

The POINT!



E-Letter for Western Pennsylvania Social Studies Educators

Vol. 14 No. 9

September 2021

Wondering where to begin? What am I allowed to teach? How much have students lost in the past year? Need a break?

Why not head to Valley Forge October 11th for the 68th Annual Conference of the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies.

The 68th Annual Conference of the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies will be held at Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Monday, October 11, 2021. If we were mathematicians, we would be talking about Sum Day (10/11/21 is $10+11=21$, sum day!). But we are social studies educators, and we will follow George Washington's lead and converge on Valley Forge for the 68th Annual Conference of the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies. With the theme of the conference ***Navigating Controversy in Social Studies***, the focus on the date fits since October 11th is the national Columbus Day holiday, alternatively celebrated as Indigenous Peoples' Day!

The 75 acre Freedom Foundation campus has treasures such as the Medal of Honor Grove and, weather permitting, a campus tour will be a unique experience for the day. There will be six invited sessions by presenters specially asked to participate by the PCSS Board and 24 poster sessions selected by peer-review from applications across the Commonwealth and beyond. Exhibitors will be showcased in the glass ballroom Galleria. The Annual awards presentations will be at 8:30 a.m.

For more information go to:

Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies

<https://pcssonline.org>



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

Save the date and the time:

Thursday September 9th

At 7:00 pm

Spotlight on: The society of the Honor Guard, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

A virtue; event

Join s on Facebook or You Tube



[Bill of Rights Institute](#)

After over 20 years of teaching civics, the Bill of Rights Institute has sequenced some of its best resources into **a year-long high school civics course**. You and your students can use this playlist to explore what it means to belong to a community, the structure of government, our roles as citizens, and how we can work together to preserve liberty, equality, and justice for all.



[NCSS Leadship Program](#)

NCSS is pleased to announce its fifth season of Leadership Forums - monthly webinars tailored to your needs and interests as social studies leaders within NCSS! These monthly programs are hosted by NCSS President Anton Schulzki and NCSS Executive Director Larry Paska.



In-School Programming Menu: Speakers, Scholars, Teaching Artists, & Sessions.

A unique list of elite educators and scholars who are able to teach classroom sessions for middle and high school students as well as professional development sessions for educators on a variety of topics including: Jewish History, Holocaust, Antisemitism, Israel, Filmmaking, Music, Human Rights, Genocide, U.S. Policy during WWII, White Supremacy and Hate, and Racial Justice. www.classroomswithoutborders.org



The Point

For
Western Pennsylvania
Social Studies Educators

EDITORS

Leo R. West

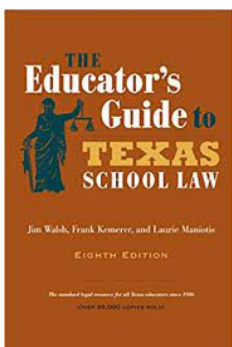
John Larner

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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Challenge of teaching US history gets more challenging

Conflicting ideas and stakeholders have long influenced what is taught in the social studies classes of US schools, as detailed by the background in this article. This fall, teachers in some states will adjust to newly enacted laws and requirements while parents in some locations are challenging teachers, lessons, texts and literature choices, including a Tennessee district where a group of mothers objected to "Ruby Bridges Goes to School: My True Story," written by Bridges, who was 6 when she was among the first Black students to integrate a school system. **Full Story:** [Education Week](#) (8/11)

Explore Civics Lessons

Many of you have asked, and the Choices Program has responded! Now available in print and Digital Editions is our latest unit, a collection of civics-focused lessons selected from Choices Program curriculum units. These stand-alone lesson plans and activities have a special focus on civic education. Students explore the founding documents, important Supreme Court cases, and key congressional debates. The lessons not only help students understand the basis and functions of government, but also encourage them to consider and develop their own roles as citizen participants in the democratic process. Note that these lessons do not have the accompanying student readings contained in standard Choices curriculum units. Teachers may need to provide some basic context to students before beginning the lessons, and each lesson plan includes some suggestions about context.

Will Texas law silence local history of discrimination?

