

The POINT!

E-Letter for Western Pennsylvania Social Studies Educators
Vol. 14 No. 1
January 2021



History Happened and is Happening Here!

The Vegas brag about “What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas!” is simply not true. And it really has not been true for any locality. Because textbooks try to cater to a large audience, local history is often by-passed, leading to ignorance of the importance of their own area in the past and present.

Textbooks have always been prejudiced. The New England Puritans brought in the first printing press to spread the gospel. Idleness was sinful so the printers began to turn out text books. Thus the Pilgrims became our original settlers and the first Thanksgiving was held in Plymouth with neighboring Native Americans as honored guests.

New England was the center of most publishing companies until the mid-twentieth century. As book companies united and became part of huge corporate bodies, they looked to marketing for guidance and large population states soon dictated the content of most history texts. **As we begin the second decade of the 21st century, a question arises about how much of the past is included in the study of history. 180 days minus delayed starting times, fire and shooter drills, and of course test preps, it has always been difficult just to get to the 20th century in American History, not to mention world history and cultures. Somewhere there must be room for local history, and geography and include the 20th century.**

The Pittsburgh region has been the center of action over most of the life of the United States. Early settlement and exploration led to clashes with the French and Indians, the early republic and the Whiskey Rebellion. Here also saw the rise of transportation and industry. Sand deposits led to glass works and coal fields to the iron and steel industry. Boat yards lined the rivers. Railroads connected the country through Pittsburgh and supplied the goods and services needed everywhere. Immigrants filled the demand for labor and swelled the population. Every student has roots in Western Pennsylvania and should have the opportunity to gather information about their home town.



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



Chief Justice Roberts Highlights Need for Civics

We started 2020 with the Civics Edition of *TSSP*. Chief Justice Roberts delivered his 2019 Year-End Report on the Federal Judiciary in which he focused on the need for better civic education. He pointed to the work of two NCSS partners, iCivics and the National Constitution Center, as effective civic learning partners. [Read the 2019 report.](#)



Teaching About Racism, Anti-Racism, & Human Rights

2020 highlighted the need to educate students about the topics of racism, anti-racism, and human rights. To help you continue the conversation, use NCSS' racism, anti-racism, and human rights resource page in 2021 to help ensure students are prepared to face these topics.

[Access the page.](#)



NCSS SPA Reviewer Training:

2017 NCSS Standards Jan 15, 2021 3:00 PM ET

NCSS offers a review process specific to meeting national standards for each specialty licensure area. If you are interested in learning more about this process and how you can become a peer-reviewer volunteer for NCSS, register for this free webinar. [Register.](#)



Free Website To Teach Media Literacy

Newscompare takes snapshots of major media outlets every hour, and lines them up side-by-side, making it easy to teach media literacy. Try it for yourself at: newscompare.com



[Teachers tap social media to counter Zoom fatigue](#)

Students' Zoom fatigue is leading teachers to employ social media for some virtual lessons as a fresh way to engage students. From imparting lessons via TikTok and Instagram to utilizing the popular "Among Us" mobile game, several teachers explain the ways they've made remote learning feel new again. **Full Story:** MIT Technology Review (tiered subscription model) (12/12)



The Point

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

The Point is the
e-newsletter
of the former WPCSS
issued monthly via e-mail.

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



VectorStock



Racial Slavery in the Americas: Resistance, Freedom, and Legacies

Provides a wide-ranging overview of racial slavery in the Americas and explores how the past shapes the present. Free in Digital Editions through 9/30/2021. [Explore the unit](#)

Black tour guides focus on honesty in Ga. history

Black tour guides, historians and workers of some museums and historic sites in Savannah, Ga., have reworked how and what they teach about slavery. While some online reviews written by tourists have been critical of the shift in how slavery is addressed, leaders of the tours say they focus on the truth, including Patt Gunn, CEO and founder of a tour company that hires Gullah Geechee, descendants of enslaved people of coastal Georgia and South Carolina, to share their history. **Full Story:** [The Washington Post \(tiered subscription model\) \(11/26\)](#)

