

# The POINT!

E-Letter for Western Pennsylvania Social Studies Educators

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## SEPARATION: CHURCH & STATE

Recent rumblings of some conservative activists calling them selves “*Christian Nationalists*” are attempting to eliminate separation of religious beliefs and practices from government. This harkens back to tribesmen in barbaric times when Christianity was in its infancy and people were uneducated. Tribal leaders would be converted and convince the members that they would live forever if they became Christian. Loyal tribesmen would have a battle cry that became effective. “Do you believe in Christ?” “No. Then you can’t live forever and I must kill you!” And church & state became one. Perhaps they also want to bring back the inquisition? What ever.

In addition, anti-Semitism can be traced back to the early times also. Clovis King of the Franks , speaking of Christ’s crucifixion was said to have stated that had he been there with his Franks, the Jews would not have done this. This too was passed on to his subjects and became part of European tradition

The First Amendment to the Constitution states: “ Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech...

Bible quoters should check the New Testament and the words of Christ: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things...”. Matthew 22:22. Christ did NOT unite Church & State. Humans did.

Efforts of the *Christian Right* to define America as a Christian nation are ill founded. The founders were not uniformly Christian. Many were Deists, others Unitarian, Congregationalist, Catholic, Anglican, Epicopalian, Presbyterian, Quaker, and possibly even a Jew.

The state they formed was not going to force citizens to support a state church, which had been the case in some colonies and definitely in Europe. Church and state were one and the same. The founders visioned a secular state where people were free to worship, or NOT, as they wished without fear of pressure from a government.

We object to regimes such as the Taliban where religious rules are enforced by the state. There are other countries where Christians are a minority group that often face discrimination and/or persecution. America has NO state sponsored religion but allows each person the freedom to follow their own conscience. The state in America is secular and allows its people the freedom to practice their own particular belief

-Leo West

*There are certain prehistoric things that swim  
beyond extinction. Karen Russell, writer*

## 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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**To learn about Soldiers & Sailors sponsorship opportunities,**

**please contact Sarah B. Galiotto**

**VP, Director of Development & Community Relations  
at [sarah@soldiersandsailorshall.org](mailto:sarah@soldiersandsailorshall.org)**

## Classrooms Without Borders

We are thrilled to announce that we are launching this summer a new look to our website! All the same educational information, event listings, digital resources, etc. all in one place and easier to locate than ever before.

[CWBPGH.org](http://CWBPGH.org)

Throughout the summer, we will be introducing you to aspects of the new site to get you ready to use it full steam ahead for the fall. As always your feedback is important to us to please let us know what you think [by leaving us a comment](#).

Shannon Pugh, **Shannon Pugh**  
President,  
Silver Spring, MD -- National Council nor the  
Anne Arundel Public Schools  
Programming for Anne Arundel County Pul  
Annapolis, MD  
Maryland, begins a one-year term as President of the NCSS Board of  
Directors on July 1, 2022.



*People truly engaged in life have messy houses.*

*Otessa Moshfeqh, writer*

# The Point

For  
Western Pennsylvania  
Social Studies Educators  
EDITORS  
Leo R. West

*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

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## **Minn. teachers learn about ag history for social studies**

A group of teachers in a Minnesota district recently toured farms, vineyards and other local sites that offer various opportunities for agriculture-related lessons in social studies classes. The education summit -- sponsored by National Geographic, the Minnesota Alliance for Geographic Education and the state's Department of Agriculture -- included the history of some sites, such as early influential farmers of the area like Andrew Peterson, an immigrant from Sweden who journaled about farm life from 1850-1898, and Wendelin Grimm, whose efforts resulted in North America's first winter-hardy alfalfa. **Full Story:** Hometown Source (Coon Rapids, Minn.) (7)

## **Education Equity**

**Get the insights you need on leaders who champion equity, culturally responsive teaching, the importance of cultivating Native teachers, the positive social-emotional effects of teachers of color, how the suspensions for students of color can be reduced by having teachers of color, strategies for promoting diversity and inclusion.**

