

# The POINT!



E-Letter for Western Pennsylvania Social Studies Educators

Vol. 14 No. 8

August 2021

## Revisionism in History: A Parable

In 1960, conventional wisdom said Hannibal's elephants were of Indian origin. The best guess at the time was that Alexander the Great's army brought Indian elephants back to the Mediterranean area. The Phoenicians acquired some of these and Carthage was originally a Phoenician colony. Hannibal took elephants to Spain from Carthage and eventually through what is now France and over the Alps into Roman territory in Italy.

Recently, archaeologists found a coin with the likeness of Hannibal's father on one side and an elephant on the obverse. The elephants ears indicated it was not from India, but definitely African. Now a new guess. Perhaps elephants were still found around the Atlas Mountains in North Africa in 200 B.C.E.?

This also challenged or disproved the myth that African elephants could not be tamed. What to do? Do we continue to teach the errors of the past? History is continually updated. As new evidence is uncovered, the story changes and history is revised.

Leo West



**The  
ears  
mark  
them!**



*It is a time in which we will redefine what it means to be human, for this is not just the start of a revolution, it is the start of an evolution. David A. Sinclair, biologist, professor of genetics*

## 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

### Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh

[www.carnegiemuseums.org](http://www.carnegiemuseums.org)

Coming Soon: *Wild Life: Elizabeth Murray & Jessi Reaves* opens in the Heinz Galleries on Saturday, September 4, 2021! Bringing together the work of Elizabeth Murray (1940-2007) and Jessi Reaves (b. 1986), this traveling exhibition highlights how both artists—practicing generations apart—have critically engaged with the decorative, the domestic, and the bodily.

## NCSS Professional Development Monthly

### Civic Inquiries for Social Justice

Dan and Michael chat with Steven Camicia and Ryan Knowles about their new book titled, *Education for Democracy: A Renewed Approach to Civic Inquiries for Social Justice*. [Listen to it here.](#)

## NCSS: Engaging Teaching Strategies for Enhancing Student Inquiry

August 17, 2021 | 1 PM ET

Examine four instructional strategies that teachers can use to bring about deeper levels of questioning in their students, and in nurturing civic spaces and collaboration within their classrooms. [Register here.](#)

## NCSS: Advocating for LGBTQ Students

August 24, 2021 | 7 PM ET

This session will explore the current state of education for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) teachers and students locally and across the nation. Activities and discussions will center on current research and the impact of the marginalization of LGBTQ content in day-to-day instruction. [Register.](#)

## NCSS POD CASTS

### 2Visions of Education

[Ep.167: Teaching Genocides](#) [Ep.167: Teaching Genocides](#)

[Ep.166: Latinxs in U.S. History](#)

[Ep.165: Hard Questions: Learning to Teach Controversial Issues](#)

[Ep.164: Data Science in Education](#)

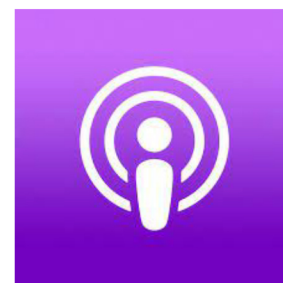
[Ep.163: The Making of Global Black Anti-Citizen/Citizenship](#)

[Ep.166: Latinxs in U.S. History](#)

[Ep.165: Hard Questions: Learning to Teach Controversial Issues](#)

[Ep.164: Data Science in Education](#)

[Ep.163: The Making of Global Black Anti-Citizen/Citizenship](#)



### **Educator: Some video games include civics**

People who play certain video games may engage in civics without knowing it, writes Karen Schrier, an associate professor and director of games and emerging media at Marist College in New York. In this article, Schrier explains that games such as Minecraft and Fortnite require tasks that are useful for solving problems, while Among Us, Plague Inc. and Animal Crossing involve societal dynamics. **Full Story:** [The Conversation \(7/7\)](#)