Neb. high-schoolers share poetic dreams for America

A creative writing class of high-school English students are putting their views of America into words as a way to cope with national turmoil, with the poetry of Langston Hughes as a model. Nebraska teacher Mariah Reicks has led students outside to find inspiration from the environment and create odes to respect, acceptance and the diversity of dreams. **Full Story:** [Lincoln Journal Star \(Neb.\) \(tiered subscription model\) \(12/9\)](#)

Pa. district adds high-school class on world religions

Next year's junior and senior students in the Carlisle Area School District in Pennsylvania will have the opportunity to learn about the connections among world religion to identity, culture and economics. The district's school board has approved a pilot of the yearlong elective to study the academics of world religions, says high-school history teacher Kevin Wagner, who helped develop the course. **Full Story:** [The Sentinel \(Carlisle, Pa.\) \(12/11\)](#)

Mini quilts stitch together local history

Miniature quilts adorned with hand-stitching and found-object appliques help share the history of life in 72 Berks County, Pa., municipalities. Fiber artist Martha Ressler, whose 87 5-by-7-inch quilts are displayed in picture frames, points out objects and the stories they tell, such as the badge worn by mine workers. **Full Story:** [Reading Eagle \(Pa.\) \(free content\) \(12/15\)](#)

What do we live for, if it is not to make life less difficult to each other?

George Eliot, writer, poet

U.S. Senate Proposes \$1 Billion in Civic and History Education

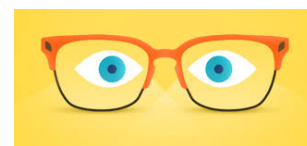
As follow-up to our previous legislative alert on Constitution Day, we are delighted to let you know that Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) and Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) introduced the bipartisan Educating for Democracy Act of 2020 yesterday, Monday, November 30. This is a measure to significantly increase a federal level investment in civic and history education. This is the Senate companion bill to the U.S. House version of the Educating for Democracy Act which was introduced on Thursday, September 17 by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK).



Report offers tips to improve virtual learning

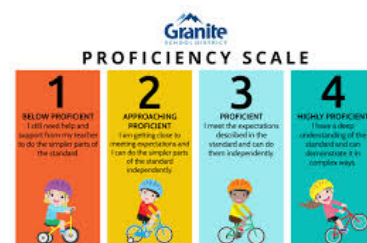
A report shows that remote learning is here to stay because of the coronavirus pandemic and suggest ways to make it better, such as connecting all learners, supporting teachers and building relationships. The report suggests that schools use both asynchronous and synchronous learning, providing individual help and monitoring student disengagement and equity.

Full Story: [EdSurge \(11/25\)](#)



Are you progressing toward learning and achievement?

Measuring student progress and designing instruction to maximize it can be challenging. That's why many districts are increasing their use of or are committing to proficiency scales. **Read this SmartFocus** to learn more about the benefits of proficiency scales and how to implement one in your school or district.



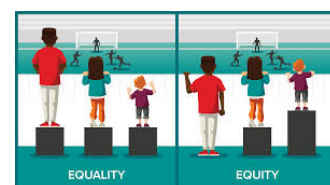
How augmented reality can help engage students

Augmented reality and virtual assistants can make education, especially for English language learners, more meaningful and tangible, educational technology coordinator Roberta Freitas said during a recent conference. Holographic features and 3D renderings are just a few of the features that have engagement potential for students. **Full Story:** [EdTech online \(12/7\)](#)



How the pandemic can improve education equity

The pandemic has teachers focusing more on the whole child, and recognizing that schools should be more accessible and equitable, writes consultant and veteran educator Becki Cohn-Vargas. Trends that could improve the future of education include strengthening relationships with and among students, using tech tools in project-based lessons, and tapping into community services to support students and families, Cohn-Vargas writes. **Full Story:** [Edutopia \(12/9\)](#)



I never decide if an idea is good or bad until I try it.