A Texas law that goes into effect Sept. 1 could prevent students from learning about at least seven peers from the 1950s who, because of their Mexican heritage, were forced to repeat first grade three times and placed in a separate classroom. In this article, Enrique Aleman Jr., a professor of education at Trinity University, discusses the law restricting how teachers discuss race in public schools and says Texas students need to learn about the experiences of his mother, Lupe, who was one of the students held back for three years. **Full Story:** [CNN](#) (8/11)

Texas law prompts district to drop government elective

An elective related to a Youth and Government program has been cut by a Texas school district's officials, who point to a recent state law that bans political activism and policy advocacy in classes. There is disagreement about whether it was necessary to eliminate the course, with Judith Anderson-Bruess, a recently retired teacher who started an extracurricular Youth and Government club, saying the class is a simulation of how government works with students writing "bills" and learning about legislative procedures. **Full Story:** [The Texas Tribune](#) (8/17)

40 daguerreotypes by Black photographers go to museum

The Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C. has purchased a collection, which includes 40 daguerreotype photos created by three Black photographers of the 19th century. Put together by a private collector, the collection's daguerreotypes were taken by photographers Augustus Washington, James P. Ball and Glenalvin Goodridge, abolitionists who were able to capture the faces of people involved with the Underground Railroad. **Full Story:** [The New York Times](#) (8/17)



9 Black players discuss racism in America's pastime

The experiences of nine Black baseball players are explored in this article, which examines the history of racism in MLB and the US as well as what the future holds for the sport. The nine players and their stories span 1951, when future Hall of Famer Willie Mays made his MLB debut and endured racism even as he became a star, to the present with the story of Ian Moller, an 18-year-old prospect who faces pressure to leave the catcher position because he is Black. **Full Story:** [The Washington Post](#) (tiered subscription model) (8/19)



Report: "Slavery" not in Iowa social studies standards

Analysis by Iowa news station KCRG found that the state's K-12 social studies standards don't contain the word "slavery" in them. When KCRG contacted the state's department of education for comment, Communication Director Heather Doe responded via email, saying that the standards are designed to help students "be critical thinkers about the information they encounter, as opposed to memorization of a list of facts." **Full Story:** (8/24) (8/24)



Tribes teach traditions to youth with an eye on future

Many Native American students are learning about the traditions of their people, such as Nation Cowins, 14, a Cheyenne River Sioux Nation member in South Dakota, who has grown vegetables for use in a community feast, while youth in the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe, which has fished for 12,000 years in Massachusetts, are learning about being stewards of the water. This article highlights programs -- some of them online -- that include traditional elements, such as math in the Bluebird Math Circle and art, while nurturing students toward better futures. **Full Story:** [Yes! Magazine online](#) (8/13)



Is teaching "action civics" putting the cart before the horse?

The Hechinger Report

Peyton Amaral, a Morton Middle-schooler with a pale pink suit jacket and a swath of blue and purple hair, stood before the Fall River City Council this April, arguing for a ban on plastic bags.

"Pollution is making our community dirty and unlivable," said Peyton, in a voice that came through clearly, despite the mask covering the lower half of her face _____

"I'm not opposed to civic action, but we can't let the cart get ahead of the horse," said David Davenport, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, a conservative think tank at Stanford University. "In science, you don't run around doing a bunch of experiments — you start with knowledge and develop a hypothesis first."



CHOICES VIDEOS

The latest video series from the Choices Program features Dr. Ashish Jha, a globally recognized expert on pandemic preparedness and response as well as health policy research and practice. He is a practicing physician and dean of the School of Public Health at Brown University.

In this video series, Dr. Jha defines public health and addresses inequalities, health as a human right, governance, international collaboration, climate change, COVID-19, and more. There are thirteen videos in the series, and they have been added to our curriculum units on climate change, human rights, the United Nations, and the U.S. role in the world. [Explore All The Videos](#)



"CODA" shines spotlight on ASL, Deaf culture, families

"CODA," an acronym of "child of deaf adults," is giving broad movie audiences an inside look at Deaf culture and the use and nuances of American Sign Language accompanied by spoken English and captions as it tells the story of the Rossi family of four and Ruby, the only hearing member. The PG-13 movie stars actors who are deaf playing characters who are deaf -- including Academy Award-winner Marlee Matlin -- and will become the first feature film ever released in theaters with open captions always visible on the screen. **Full Story:** [CNET](#) (8/18), [Vox](#) (8/16), [The Hollywood Reporter](#) (8/4)



More schools consider competency-based approach

The challenges of teaching and learning during the coronavirus pandemic have some schools considering a personalized, competency-based approach, which supports mastery and could address learning gaps early on. Jean-Claude Brizard, president and CEO of the nonprofit Digital Promise, said there is "real appetite for something more whole-child, more comprehensive, more longitudinal, that really informs [teacher] practice." **Full Story:** [The Hechinger Report](#) (8/13)



Older adults take class to pen their memoirs

A program in Boca Raton, Fla., is enabling older adults to write the stories of their lives as personal expression so they can give those memoirs to their families. Holly Budney, Sinai Residences' life enrichment director, said the class grew out of the need of residents to creatively express themselves amid the pandemic. **Full Story:** [WPTV-TV \(West Palm Beach, Fla.\)](#) (8/17)