## **Ky. art camp helps participants connect, express selves**

The Center of Owensboro, Ky., is hosting its first Transcend Summer Arts Camp for attendees to express themselves, tell their stories and communicate across cultures. Campers participate in activities such as exploring Indigenous art and creating self portraits and other art led by a local artist, with the students' work exhibited in a temporary gallery at the Owensboro Museum of Science and History. **Full Story:** Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer (Ky.) (7/1)

## **Software to help Pa. district gauge K-1 literacy**

A Pennsylvania school district will begin using EarlyBird Education software's "Pip the EarlyBird" game to help assess the literacy skills of kindergartners and first-grade students. Superintendent Megan Marie Van Fossan said the goal is to help more students learn to read at grade level by third grade. **Full Story:** Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (tiered subscription model) (7/5)

## **Gaming app developed to improve adult literacy**

The Barbara Bush Foundation has worked with the Dollar General Foundation and Southern Methodist University's game lab for the last few years to develop an app to improve the literacy of adults. Called Enigma, the app focuses on phonetic comprehension skills, and though it was created for adult readers, it can be used by younger struggling readers. **Full Story:** KXAN-TV (Austin, Texas) (7/8)

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## How to teach 2 perspectives of a single text

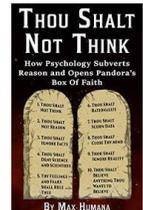
One way to help students improve their reading comprehension skills is to approach a single text from two perspectives -- reading like a reader and reading like a writer, suggests Jacob Chastain, a seventh-grade English teacher in Texas. In this article, Chastain share how to use a workshop approach for this activity and to toggle back and forth using the same piece of poetry or text. **Full Story:** MiddleWeb (7/4)

## Fla. teachers: Civics PD has religious angle

Miami Herald (tiered subscription model)

Several South Florida high school educators are alarmed that a new state civics initiative designed to prepare students to be “virtuous citizens” is infused with a Christian and conservative ideology after a three-day training session in Broward County last week.

Read more at: <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/education/article262941378.html#storylink=cpy>



## The Interesting Effects 4-Day Weeks May Have on School Climate

Teenagers experienced less bullying and fighting, a study found  
[Read More](#)

\* \* \*

## the origin of the city being described as “hell with the lid taken off.”

This is an interesting but long essay written about 1860 describing a visit to Pittsburgh during



## **Women in the Military:**

Since America’s founding days, women have been stepping forward to serve this country. From uncommon soldiers who disguised themselves to fight and nurses that faced horrific wounds to those who proudly wear the uniform today, women have always contributed to our military might. This curriculum reviews the changing roles of women in the military, case studies of women currently serving, and an overview of women’s participation in America’s conflicts. [WIM transcripts pdf](#)

[Women in the Military Documentary](#) (video)

[Women in the Military Discussion Points](#) (PDF)

[Women in the Military Videos](#) (multiple videos)

[Women in the Military Learning Activity Guide](#) (PDF)

[Women in the Military Bundle](#) [Women Quiz](#) (PDF)



Bob McMahon President, V-NEP. Cell: (610) 585-5682. [www.v-nep.org](http://www.v-nep.org)

## New Pa. budget injects \$125M into private school tax credit program \

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### 4 podcasts for the civics classroom

There are several civics podcasts to recommend to teachers and students, including "Civics 101" from New Hampshire Public Radio that includes lesson plans and graphic organizers, writes Sarah Cooper, an eighth-grade history teacher at Flintridge Preparatory School in La Canada, Calif. Cooper also suggests "Reframing History," a site-specific with historians speaking from museums or historical sites, and "Education for Sustainable Democracy," which profiles initiatives that focus on furthering democracy. **Full Story:** MiddleWeb (7/17)

### The economic history of New Orleans

New Orleans' geography and the presence of the Mississippi River made the city a major hub for transporting goods around the country in the early parts of the 1800s, but leaders missed the opportunity to diversify the economy with factories and other industrial opportunities, writes historical geographer Richard Campanella of Tulane University. In this commentary, he explains the history of the area's commercial activities and discusses how past decisions affect the city today. **Full Story:** The Times-Picayune | The New Orleans Advocate (7/7)

## Florida Is Placing Limits on Social Studies Textbooks. Here's What Has to Go=

Earlier this year the state drew national attention when it rejected several math textbooks for purportedly including principles of social-emotional learning, aspects of the Common Core State Standards, or aspects of critical race theory.



