

The POINT!



E-Letter for Western Pennsylvania Social Studies Educators
Vol. 14 No. 5
May 2021

PCSS Plans Fall Conference

PCSS discussed tentative plans to schedule the 2021 fall conference as a traditional in-person October event in Harrisburg, pending CDC rulings over the summer. This could be a hybrid meeting with some members joining in via Zoom. Given school schedules and the shortage of substitute teachers, there may be problems getting teachers released, especially on Friday. There were several different options suggested including holding the conference on Saturday or even Monday, but no final schedule was made at this time. The planning committee is working to make the 2021 conference a success.

In addition, the local arrangements committee was formed to plan for the 2022 NCSS conference in Philadelphia

There is a beauty in discovery. There is mathematics in music, a kinship of science and poetry in the description of nature, and exquisite form in a molecule. Attempts to place different disciplines in different camps are revealed as artificial in the face of the unity of knowledge. All literate men are sustained by the philosopher, the historian, the political analyst, the economist, the scientist, the poet, the artisan and the musician. -Glenn T. Seaborg, scientist, Nobel laureate (19 Apr 1912-1999)

Soldiers & Sailors Hall!

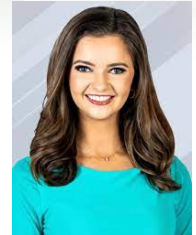
Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum houses a vast collection of primary and secondary documents and military artifacts. It is their mission to promote the use of these educational items and create an understanding for all groups who visit the museum. They provide a rich learning experience for all people by exploring the deeds and sacrifices of ordinary citizens during extraordinary circumstances.



McDonald native appointed to serve as Clarion University student trustee

Observer-Reporter

McDonald native Kathryn Robinson was recently appointed by Gov. Tom Wolf to serve as student trustee for Clarion University of Pennsylvania. She will serve as trustee until her May 2023 graduation.



2021 Summer Leadership Institute: Think Global Act Local July 12, 2021 - July 13, 2021

As COVID-19 continues to affect us globally and unite us in efforts to combat the pandemic, we have noticed the need to also reconnect locally to create meaningful contributions to our communities. This year's SLI will showcase ways to build strong connections between NCSS state, regional, and local councils and community organizations who share similar visions to advocate for and promote the social studies profession. Free for NCSS members with registration. **Register.**



City Nature Challenge

Observation: April 30–May 3

Identification: May 4–9

Using the free iNaturalist app, let's work together virtually with cities around the world to safely document biodiversity in whatever way we can, even at home or in our neighborhoods.

Join museum educator and certified ecologist, Jenise Brown, for a live virtual kick-off event on Friday, April 30: [4 p.m. on Facebook](#), [4:30 p.m. on Instagram](#).



Family Nature Walk at Powdermill

May 22, 2 p.m.

Powdermill Nature Reserve

Join us as we hit the trails for a guided nature walk! We'll meet in the atrium of the Powdermill Nature Center before heading outside to explore the beauty of a spring afternoon. This family-friendly experience is open to participants of all ages. Pre-registration is required as space is limited.



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

New certification programs aim to address teacher shortages in Pennsylvania

Penn State News

In an effort to help address teacher shortages in **Pennsylvania** in critical areas such as special **education**, English, **social studies** and math, Penn State ...

Report: Coronavirus likely to upend kindergarten

Schools should prepare for a kindergarten "bubble" caused by disruptions to learning during the coronavirus pandemic, according to a report released by NWEA. The report predicts more kindergartners will be enrolled and suggests educators prepare to accommodate children who may have had limited opportunities for learning and socialization. **Full Story:** K-12 Dive (4/13)

Laws proposed to limit teaching about racism, sexism

Lawmakers in eight states -- Idaho, Iowa, Louisiana, Missouri, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Rhode Island and West Virginia -- have proposed legislation that would restrict how teachers can address issues of racism and sexism in classroom discussions with students. Some of the bills appear similar to an executive order during President Donald Trump's administration that restricted training of federal workers on the same topics. **Full Story:** Education Week (4/15)

This Is What Democracy Looks Like | A Documentary

This documentary explores the black lives matter protests in May and June. Why is this protest different? Why is it so big compared to others? www.youtube.com



Festival celebrates comics creators of color

The Boston festival created by Comics in Color -- a community seeking to amplify the voices, artists and storytellers of color in the white-, male-dominated genre of comics and comic books -- will feature artists gathered in an open-air space, co-founder Cagen Luse says. The headliner, Boston native Keith Knight, will take fans behind the scenes of how three of his popular comic strips morphed into "Woke," the partially animated Hulu series about a cartoonist. **Full Story:** The Bay State Banner (Boston) (4/21)

There is also an artificial aristocracy founded on wealth and birth, without either virtue or talents... The artificial aristocracy is a mischievous ingredient in government, and provisions should be made to prevent its ascendancy. -Thomas Jefferson, third US president, architect, and author (13 Apr 1743-1826