### **Biden: Teachers should be paid more**

In remarks to the National Education Association's annual meeting, President Joe Biden told teachers they "deserve a raise, not just praise." Biden said teachers' efforts during the coronavirus pandemic demonstrates they need higher pay. **Full Story:** [The Associated Press \(7/2\)](#), [Education Week](#)

### **How Google Workspace tools support teaching, learning**

The tools available via Google Workspace -- including Google Classroom, Google Docs and Google Slides -- aid teaching and learning both remotely and in person, according to Kathryn Nieves, an educational technology coordinator from New Jersey. In this article, Nieves shares how the tools help students access and complete their work while ensuring teachers have more time to offer individual feedback. **Full Story:** [Edutopia \(7/6\)](#)

### **AFT, NEA back teachers regarding critical race theory**

The American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association have pledged to defend teachers in the debate about critical race theory, saying educators must be honest and encourage students to think critically about the nation's history. "Mark my words: Our union will defend any member who gets in trouble for teaching honest history," AFT President Randi Weingarten said. **Full Story:** [The Washington Post \(tiered subscription model\) \(7/6\)](#), [The Associated Press \(7/6\)](#), [The 74 \(7/6\)](#), [Education Week \(7/6\)](#) [More educators stressed, quitting over diversity battles](#)

### **Critical race theory: What it is, what it isn't, and what it means for education in Pennsylvania**

[pennlive.com](http://pennlive.com)

Racial equality and race issues are a part of just about every school district curriculum, DiRocco said, whether those issues are incorporated into **social** ...

# The Point

For  
Western Pennsylvania  
Social Studies Educators

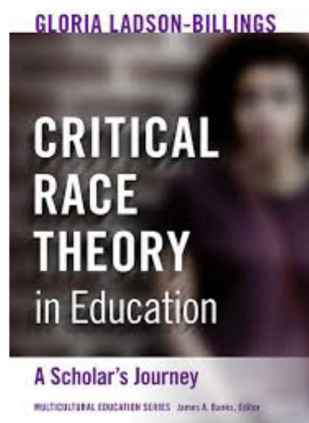
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## **Should states require citizenship tests for students?**

Events including the insurrection in Washington, D.C., violence during protests and a divisive presidential campaign are part of the impetus for an Oklahoma lawmaker to propose requiring citizenship tests for high-school graduation. The state's House Speaker Pro Tempore Terry O'Donnell, who proposed the bill, says events such as the insurrection could be avoided if people understood more about the workings of the US government.



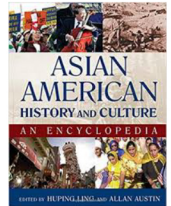
## **More educators stressed, quitting over diversity battles**

The stress of addressing community concerns -- and sometimes personal threats of violence -- over critical race theory has prompted several public-school educators and leaders to resign or be fired. The rising number of calls for help led the AASA, The School Superintendents Association, to create virtual sessions about handling diversity and equity protests, Executive Director Daniel Domenech says. **Full Story:** NBC News (7/12)



## **Asian American history mandated in Ill. schools**

Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed a bill on Friday that made Illinois the first US state to mandate a unit about the history of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, with details about connections to Illinois and the Midwest. The requirement, for public elementary and high schools, takes effect in the 2022-23 school year. **Full Story:** Chicago Tribune (tiered subscription model) (7/9), USA Today (7/11)



## **Architectural dig seeks to bring town's past to light**

The Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians in Massachusetts is leading a volunteer community architectural dig that seeks to uncover a 1739 meetinghouse. While wrought iron nails from the time period have been found, the goal is to document that the town of Stockbridge was founded by the tribe, though most traces of that history have been erased, says Bonney Hartley, tribal historic preservation manager. **Full Story:** The Berkshire Eagle (Pittsfield, Mass.) (7/11)



## **App teaches more about Black historical figures**

The nonprofit education-technology firm Movers & Shakers NYC launched the mobile app Kinfolk that allows students, via augmented reality, to learn the stories of famous Black historical figures. Through the app, students can examine artifacts, read biographies and learn more about historical figures. **Full Story:** The Hechinger Report (7/14)



## **Discussing racism in class: what educators think.**

The roiling debates over what gets taught about race and racism remain fiery hot. While a majority of district leaders, principals, and teachers don't think there should be legal constraints on what gets taught about racism, sexism, and other controversial issues, a significant share—32 percent—[believe there ought to be](#).







