

# The POINT!

E-Letter for Western Pennsylvania Social Studies Educators

Vol. 15 No. 1

January 2022



- **Annual MSCSS Conference**
- Saturday, February 26, 2022, 9am-1pm)
- Cost is \$50
- Link to register:
- <https://www.midstatescouncil.org/annual-conference/>

In a year (2022) which will be dominated at its end by the in-person National Council for the Social Studies' Annual Conference at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in Philadelphia, December 2-3, 2022, attending the virtual experience offered by the oldest social studies council in the nation this February 26<sup>th</sup> is a great way to get a year of social studies off to a great start!

Call for Award Nominations – 8 award categories this year – Link to see the list and nominate: <https://www.midstatescouncil.org/mscss-awards-descriptions/J>

## Join Your Social Studies Colleagues in Philadelphia, December 2-4, 2022

National Council for the Social Studies invites you to submit a proposal to present at our 102nd Annual Conference in Philadelphia.

The NCSS Annual Conference is the largest gathering of K-12 social studies classroom teachers, college and university faculty members, curriculum designers and specialists, district and state social studies supervisors, international educators, and social studies discipline leaders.

## Join us at the 100th Anniversary Celebration

Join us on February 1-6, 2022 for weeknights that will include live panels on current social studies topics and a weekend filled with featured speakers and sessions designed to increase your professional learning.



*“Strive not to be a success; but, rather to be of value!”*

*Albert Einstein*

## 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 circumstance



## Classrooms Without Borders

### Confronting the Complexity of Holocaust Scholarship: Reflections on the Past, Present, and Future of Holocaust Studies

- The 4th Session i will be held on January 12th, 2022 at 3pm, *Using Photographs as Evidence*: <https://classroomswithoutborders.org/confronting-the-complexity-of-holocaust-scholarship/>

### Using Holocaust films in the classroom,

Holocaust film scholar and author Rich Brownstein in conversation with Dr. Michael Berenbaum

Wednesday, January 19, 2022 4:00pm-5:30pm ET

<https://classroomswithoutborders.org/holocaust-cinema-complete-rich-brownstein/>

### Holocaust Museums and Memorials Around the World

Thursday, January 20, 2022 - 1:00pm EST

New Museums and Memorial series

"Remembering the Holocaust in Poland"

<https://classroomswithoutborders.org/holocaust-museums-and-memorials-around-the-world/>

### A Discourse on Holocaust Studies: Lecture Series with Prof. Gideon Greif

Monday, January 24, 2022 - 4pm-5:30pm ET

Professor Greif will explore underappreciated aspects of Holocaust studies

<https://classroomswithoutborders.org/discourse-holocaust-studies-lecture-series-prof.-gideon-greif/>



*We read books to find out who we are.*

*-Ursula K. Le Guin, author (21 Oct 1929-2018)*

**Opinion: Online learning is not inferior**

Jane Gallagher, vice president of operations at the nonprofit VHS Learning, in this blog posts debunks two common myths about online learning. Among them, Gallagher writes, are that pandemic-related learning losses prove online learning is ineffective and that online learning worsens student interactions. **Full Story:** SmartBrief/Education (12/16)

**Teacher shortage prompts extension of remote option**

A Tennessee school district will expand its contract with a remote learning platform for nine weeks in the spring semester. The move comes as the district is grappling with unfilled positions for classroom teachers. **Full Story:** The Daily Herald (Columbia, Tenn.) (12/15)

**Why, how to incorporate video into teacher evaluations**

Teachers in the Metropolitan School District of Decatur Township in Indianapolis are being evaluated via video, with each teacher first submitting a 10-minute video with their own reflections, Assistant Superintendent Stephanie Hofer explains. Video evaluations have removed the distraction of having an observer in a classroom, improved retention efforts because of targeted feedback and aided in creating a professional development library, Hofer asserts. **Full Story:** Education Week (12/14)

**Report: In-person learning nearly universal**

Fewer schools are offering remote and hybrid-learning options, according to a report from the National Center for Education Statistics. Data shows that close to 100% of schools now are offering in-person instruction. **Full Story:** K-12 Dive (12/15)

**What Is Critical Race Theory, and Why Is It Under Attack?**

Debates about critical race theory are coming to your district, board room, and classroom. Here's what you need to understand about the academic concept and how it's portrayed in political