Read" photos to help students boost critical thinking

Image analysis prompts students to linger longer on photos and other images to "read" what is being said and identify "fakery," writes Frank Baker, an education consultant and author of "Close Reading The Media." In this blog post, Baker writes that students can enhance their critical-thinking skills by answering questions, such as who took the photo, what message is conveyed and has it been altered, as well as engaging in various activities. **Full Story: MiddleWeb (3/16)**



A Response to Anti-Asian Harassment and Violence During COVID-19

In May 2020, NCSS issued a statement about Anti-Asian Harassment. At the time, NCSS sought to help educators confront the sad reality that "this is not the first time the United States has witnessed a surge of anti-Asian discrimination in a time of public health crisis." Now there is an urgent need to re-release and re-affirm this statement. Today, we reaffirm that anti-Asian harassment and violence is a systemic problem that cannot be tolerated in our civic life-- during and *beyond* COVID-19. Verbal and physical harassment, violence, hate, and racism toward Asians and Asian Americans clearly persists in daily American life.



Chinese Exclusion Act

In the spring of 1882, the **Chinese Exclusion Act** was passed by Congress and signed by President Chester A. Arthur. This **act** provided an absolute 10-year ...



Why you've never heard of the six Chinese men who survived ...

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/2018/04/19>

Apr 19, 2018 — That man would be one of six **Chinese passengers** who survived the **Titanic**, a little-known fact about the historic disaster that has largely ...



Can students protect themselves against misinformation?

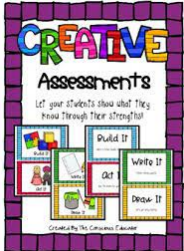
Teaching students how to verify information found online can provide "cognitive immunity" against misinformation circulating online and on social media, educators Gillian Mertens, Angela Kohnen and E. Wendy Saul write in this article. They write that students can learn about the traits of a generalist identity -- someone who is skeptical, curious and persistent -- and how students can become evaluators of age-appropriate information and misinformation found online. **Full Story: MiddleWeb**



Location of Tubman's teen-years Md. home discovered



An 1808 coin uncovered last fall with a metal detector led archaeologist Julie Schablitsky to the nearby spot in Maryland's Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge where abolitionist Harriet Tubman spent her teens and early 20s. Officials say the discovery of the coin, a button, bricks, pieces of pottery and other items are evidence of the household headed by Tubman's father, Ben Ross. **Full Story:** The Washington Post (tiered subscription model) (4/20)



Teacher's students choose creative assessment methods

Lack of engagement and falling grades during the pandemic led Wisconsin history teacher Matt Ramlet to put students in charge of explaining what they've learned. Ramlet and other teachers accept the limits of online learning and adapted lesson plans, with Ramlet assessing one student's growth, for example, based on a TikTok-crafted report. **Full Story:** Stevens Point Journal (Wis.) (4/22)

America' (n): A Creation Myth



"Perhaps America doesn't exist, or it shouldn't," writes Alan Palaez Lopez, an Afro-Indigenous poet, collage, and installation artist from Oaxaca, Mexico. In this excerpt from *Fantasy America*, The Warhol's latest book and a complement to the exhibition of the same name, the author examines how a history of violence, exploitation, and dispossession helped will the United States into existence.

Teaching for Positive Creativity



To confront the challenges facing the world today, students need to be creative in ways that critically evaluate an idea's constructiveness. In the latest issue of ASCD Express, Robert J. Sternberg and Sareh Karami unpack what cultivating positive creativity for students looks like in the classroom.

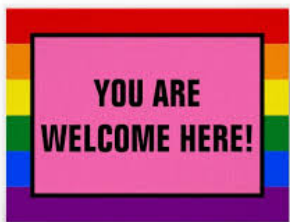
Planning Strategically for a Post-COVID World

When students, parents, and educators unite behind ideas for what the future might hold, the possibilities are endless. Educator and coach Isobel Stevenson shares what school communities will need to cultivate a fresh vision for schooling after the pandemic in the latest issue of ASCD Express.



Teachers share how they welcome LGBTQ students

LGBTQ high-schoolers at a California school are welcomed into an English classroom that is decorated with pride-themed classroom decor, says Jennica Leather, who highlights the importance of treating all people well. In this blog post by Larry Ferlazzo, Leather and others share inclusion strategies, including elementary-school teacher Jennifer Orr, who uses books, such as "The Misadventures of the Family Fletcher" about two dads with four sons, and a transgender girl's picture-book autobiography, "I Am Jazz." **Full Story:** Education Week Teacher (tiered subscription model) (4/11)



Teacher: Interruptions interfere with students' critical thinking

The Dallas Morning News (tiered subscription model) (4/11) 04:35

When I know my students have not done much original thinking about literature, I ask them to study Billy Collins' poem, "The History Teacher." The eponymous teacher tells his class: "The Spanish Inquisition was nothing more / than an outbreak of questions such as / 'How far is it from here to Madrid?' / 'What do you call the matador's hat?'"