### **Program supports teaching the Holocaust in schools**

Twenty-five educators recently participated in the 2021 Alfred Lerner Fellows program by the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, where they gained a deeper understanding of the Holocaust. The goal is to help teachers integrate lessons on the Holocaust in the classroom. **Full Story:** Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (tiered subscription model) (7/12)



### **Congresswoman uses teaching background in role**

Jahana Hayes, a former high-school history teacher and a member of the US House since 2018, says it is critical to include teachers' voices when setting education policy. In this interview, Hayes shares how her experience as an educator helps inform her decision-making in Congress. **Full Story:** Edutopia (7/12)

### **Social media, digital tools can prompt student involvement**

Digital tools and gamification can encourage many less-confident students to seek support or contribute in class, Australian professor John Hattie recent said at a forum with other educators. Students are more comfortable sharing what they don't know via social media rather than in the classroom, Hattie added. **Full Story:** The Sydney Morning Herald (Australia) (7/14)



### **Teacher will require students to take notes by hand**

Benjamin Barbour, a high-school history and government teacher, writes that he plans to require students to take notes this coming school year in paper notebooks -- a stark departure from the digital nature of teaching and learning during the coronavirus pandemic. In this article, Barbour shares the science behind the benefits of taking notes by hand, including improved learning and retention. **Full Story:** Edutopia (7/13)



### **Why students should research, debunk conspiracy theories**

District Administration (7/13)

Here's an idea for teaching students about political polarization and far-right extremism: Have them do the research to debunk a conspiracy theory.



### **US encourages diversity in history, civics grant contest**

U.S. News & World Report (7/16)

The Education Department on Friday said it will encourage – but not prioritize – applications for an American history and civics federal grant competition that seek to expose students to more diverse perspectives and voices.

"The Department recognizes the value of supporting teaching and learning that reflects the rich diversity, identities, histories, contributions, and experiences of all students," Education Secretary Miguel Cardona wrote in a blog post Friday morning, which accompanied the official notice in the Federal Register. His comments echoed sentiments he's shared with members of Congress in the last month while testifying before committees regarding the president's budget proposal.



## How Innovative Teachers Can Start Teaching Innovation

During the 2020 pandemic, teachers quickly learned to adapt and innovate in their teaching. However, does innovative teaching necessarily mean that students will be more innovative? Learn three ways that teachers can alter lesson planning to bring student innovative thinking to the forefront in Educational Leadership



## How to weave confidence-building reflection into lessons

Teachers who incorporate goals and reflection skills into their lessons are helping young students develop confidence and curiosity, Massachusetts first-grade teacher Alissa Alteri Shea asserts in this commentary. Shea discusses the benefits of written reflections and describes a "memory rocks" assignment that can generate socially-conscious perspectives from students. **Full Story:** Edutopia (7/13)



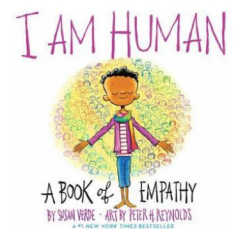
## Space for literary arts, poetry helps students thrive

The nonprofit 12 Literary Arts in Cleveland provides a poetry venue for writing, practicing and performing for K-12 students. Poetry provides lessons in self-reflection and "raw" impressions of their community, said Eric Odum, youth program coordinator at 12 Literary Arts. **Full Story:** WFMZ-TV (Allentown, Pa.) (6/28)



