

The POINT!

E-Letter for Western Pennsylvania Social Studies Educators

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Addressing Transgender

In 1952 I was stationed in Austria when Armed Forces Radio reported an earth shaking event: “In Copenhagen, Denmark today, history was made when George W. Jorgensen became Christine Jorgensen.” The announcement spurred quite a lot of conversation in the barracks and the E.M. club. About a week later, a close friend, Corporal Schlabach received a letter from his wife that ended with, “**Stay away from Denmark!**” While this was rather unique in 1952, G.I.s could and did joke about it but as time went on, this was not to be an isolated incident.

Here we are in the 21st Century fighting to make it illegal to claim a different gender than that stated on a birth certificate. Isn't it time for law makers to do their home work and go to the internet and do some research other than uninformed e-mails and blogs?. Sex assignment at birth is not an exact science and many problems remain unresolved due to ignoring the plight of those who are confused about who and what gender they are.

My daughter teaches kindergarten. She has one small little boy who identifies as a girl. The state where she teaches does not allow her to discuss this either with the individual or the class. As time goes on, this little person will become a victim of bullies and life will become miserable. We know that gender assignment is not always exact. Pre-birth predictions are often wrong. It's time to accept the facts. Birth certificates are not always accurate. My brother was Christened James Edward West. His birth certificate name is James **Edwood** West. While this was a clerical error, the assignment of gender at birth is not always accurate according to medical reports.

Some schools have refused to adjust to accept transgender students. They insist that use of rest rooms depends upon the gender listed on the student's birth certificate.

Porta-potties are unisex. They have latches inside for security. Many small gas stations have unisex rest rooms equipped with inside locks. Even some bars have unisex rest rooms. Why not offer a unisex restroom in a school? It only needs to accommodate one person at a time. This could eliminate much of the conflict now occurring.

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

Education Department 412-621-4253-Ex.210

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please contact Sarah B. Galiotto

**VP, Director of Development & Community Relations
at sarah@soldiersandsailorshall.org**

Classrooms without Borders

This Summer CWB continues our tradition of transformational study seminars. This summer we will study in Poland, Italy, and Germany, walking the path of history returning to our communities with renewed purpose and a wealth of knowledge gleaned through personal connections.

2023 Seminar Applications Coming Fall of 2022

Teaching with Primary Sources Leadership Institute

The TPS Leadership Institute prepares individuals to plan and deliver high-quality educational activities that focus on primary source materials from loc.gov to build critical and analytical thinking skills and understanding of specific content.

Leveraging the format of the former TPS PDPI, the Leadership Institute was developed to meet the needs of a broader range of formal and informal educators and learners.

TPS Leadership Institute participants prepare for each week's one-hour live online session by previewing and pre-reading provided resources. One to two hours of preparation is required in advance of weekly inquiry activiThursdays, July 7 – August 11, 5:30-6:30 pm ET

Registration

Free and Online

swise@waynesburg.edu



The Point

For

Western Pennsylvania
Social Studies Educators

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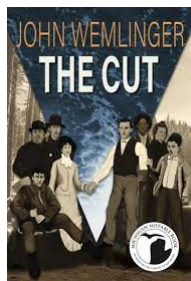
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organization dedicated to promoting
the teaching and learning of social
studies in Western Pennsylvania

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Spanish cave was cultural hot spot for ancient humans

With the use of radiocarbon dating, archeologists exploring a cave in Malaga, Spain, have determined that ancient humans used the cave for more than 50,000 years to create art and lay their dead to rest. The research, published in PLOS One, demonstrated that Neanderthals and later modern humans regarded Cueva de Ardales as a significant location, which contains painting materials and fossilized remains. **Full Story:** ScienceAlert (Australia) (6/1)

Columbine survivor says ongoing support is vital

Marjorie Erickson survived the 1999 Columbine High School shootings in Colorado, and shares her life since that year, when she was a sophomore: dropping out, panic attacks, a friend who later died by suicide and an experience that "never ended for us." Erickson emphasizes how much support survivors in Uvalde, Texas, will need, noting that the elementary-school students whose thoughts are typically innocent just saw their world "shattered." **Full Story:** WCBS-TV/WLNY-TV (New York City) (6/1)

Black history curricula sought by Colo. 7th-grader

Seventh-grade student Dante Clark says he queried several teachers, including social studies teacher Adam Flatt, about a lack of Black History Month curricula at Aspen Middle School in Colorado. After conducting research on the topic with Flatt, Clark recently made a 5-minute presentation to the local school board to seek support for lessons that include more Black history. Full Story: Aspen Daily News (Colo.) (6/2)

Author discusses historical fiction with students

Reading historical fiction can enhance history lessons by offering context and perspective, says John Wemlinger, author of the historical novel "The Cut," who visited eighth-grade students at a Michigan middle school. History teacher Joe Hedges invited Wemlinger to talk about the history of the area where the novel is set in 1871, and the creation of Manistee News Advocate (Mich.) a water channel that is integral to the story. **Full Story:** (5/27)

Detroit schools focus on cultural inclusion in civics

Schools in the Detroit Public Schools Community District have adopted a new approach to teaching high-school civics, by including a focus on local history and city government that promotes community engagement and cultural inclusion. Superintendent Nikolai Vitti says the goal is to grow empowerment among students and civic engagement. **Full Story:** Michigan Advance (Lansing) (5/24)

*The highest result of education is tolerance. -Helen Keller,
author and lecturer (27 Jun 1880-1968)*

the Civics Secures Democracy Act has been re-introduced in the U.S. Senate!