Rick Rubin, record producer



19th Amendment's 100th anniversary: 19 ways to teach it

"Suffrage Isn't 'Boring History.' It's a Story of Political Geniuses," a book by Jessica Bennett and Veronica Chambers, helps students better connect current events to the women's suffrage movement. Nineteen ideas for teaching more about the subject include a game to help students follow the road to ratification. **Full Story:** [The New York Times](#) (tiered subscription model) (9/17)



Navy captain to make history with carrier appointment

Capt. Amy Bauernschmidt is in line to become the first woman to command a US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier. In 2016, Bauernschmidt served as the first female executive officer on a nuclear carrier. **Full Story:** [Stars and Stripes](#) (tiered subscription model) (12/9), [Metro \(UK\)](#) (12/8)

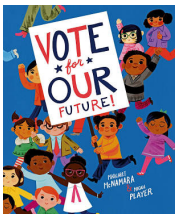
Could you pass the more rigorous US citizenship test?

The Trump administration has added more rigor to the US test for immigrants seeking US citizenship, adding 28 additional questions to the 100 that test-takers are required to study and increasing the number that must be answered correctly to pass. Though the actual test is given orally, this interactive quiz offers readers the chance to test their knowledge with multiple choice answers. **Full Story:** [The New York Times](#) (tiered subscription model) (12/3)



Educator teaches partisan students about elections

Blind devotion to candidates by middle-schoolers is something unfamiliar to veteran social studies teacher Greg Cruey. In this interview, Cruey explains how he navigates teaching about the presidential election in a poor, rural district in West Virginia, where he says he wants his sixth- through eighth-grade students to learn to research and think critically about conspiracy theories and rumors. **Full Story:** [The Washington Post](#) (tiered subscription model) (11/29)



History teacher shares 6 key facts about Pearl Harbor

The attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii had two parts, one of six key facts that students should know about the attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, according to Tim Miller, a high-school history teacher in Pennsylvania. In this interview, Miller shares this and other facts ahead of the anniversary of Dec. 7, 1941. **Full Story:** [Today](#) (12/1/20)



UN goals help 7th-graders develop passion projects

A library course in a Pennsylvania middle school is encouraging students to think about their passions and how those passions can help or honor other people. Librarian Aimee Emerson says students research their passions and explore how a project can apply to the UN's 17 global sustainability goals, with some students doing community service or raising money for causes, such as a student who built and sold tables made from fallen trees and donated the funds to a park in his grandmother's name. **Full Story:** [The Bradford Era \(Pa.\)](#) (12/11)



Pa. student teachers learn with veteran educator

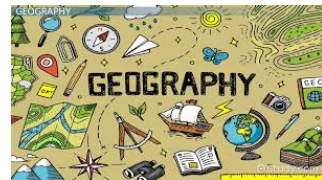
Everyone is learning in the classroom of veteran Sunbury, Pa., teacher Mark Cox, including the high-schoolers learning English, students teachers and Cox himself. A teacher for more than 28 years, Cox has made the shift to a tech-focused classroom to teach remote students while also holding meetings with two student teachers for feedback, assignment planning and to discuss teaching methods. **Full Story:** [The Daily Item \(Sunbury, Pa.\) \(12/2\)](#)

**Students learn US history through local context**

History lessons on difficult topics such as slavery and the Civil War are important for students to learn, especially where there is local context, educators and others in Tennessee say. Strategies suggested for lessons include the use of primary sources, such as newspapers and first-person accounts, and confronting the role of slavery in local and state history because it can "build empathy and understanding among our students," says Rachel Turner, an educator in the Hamilton County School District. **Full Story:** [The Tennessean \(Nashville\) \(tiered subscription model\) \(12/3\)](#)

