies high-school teacher Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle says she may be the only published novelist among the 14,000 members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. In this interview, Clapsaddle says she wrote "Even As We Breathe" with characters that her students -- 30% of whom are Native American -- might know because they are rarely able to relate to characters in books. **Full Story:** National Public Radio (11/23)



US poet laureate who is Native American gets third term

Joy Harjo, who in 2019 made history as the first Native American to become the US poet laureate, will become only the second person to serve a third, one-year term, starting in September 2021, according to the Library of Congress. A Muscogee (Creek) Nation member, Harjo's immersive "Living Nations, Living Words" project uses audio and an interactive story map to share the work of 47 Native Nations poets. **Full Story:** Insight Into Diversity (11/20)



SURVEY

All K-12 teachers of all content areas are invited to participate in a survey of their teaching and discussion of difficult social and historical topics for a research project being conducted by Dr. Scott Metzger and Melissa Stanley at The Pennsylvania State University. The objective of this study is to better understand how teachers, students, and school communities respond to the teaching and discussion of difficult knowledge and how contexts may influence teachers' educational choices. To take this survey, follow this link: <https://tinyurl.com/SHIEDTopics>

If you have any questions, please contact the researchers at SHIED@psu.edu
Best, • Melissa Stanley • Social Studies Education • Doctoral Research Assistant
• Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Education Initiative • 258 Chambers Bldg.



National Constitution Center

Article I: How Congress Works: The Legislative Branch

Monday, November 30 and Wednesday, December 2

- [Middle School Session – 12 p.m ET](#)
- [High School and College Session – 2 p.m. ET](#)

Friday, December 4

Fun Friday session with Congresswoman **Mary Gay Scanlon**, member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Pennsylvania, joins Center President and CEO **Jeffrey Rosen** to explore Article I of the Constitution, which defines the powers of Congress.

- [All Ages Session – 1 p.m. ET](#)

Article II: The President and the Executive Branch

Visit the [Article II Classroom Resource Page](#), where you can watch a [recording of the Article II Scholar Exchange](#) and explore other educational materials on the presidency and presidential power.

III – From Judicial Selection to Current Cases

Monday, December 14 and Wednesday, December 16

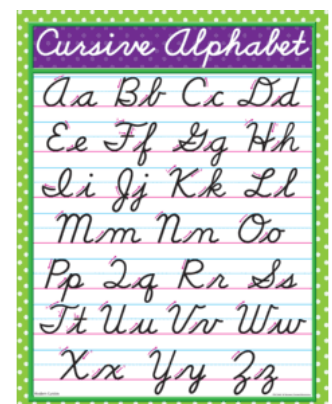
- [Middle School Session – 12 p.m ET](#)
- [High School and College Session – 2 p.m. ET](#)

Friday, December 18

- [All Ages Session – 1 p.m. ET](#)

Should students learn cursive to sign their names?

Voters are expected to sign -- not print -- their names when casting their ballots, says Nancy Talbot, a town clerk in Massachusetts. The state's English Language Arts and Literacy Curriculum Framework calls for fourth- and fifth-graders to know how to sign their names in cursive but the framework is a guideline for districts to decide whether to teach the skill, says Jacqueline Reis, spokesperson for the Department of Early and Secondary Education. **Full Story:** [Telegram & Gazette \(Worcester, Mass.\) \(tiered subscription model\) \(10/24\)](#)



World Cultures

Hindu Celebration of Diwali



Diwali is known as the “Festival of Lights” and is a Hindu holiday widely celebrated in India and across the Hindu Diaspora. The word Diwali derives from Sanskrit meaning “a row of lights” and clay lamps or diyas are lit to signify the destruction, through knowledge, of all negative qualities. In other words, Diwali celebrates the victory of good over evil.

And this year, HAF is proud to release our updated and improved **Diwali Toolkit** so celebrations can align with Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

This interactive and classroom-ready toolkit features resources and lesson plans which include:

- **Diwali Factsheet • The Origins of Diwali • Pre-K - 3rd Grade**
- **Draw Your Own Rangoli**

Election aftermath leads students to bigger questions

- Teaching in the aftermath of the election earlier this month has no comparison to the past, says Bill Polasky, a high-school social studies teacher in Illinois. Polasky, among other teachers commenting in this blog post, shares that the situation has brought up bigger questions for students to explore regarding elections and what defines a democratic republic. **Full Story:** Education Week Teacher (tiered subscription model) (11/22)

Opinion: Civics education is about more than voting

Civics education needs to help students understand that part of the population will be disappointed by the results of any given election, writes Frederick Hess, director of education policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute and a former social studies teacher. In this commentary, Hess writes the recent political events remind him that civics education must go beyond voting and protests to stress the importance of respect for US democratic traditions. **Full Story:** Forbes (tiered subscription model) (11/23)

Educators rethink traditional story of Thanksgiving

Educators across the US are taking a hard look at how and what students are taught about the history of Thanksgiving, often told by focusing on the white Pilgrims and false narratives about the feast. While tribes and advocates say progress is being made with honest lessons and more conversations about racism, they say standards are needed for education about Indigenous cultures, history and modern life, including the devastation caused to Native American communities by the coronavirus pandemic. **Full Story:** The Associated Press (11/23)

NCSS Urges Congress to Provide \$12 Billion to Schools and Libraries

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) is a member of the "Homework Gap Coalition," which represents many education and related organizations working together to increase funding for students and teachers without access to technology and Internet connectivity - both critical needs as more schools continue to function partially or fully online.