## Picture books aid early lessons on "radical empathy"

Language arts teacher Islah Tauheed of New York teaches "radical empathy" to students and has started in the earliest grades by discussing the situations of characters in picture books. Now a fifth-grade teacher, Tauheed says in this Q&A that the "radical" part comes from shifting students out of their comfort zones by asking them to question themselves and explore other people's perspectives. **Full Story:** Chalkbeat/New York (6/29)



## Ga. district creates Every Child Reads program

Fulton County Schools in Georgia will use the bulk of its portion of federal coronavirus relief funds -- \$90 million of more than \$168 million -- to support academic programs, including literacy. The district's Every Child Reads program will focus on phonics, phonemic awareness, reading, fluency, comprehension and vocabulary and provide literacy coaches plus other support at every elementary school. **Full Story:** WABE-FM (Atlanta) (6/27)



## Teacher's social studies activity offers economic lessons

Colorado high-school teacher Ken Benson shares in this Q&A that one of his favorite lessons involves students trading small, dollar-store objects among themselves to learn about trade benefits, value fluctuations and the welfare state. Benson also discusses the importance of building student relationships and why it's the springboard for everything else in class. **Full Story:** Chalkbeat/Colorado (6/29)



## Teacher's curriculum plants seeds of civics education

To help her students cope with the trauma of racial violence, Riah Williams, a fourth-grade humanities teacher at Rocketship Rise Academy in Washington, D.C., developed a social studies curriculum, Seeds of Civil Power. In this commentary, Williams shares how the curriculum plants the "seeds of a civic education" through a focus on community, culture, economics, government and activism. **Full Story:** The 74 (6/28)





## How teachers can encourage "effortful thinking"

Teachers can improve their questioning to "spark deep thinking" and help students store information in their long-term memory, write Rebekah Berlin and Staci Bradbury, both of Deans for Impact. In this commentary, they share how teachers can ask questions that "require students to engage in effortful thinking." **Full Story:** EdSurge (6/28)



## How to bring students' cultures into SEL

Teachers can take several key steps to make their social and emotional learning instruction more inclusive, writes Cailin Currie, a research scientist and an applied developmental psychologist at Committee for Children. In this blog post, Currie suggests focusing on the "collective or community aspects of SEL," celebrating differences, elevating students' voices and offering opportunities for "mirrors and windows," in which students can both see themselves in lessons and gain insight into others. **Full Story:** SmartBrief/Education (6/25)



## Walking tours offer adults a teen perspective

Residents of two Chicago neighborhoods will get a teen's-eye-view of their surroundings during tours for the My Block My Hood My City program. Thirty paid teen guides will share their perspective of the neighborhoods with adults while building relationships, self-confidence and public-speaking skills, senior program manager Nathaniel Viets-VanLear says. **Full Story:** WLS-TV (Chicago) (6/28)



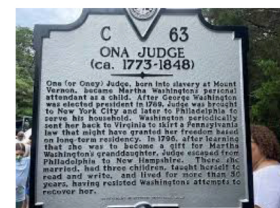
## Students' street-name petitions lead to ordinance

Petitions by middle-school students in West Hartford, Conn., have led to a new town ordinance establishing a process for renaming a city street. King Philip Middle School students Julie Levy and Rebecca Samuels and Kingswood Oxford students Regina Miller and Aliza Sadiq submitted two separate petitions calling on the town to name area streets in honor of local people who were enslaved. **Full Story:** The Hartford Courant (Conn.) (6/29)



## History scavenger hunt leads to new Va. state marker

Educator Maura Keaney's annual History Hunters class project involves a scavenger hunt of Virginia state historical markers, historical sites and parks, as well as little-known state history. After learning about George Washington's enslaved housemaid, Ona "Oney" Judge -- who is the subject of a book with a young-readers' version -- Keaney's students succeeded in getting a state historical marker that tells Judge's story. **Full Story:** Diverse: Issues In Higher Education (6/29)



*Kindness enriches our life; with kindness mysterious things become clear, difficult things become easy and dull things become cheerful. Leo Tolstoy, writer*