He also tells students "the Enola Gay dropped one tiny atom on Japan." Why does the teacher distort history to his charges? To protect their innocence, we are told.

I ask my high school students to start by defining innocence. Most are ignorant of the fact one meaning of the word is "ignorance." Now we can ask what the point could be — for a teacher, for any adult — to cleanse a history lesson of the horrid ethical dilemmas that adhere to the real purpose and legacy of the Inquisition and to President Harry Truman's public explanation that Hiroshima was a Japanese military base (rather than a major city inhabited by civilians)

I sense we have made a real beginning; students edge their way into the dangerous, exciting questioning the poem invites.

Then we are interrupted by mandatory testing. Or scheduling for next year. Or videos created to encourage students to let nothing interrupt their focus and concentration. Learning is deferred, or lost.



Standardized testing poses one final hurdle for students, districts in Chester County

FOX 29 News Philadelphia

So, the **Pennsylvania** Department of **Education** is giving districts a choice to ... to be some deficits," said Octorara High School **social studies** teacher Adam Udell. Udell and the **Pennsylvania** State **Education** Association feel the U.S.



Districts look to maintain online schooling

Even amid the push to reopen schools, some families have come to prefer **online instruction during the coronavirus pandemic**. Several hundred districts have adopted virtual schools this school year, and researchers say **districts** are looking to maintain them in the years ahead. Full Story: The New York Times (4/11)



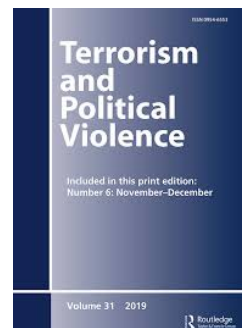
Restroom log helps identify struggling readers

It is critical to identify and support struggling readers in middle grades, asserts Seth Feldman, superintendent of the Bay Area Technology School in Oakland, Calif. In this blog post, Feldman shares how his school approaches this challenge, including by maintaining and monitoring a bathroom log to identify students who may be using the breaks to evade classroom lessons. Full Story: Education Week (4/11)



What teachers need to know about student radicalization

Teachers can help stem the radicalization of students by promoting **individual connections with students and incorporating diverse, real-life experiences across all subjects**, writes Amra Sabic-El-Rayess, a survivor of Muslim genocide blamed on Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic in the former Yugoslavia.





Va. town to research, document its Black history

A dearth of information about and recognition for the Black history of Culpeper, Va., has led to a town resolution encouraging the creation of a report about local achievements, such as a once-thriving Black business district and the estimated 120 men who fought in the Civil War. The study also will detail the work of individuals, such as a leader in the education of the community's Black students. **Full Story:** Culpeper Star-Exponent (Va.) (3/26)

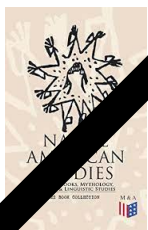
A look at continuing prejudice against Asian Americans

Anti-Asian hatred dates back centuries in the US, writes Jeff Chang, author of "We Gon' Be Alright: Notes on Race and Resegregation" and co-author of "Can't Stop Won't Stop: A Hip-Hop History (Young Adult Edition)." In this commentary, Chang examines the history of violence against Asian Americans that now includes the recent shootings in Atlanta-area spas. **Full Story:** The Washington Post (tiered subscription model) (3/22)



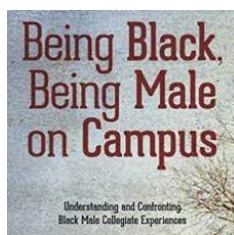
Bill requiring Native American studies fails in N.D.

A tie vote in the North Dakota House of Representatives led to the failure of a bill that would have required Native American studies in schools. Supporters said the bill would offer structure and nuance to teaching about Native American studies, while opponents said the subject is covered by many teachers in existing classes and expressed concern about more classes about more cultures. **Full Story:** Grand Forks Herald (N.D.) (tiered subscription model) (3/23)



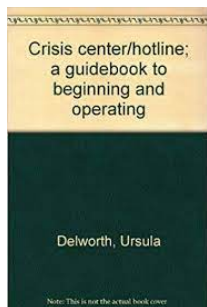
Opinion: How to better support Black male students

"Radical care" is needed to better support Black male students, write Tyrone Howard of the UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools and Jaleel Howard, a former English-language arts teacher in Texas. In this commentary, they offer guidance to help engage Black male students by creating an inclusive classroom, addressing racism and showing interest in their community. **Full Story:** Educational Leadership (March 2021)



Crisis center's book club aims for hard discussions

A virtual book club is being offered by a family crisis counseling center in Humble, Texas, as part of an effort to reach younger members of the community in a safe environment to discuss difficult topics and build healthy relationship skills and boundaries, says CEO Christina Allen. The meeting about the first book -- "The Hate U Give," by Angie Thomas -- was delayed because of severe weather in the state, Allen says in this interview. **Full Story:** Houston Chronicle (tiered subscription model) (3/4)



Life itself is the most wonderful fairy tale. Hans Christian Andersen, writer