What is the Civic Secures Democracy Act?

The Civic Secures Democracy Act is a bipartisan initiative that would provide a \$1 billion annual investment in civic education to support states and local school districts in offering the civic education needed to equip youth in the United States with the civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions to become informed and engaged members of society.

What can I do to help?

Now that the act has been reintroduced in the U.S. Senate, **the next important goal is reintroducing the act in the House this summer with a bipartisan cohort of Representatives.**

The Learning Zone / The Life-Changing Magic of Going In-Depth

There's pressure these days -- even in schools -- to learn many things quickly and superficially. But if coaches and those leading PD lack a deep understanding of the strategies and ideas they share, teachers receiving their guidance will also understand strategies superficially, and may not use them effectively. Coaching expert Jim Knight offers 5 ways coaches and PD presenters can deliberately learn about ideas and strategies in their repertoire at a deeper level in Educational Leadership

Tenn. governor: Teach about Jan. 6 "lawlessness"

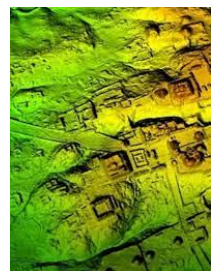
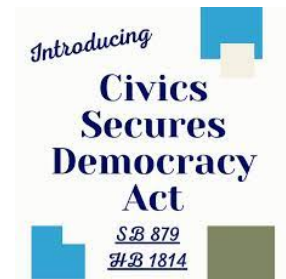
Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee, who has advocated for more civics instruction in schools, says educators should teach students that Jan. 6, 2021 was a day of "lawlessness." The state has just begun a review of social studies standards, which occurs every six years. **Full Story:** Chalkbeat/Tennessee (6/21)

Program engages Calif. students in forest restoration

A group of students recently worked with California State Parks employees for three days to help restore redwood habitats damaged by a fire in 2008. The Nature Corps, a nonprofit conservation organization, organizes the service-learning program in which students learn about forest management, invasive species and how cleanup efforts help *make habitats more resist*

Scientists find site in Bolivian Amazon with lidar

Scientists used lidar technology via helicopter to map ancient ruins at a site within the Bolivian Amazon that was abandoned around 600 years ago. The digital images showed the archaeological site's network of settlements, urban centers and pyramid architecture, suggesting that parts of the rainforest may have contained substantial numbers of people. **Full Story:** Smithsonian (5/25)



How Uvalde paper's staff covered school massacre

The Uvalde Leader-News in Texas, a twice-weekly paper with a 10-person staff, was thrust into a huge story that became personal, as a reporter's child was among the 21 people killed by a gunman at Robb Elementary School on May 24. The paper's staff struggled with how to treat the news on the front page, settling on a fully blacked-out page with the date. Full Story: The New Yorker (tiered subscription model) (5/28)

Uvalde Leader-News

MAY 24, 2022

*For a moment, he
already been af*

Why We Need to Save Handwriting

Is handwriting essential anymore? On The ASCD Blog, K-5 literacy interventionist Caroline Selness explains the important role handwriting can play in students' cognitive skills and writing development

visit to 3 tiny schools hanging on

A dwindling rural population has led school districts in North Dakota to consolidate, dropping from 312 in 1985 to 173 now. Still, 34 schools remain with fewer than 100 students; 5 are 1-room schools. Governing.com reports on a [visit to 3 tiny schools hanging on](#) in the face of changing demographics.



The World Feels Less Stable': Educators' Sense of School Safety Right Now

6 in 10 educators said a mass shooting was their biggest source of fear. Four in 10 educators feel less safe in their schools now than they did five years ago, according to a new survey by the EdWeek Research Center. School shootings factor heavily into their fears, but so does a swirl of other dynamics, from an angry political climate to a rise in student and parent aggression.



Future of the First Amendment: Exploring Trends in High School Students' Views of Free Speech

Learn how educators are navigating student free speech issues and addressing controversial topics like gender and race in the classroom.