**Lee statue's pedestal demolition reveals time capsule**

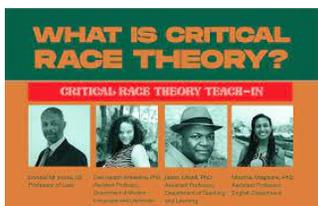
Construction workers halted the demolition of the pedestal for the Robert E. Lee statue in Richmond, Va., so could preserve a section containing a copper box that likely is a time capsule from 1887 containing some rare Confederate memorabilia, construction superintendent Michael Spence says in this interview. Lee's statue was removed from atop the pedestal in September. **Full Story:** Richmond Times-Dispatch (Va.) (12/17)

*The Point*

For  
Western Pennsylvania  
Social Studies Educators  
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*The Point* is the  
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of the former WPCSS  
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organization dedicated to promoting  
the teaching and learning of social  
studies in Western Pennsylvania

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*Writing is like carrying a fetus.*

*Edna O'Brien, writer (b. 15 Dec 1930)*

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## **High-schoolers in Wyo. make the case in mock trial**

Students in Wyoming competed in the state's High School Mock Trial competition this year, which focused on a case of a fictional company that sued a made-up Instagram influencer. A national contest is scheduled for next year. **Full Story:** Laramie Boomerang (Wyo.) (12/12)



## **Is Your Deeper Learning Instruction Boring Students?**

Deeper learning is great for exploring a topic in great depth, but it will fail if student motivation isn't taken into account. Researchers Eric Anderman and Adriana Calvit discuss how to align your deeper learning curriculum with motivational strategies for successful lessons in the new issue of Educational Leadership.



## **Streamlined Lesson Planning**

Want to shed old-style templates, overstuffed curriculum, and bureaucratic lingo when planning lessons? Educators can speak directly to students and their families and involve them in lesson creation by using a tool called learning sets. Read more in Educational Leadership.



## **How one Pa. district uses video to improve teaching**

Self-reflection via video helps teachers think about and improve their teaching and student learning, writes Donna Spangler, a middle-school instructional coach in a Pennsylvania district. In this commentary, Spangler shares how the approach works in the district by helping teachers home in on details that might otherwise be missed. **Full Story:** K-12 Dive (12/10)



## **SCOTUS has weighed in on school book challenges before**

Schools and school boards nationwide are being asked to remove certain books from school libraries and classroom bookshelves. Recent challenges have some questioning whether the most recent Supreme Court ruling on the issue -- the nearly 40-year-old Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District v. Pico -- offers enough guidance. **Full Story:** Education Week.



## **Lawsuit challenges N.H.'s limits on teaching about race**

The American Federation of Teachers' New Hampshire affiliate is suing state officials because of a law, adopted last summer, that limits school lessons about race, racism and related topics. The union says the law is too vague and limits teachers' freedom of speech. **Full Story:** The Washington Post (tiered subscription model) (12/13), The Associated Press (12/13)





### **Catholic-school student wears police badge for a day**

A second-grade student from St. Thomas Catholic School in Illinois recently served as police chief for the day of the Peoria Police Department. With Police Chief Eric Echevarria on hand, Donald Genzel was sworn in, received a tour of the department and said the experience -- won in an auction at a children's museum -- taught him about helping others.  **Full Story:** WMBD-TV/WYZZ-TV (Peoria, Ill.) (12/10)



### **Historical Black Newspapers**

### **Effort aims to digitize issues of Black newspaper**

The Frederick Douglass Voice was one of the longest-published Black newspapers in New York state, chronicling the lives and achievements of Black residents of Rochester, N.Y., from 1933 to 1996. Joan Coles Howard, daughter of the publication's founder and editor, is working with the Rochester Museum & Science Center to digitize 350 copies of the paper, archivist and librarian Stephanie Ball says in this interview. **Full Story:** WXXI-TV (Rochester, N.Y.) (11/12)



### **Schools prepare for influx of Afghan refugee students**

Some US schools have already welcomed Afghan refugee children, and thousands more still on military bases will be enrolling soon. Educators and experts discuss what these students will need and what is already being done -- from buddy systems at Annandale High School in Virginia to a school supply fundraiser organized by a student at Ellsworth High School in Wisconsin. **Full Story:** The Washington Post (tiered subscription model) (11/12)



### **Teacher: Quality work created if students have options**

When students were given the freedom to choose topics and present history projects in a way that worked for them during the height of the pandemic, they created "the best work they produced all year," says social studies teacher Carrie Lynch. In this interview, Lynch says students used the same skills needed for traditional formats in their creative endeavors, including one student's research on whether at-risk youths go on to attend college and another's interview and podcast on overcoming the challenges of homelessness. **Full Story:** The Bethel Citizen (Maine) (11/10)