**Survey: Teaching geography deepens student learning**

Sixty-two percent of US K-12 educators say they consider geography to be "extremely important," saying it deepens student learning across subjects, according to a recent National Geographic Society survey. In the poll, 74% of teachers say they use geography to teach other subjects, with one educator explaining how geography relates to all subjects because everything is "connected to a place," such as the creation of celadon porcelain glaze in ancient Korea. **Full Story:** [Forbes \(tiered subscription model\). \(12/1\)](#)

**A closer look at the pandemic's shifting geography**

The geographic scope of the coronavirus pandemic has evolved since March, with early outbreaks in metropolitan areas and hot spots later emerging in rural and exurban areas, as a Pew Research Center report shows. In a New York Times article, public health experts discuss the differences between dealing with the disease in cities and in areas with lower population density. **Full Story:** [Pew Research Center \(12/8\), The New York Times \(tiered subscription model\) \(12/10\)](#)

**Does music education boost student achievement?**

Results from a recent study indicate a correlation between musical skills and higher grades in math and reading. Researcher Martin Bergee says that these results aren't conclusive, but they do point to unexpected benefits of music education. **Full Story:** [Forbes \(tiered subscription model\) \(12/ , Psychology Today \(12/2\)](#)



Try to learn something about everything and everything about something. Thomas Huxley, biologist, anthropologist

School districts brace for workforce cuts

Aaron Bochniak, superintendent of a New York school system, says his district could be "the canary in the coal mine," after budget cuts related to the coronavirus pandemic prompted reductions to the workforce. Michael Griffith, a senior researcher at the Learning Policy Institute, predicts a nationwide education shortfall of \$246 billion -- approximately 18% of planned expenses. **Full Story:** [Reuters \(12/9\)](#)



Letters show lives of the poor in 19th-century England

The British Academy is set to publish letters written by members of 20 poor families starting in the early 19th-century that reveal skilled rhetoric used while seeking welfare payments. Researchers say the impoverished writers' correspondence uses powerful language despite a lack of literacy, using words like "nakedness" and "starvation" to appeal to overseers on moral grounds for financial support, especially for people with disabilities, while offering a view into their lives. **Full Story:** [The Guardian \(London\) \(12/20\)](#)



Why students struggle to spot "fake news"

Some studies indicate that students -- sometimes viewed as digital natives -- often have difficulty determining whether information found online is true. Washington Post columnist Jay Mathews writes about a study by researchers from Stanford University that found students have little to no training in how to read and fact-check information found on social media and other online platforms. [The Washington Post \(tiered subscription model\) \(11/17\)](#)



How to use inquiry-based lessons in social studies

Educators using the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework for Social Studies State Standards can use the Inquiry Arc strategy to help students investigate and answer a compelling question of social importance, writes Andrew Miller, an instructional coach at Shanghai American School. Miller discusses the Inquiry Design Model and how to incorporate project-based learning into the standards. [Edutopia online \(1/2\)](#)

Global learning is easy to foster. It starts with a question.

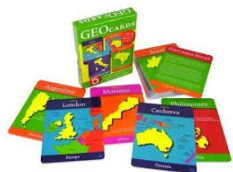
Preparing students for jobs that might not yet exist

Sixty-five percent of children who entered primary school in 2017 will one day hold jobs that do not currently exist, according to a World Economic Forum report. Heather McGowan, a future work strategist, says that the key to preparing students for those jobs lies in training them to learn for themselves rather than for transfer of knowledge.



Geography card game gets students excited about maps

A card game developed by a lawyer is being by some schools with third-through eighth-grade students to help them use maps, identify states and their capitals and other facts including when states entered the union. GeoPlunge inventor, Alan Fishel, is introducing a similar game on focused on history and historical figures. [Forbes \(6/8\)](#)



One day I will find the right words, and they will be simple. Jack Kerouac, poet