Content provided by **The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**

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Teachers' duty-free breaks protected in some states

In most states, teachers' duty-free bathroom, lunch and planning breaks are not protected by law. South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster signed legislation into law last week to provide a 30-minute break for elementary and special-education teachers each day, and officials say such moves could help ease the teacher shortage. Full Story: Education Week (5/24)



Companies offer live-streamed teachers amid shortages

Some companies, including Proximity Learning and Elevate K12, are offering virtual teachers as a solution to vacancies and teacher shortages. However, some experts question whether live-streamed teachers is a good alternative to in-person instruction and other unintended effects, such as driving down salaries for teachers and replacing in-person educators. Full Story: Education Week (5/26)



TIME FOR A CHANGE!

(From the Gettysburg Times)

- **Leon Reed, former US Senate aide & history teacher & co-chair of Gettysburg DFA.**

... “civics,” which is defined as the study of the rights and obligations of citizenship. The Founders recognized that the main reason for universal public education was to prepare the next generation for the duties of citizenship in a republic. And, for more than two decades since the passage of No Child Left Behind, schools around the country have been obsessing about Reading (English) and Math standardized test scores and reducing social studies in the curriculum. **This two decade decline needs to be reversed.**

To be able to say they’ve prepared students today, schools need to cover: basic structure and functions of government (federal, state, local); what your government actually does; and your rights and obligations. Also often missing from a graduate’s toolkit but important to promote responsible citizenship: basic understanding of social media and critical thinking skills.

I came to realize that most people lack a basic understanding of the functions of the government or their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Few people, for example, could really explain the idea of checks and balances and why it’s so important. Other things every student should understand include the vital role of compromise in our system and how the proliferation of politicians who have no interest in working with the other side are so destructive of democracy.

Students should also have a meaningful understanding of the Bill of Rights and other rights granted by the Constitution. Too often, history and civics teachers rush through this section, just asking students to memorize a list of terms. Students need to understand how the Bill of Rights applies to them. What does “right to counsel” mean? If a police officer stops you and asks to look in your trunk, or shows up at your door and asks to come in, what should you do?

People need to know more about the three branches of government and the authorities of each. In particular, it’s important for students to understand how the Supreme Court works and how its decisions affect people’s lives.

People should also understand what the government does and where their tax dollars go. When, for example, candidate Mitt Romney says, “There are 47 percent of the people ... who are dependent upon government, ... who believe the government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you-name-it,” or when an “article” named “The New American Way of Life,” making the same argument, circulates around the Internet, people should know enough to say, “No, that’s ridiculous, the government doesn’t pay benefits like that.” When someone says, “I worked for everything I ever got; I never got any benefits from the government,” a well educated person should know enough to be able to say, “well, if you ever used the Internet, traveled on a road, bought a house, listened to the weather report, rode mass transit, went to a park or a lake or a beach, got a vaccine, went to a hospital, sent a kid to school, or any of 1000 other things, you indeed got ‘something from the government.’” People should understand how much of the federal budget goes to foreign aid and that most undocumented immigrants actually pay more in taxes than they receive in benefits.. They should understand how much more spending is used to subsidize the middle class than is used to help the poor. We may disagree about what the numbers mean, but we should know the same facts, and go from there.

(Thanks to Mark Previte, Univ. of Pgh. Johnstown.)

A Position Statement of National Council for the Social Studies

Approved and published June 2022

From its inception, the founders of our democracy recognized the need to educate citizens to decode conflicting political claims presented in the media of the day (newspapers created by political parties) in order to make informed decisions. At the same time, laws were passed that forbade the teaching of enslaved people to read and write. Both examples illustrate the essential role that literacy played, and continues to play, in ensuring democracy, equity, and social justice—and the precarious nature of democracy when literacy is neglected.

Today, young people are immersed in a complicated media ecology that promotes an infodemic of disinformation and profit-driven spin while simultaneously presenting extraordinary opportunities for participatory engagement. The social studies classroom is a critical platform for preparing our next generation to cope and thrive amid this unprecedented deluge of mediated messages. Given these realities, it is essential that social studies education integrates media literacy: the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, act on, and create media messages in a variety of forms.

(. . .)

In our era of polarized politics, question-based media analysis provides an academically bounded approach to analyzing challenging topics in the social studies classroom. The role of the teacher is to choose appropriate media for collective analysis that reflects diverse perspectives, to facilitate evidence-based decoding of the document(s), and to have students reflect on their own thinking, including their own confirmation biases. This process can be done with 1st grade students responding to and asking questions about book covers, product packaging, photographs, etc. It can be done in 12th grade civics classes where students analyze media messages about contemporary or historical controversial political issues through inquiry and reflection. The role of the teacher is not to tell the students what to think but to facilitate rigorous, fact-based, and reflective analysis and evaluation.

The questions below have been adapted from the National Association for Media Literacy Education's *Key Questions for Media Analysis* to incorporate questions that target the impact of social media and the infodemic.

Authorship and Audience

- Who made this and for what purpose?
- Who is the target audience, and how do you know?
- Who might benefit from this message—politically, economically, etc.
- Who might be harmed by this message, and how?
- How does this make me feel, and why?
- Will I share this? If so, how and with whom? If not, why not?