### **Census app aims to make data science more engaging**

Data science students from American University are creating an app to help students interact with and learn about census data. The app, while appropriate for many ages, is aimed at middle-school students, with the hope of making learning about data science more engaging, says project participant Daudou Shi. **Full Story:** EdSurge (11/11)



*Great minds have purpose, others have wishes.*

*Washington Irving, writer, essayist, historian, diplomat*

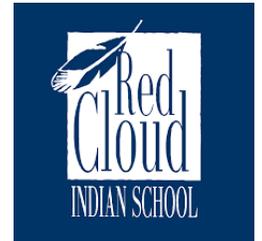
## Education Week (12/15)

The U.S. Department of Education should create a strategy to encourage school districts to provide parents information about safely storing firearms, in the wake of shootings at a Michigan school last month that left four students dead, scores of federal lawmakers say.



### Ugly past faced by residential school in S.D.

Red Cloud Indian School in South Dakota is acknowledging its past as a former Catholic residential school for Native American children, such as the Lakota. As part of its Truth and Healing process -- which has four stages: confrontation, understanding, healing and transformation -- the school is inviting former students to share their stories privately or publicly, and will open its archives to examine what occurred when the school was known as Holy Rosary Mission.  **Full Story:** The Associated Press (12/15)



### Va. students' science project examines homelessness

What started out as a science project has become something bigger for sixth-graders at Alexandria Country Day School in Virginia. Students researched issues related to homelessness -- including access to housing, food, education, transportation and social centers -- to help inform the creation of a 3D-printed miniature village while also boosting their understanding and empathy. **Full Story:** The Washington Post (tiered subscription model) (12/15)



### Study: Song helped reduced suicides among adolescents

Hip-hop artist Logic's song "1-800-273-8255" -- the phone number to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline -- helped fuel a 50% rise in calls to the phone resource, and a study links a 5.5% reduction in suicide attempts among 10- to 19-year-olds to the song. Researchers evaluated a drop in suicides in the 34 days after the song was released and after performances by Logic at two awards shows, one in 2017 and another in 2018. **Full Story:** CNN (12/13)



### "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.



*The great thing about getting older is that you don't lose all the other ages you've been.*  
-Madeleine L'Engle, writer (29 Nov 1918-2007)

## 8th-graders dig into history, geography on 3-day trip

A three-day field trip to a Canyonlands Field Institute camp in Utah allowed 24 eighth-grade students to immerse themselves in nature while talking about the history of Native Americans in Utah, reading poetry and exploring local geography and geology. In between hikes and other activities, students worked on group projects, such as designing a model waterway that would hold up during a 100-year flood, and slept in Lakota-style shelters at night. Full Story: [The City Journal \(Utah\)/Draper \(12/16\)](#)



## TikTok threats prompt schools to enhance security

School districts nationwide are enhancing on-campus security in the wake of posts on TikTok that threatened violence at schools around the country. Officials say, while the threats were not considered credible, they are taking precautions. Full Story: [The Associated Press \(12/17\)](#), [CBS News \(12/17\)](#), [The Washington Post \(tiered subscription model\) \(12/17\)](#)



## Students help school's waste-reduction effort

An elementary school in Maryland has launched a program to help reduce the amount of waste it sends to landfills. As part of the program, student volunteers help during lunch to make sure items that can go to composting or that are biodegradable are properly sorted. Full Story: [The Frederick News-Post \(Md.\) \(12/13\)](#)  
Edtech firms target early learning



## Expanding into Early Childhood Is Good for Edtech Companies. Is It Good for Kids?

Over the past several years, more established K-12 education-technology companies, including Kahoot and Khan Academy, have been expanding into the early-childhood space. The companies are taking steps to modify resources to meet the needs and abilities of younger learners, but some officials say they hope the moves are not just a business decision. Full Story: [EdSurge \(12/15\)](#)



## Comic book curriculum promotes inclusion, STEM

The researcher-developed CryptoComics curriculum is promoting cybersecurity, cryptology and various STEM careers to elementary-school students, especially girls of color, write Kara Dawson and Pavlo Antonenko, a professor and associate professor, respectively, of Educational Technology at the University of Florida. They write about an Atlanta after-school program that uses the lesson plans, a digital comic book about escaping a "mysterious cyberworld" and other activities with students. Full Story: [The Conversation \(12/14\)](#)



## How teachers can use Pinterest like a search engine

The concept of using Pinterest as a teaching resource is not novel, but teachers should revisit the social platform if they have not used it recently, according to Monica Burns, an educational consultant. In this article, Burns says teachers can make the most of Pinterest by thinking of it more as a search engine. Full Story: [Edutopia](#)