Students' research may bring pardon for 1693 "witch"

Research conducted by a class of civics 8th-graders at a Massachusetts middle school has spurred State Sen. Diana DiZogio to propose a bill to formally pardon Elizabeth Johnson Jr., a woman who in 1693 was wrongly convicted of witchcraft amid the Salem Witch Trials. The students, under the guidance of civics teacher Carrie LaPierre, discovered in their research that Johnson was spared from execution by the governor but her conviction remained on the record for various reasons. **Full Story:** [The Associated Press](#) (8/20)



"Pandemic 101: A Roadmap to Help Students Grasp an Economic Shock"

From the March/April 2021 Social Education, this article provides a close look at visual data on GDP, unemployment, interest rates and inflation during the COVID-19 pandemic will provide students with important insights into the economic effects of the health crisis and monetary and fiscal policy responses. [Read more.](#)



8 ways to energize student toward participation

Making thoughtful decisions about grouping students and modeling expected behavior are two ways in which teachers can help encourage student participation in class, educator Curtis Chandler writes in this blog post. Chandler offers eight suggestions, such as involving "quiet" students and avoiding the "I don't know" as an appropriate response. **Full Story:** [MiddleWeb](#) (8/15)



Report: Overhaul grades 11-14 to prioritize career training

Inside Higher Ed (8/3)

Jobs for the Future, a national nonprofit focused on education and the workforce, [released](#) a report Tuesday that argues for a "radical restructuring of education for grades 11-14." It advocates for a new kind of education institution that is neither high school nor college starting after the second year of high school. These institutions would combine coursework from the last two years of high school with "the more specific education and training of community college" to train students for future careers. Students would graduate with a certificate or associate degree.



Socratics, Remixed

Teacher Henry Seton describes a unique lesson design for more focused and engaging student-led discussions. His twist on the traditional Socratic seminar organically integrates the "holy trinity" of literacy skills: reading, writing, and discussing. Read how in the latest issue of Educational Leadership



N.H. high schools explore their history of Native imagery

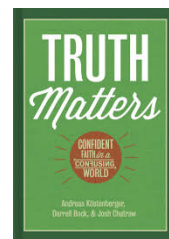
Two high schools in New Hampshire removed Native American imagery and mascots from their sports teams and have been creating community projects to discuss the topic and learn from the history of their teams. Winnacunnet High School is centering new imagery on pine trees and a "W" to reflect the town name meaning of "beautiful place of pines," and an interview series led by a team including social studies teacher Stacy Brown explores the school's history with Native American imagery. **Full Story:** [Concord Monitor \(N.H.\) \(tiered subscription model\)](#) (8/26)



It is often forgotten that (dictionaries) are artificial repositories, put together well after the languages they define. The roots of language are irrational and of a magical nature. -Jorge Luis Borges, writer (24 Aug 1899-1986)---

Teachers unite nationally for Teach Truth

Teachers will come together in over 115 US cities this weekend in a Days of Action movement to protest proposed anti-critical race theory legislation and anti-race education. Some 6,600 teachers from across the country have signed the Teach Truth pledge, which reads, "We, the undersigned educators, refuse to lie to young people about U.S. history and current events." **Full Story:** [ABC News](#) (8/26), [Chalkbeat](#) (8/26)



A Response to the Attacks on Social Studies Education in ... <https://www.socialstudies.org> › current-events-response

A Current Events **Response** by National Council for the **Social Studies Social studies education** is a topic of debate for national and state legislatures and ...
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Social studies education is a topic of debate for national and state legislatures and local school boards this year. This debate has resulted in a number of bills being introduced in state legislatures concerning what should or should not be taught in the PK-12 social studies classroom. We are pleased to see citizens engaging in discussions surrounding citizenship, race, gender, equity, and other social studies topics. Yet we have become aware of the need to address misconceptions that have arisen surrounding what others have labeled as “divisive concepts” such as critical race theory (CRT).



Defining Important Concepts • ^a What is at stake?
The Right to Academic Freedom.

Study finds social media rife with harmful info on cancer

A third of the most popular articles about cancer treatment on social media contain inaccurate information, most of which could lead to patient harm, according to a study in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute. "I encounter a lot of patients through my oncology practice who believe misinformation they read online and through social media, and it has led to delays in their diagnosis and treatment ... refusal of proven cancer treatments and, ultimately, their early deaths," said study leader Dr. Skyler Johnson, a radiation oncologist. **Full Story:** [Healio](#) (free registration)/[HemOnc Today](#) (8/25)



Every government has as much of a duty to avoid war as a ship's captain has to avoid a shipwreck. -Guy de Maupassant, short story writer and novelist (5 Aug 1850-1893)