## **Ariz. does not advance measure to limit teaching race**

A move to limit teaching of so-called critical race theory in Arizona schools has failed to pass for a second year. The measure, which did not advance this year because of logistical reasons, drew criticism from some that it would have restricted teaching and learning. **Full Story:** KAWC-FM (Yuma, Ariz.) (6/26)



## **Study examines characteristics of developmental dyslexia**

Dyslexia is often viewed through a deficit-centered lens, but a study by researchers from the University of Cambridge suggests that's unwise. Researchers say that although developmental dyslexia can make writing, reading and spelling challenging, people with dyslexia have key strengths relating to exploring the unknown that have contributed to the successful adaptation and survival of our species. **Full Story:** Interesting Engineering (6/28)



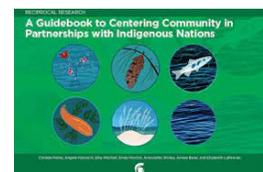
## **Teachers in Fla. attend civics education training**

Teachers in Florida are being offered \$700 stipends to attend one of 10 three-day training sessions being held around the state. The training sessions, which have been criticized by some as being partisan, are intended to help educators learn more about what to teach students about civics and government. **Full Story:** WINK-TV (Fort Myers, Fla.) (7/11)



## **Indigenous resource guide is free to Mich. teachers**

A free resource guide is available to support Michigan educators as they cover the addition of tribal governments to the state's social studies standards. The guide is named Maawndoongan -- from Anishinaabemowin meaning "gathering of information to share with people" -- and took tribal leaders two years to develop, with resources including information on the 1836 Treaty of Washington between the US government and the Anishinaabek people. **Full Story:** Traverse City Record-Eagle (Mich.) (tiered subscription model) (7/10)



## **More schools offer personal finance education**

A growing number of states require -- or are considering requiring -- high-schoolers to take a course in personal finance, according to Next Gen Personal Finance, which reports 7 in 10 public high-school students had access to a semesterlong personal finance course in the 2020-21 school year. Students enrolled in such a course at a California high school learn about budgeting, careers, debt, investing and saving. **Full Story:** CNBC (7/8)



## Utah prioritizes civic education in schools

Teachers in Utah want to teach civics, but lack the resources, according to a survey by the Department of History and Political Science and Center for Constitutional Studies at Utah Valley University. The state now requires civics education to be taught in school, and the new Civic Thought & Leadership Initiative at UVU's Center for Constitutional Studies is supporting that effort.  **Full Story:** KSL-TV (Salt Lake City) (7/6)



## 25% of schools cannot lock classroom doors from inside

Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, as well as many schools nationwide, do not have a basic safety feature that some experts say would help protect against acts of violence: classroom doors that lock from the inside. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that about 25% of US public schools do not have classroom doors that can be locked from the inside. **Full Story:** NBC News (7/12)



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## Students share 5 advantages of online learning

Online learning has benefitted many students -- including those with certain disabilities, notes Karen Powell Sears, an assistant sociology professor at Denison University in Ohio, who queried her students for insights. Virtual classes also put all students "on more equal footing," felt more inclusive and gave students more agency when it came to their health and learning, Sears writes. **Full Story:** Inside Higher Ed (7/14)



## **CHOICES Program**

**Looking for engaging ways to help your students gain new insights and perspectives on U.S. history?** Take a look at our **U.S. History Series!** The sixteen curriculum units in the series contain loads of **primary sources**, images, videos, and **lesson plans**, including role plays, perspective activities, analyzing political cartoons, geography and mapping, and so much more!

This series features frequently **untold perspectives** about the nation's significant events and turning points from the pre-revolutionary era to today. The most recent additions to this series include the following units:

- *Civics Lessons for Student Engagement*;
- *Imperial America: U.S. Global Expansion, 1890-1915*;
- *Racial Slavery in the Americas: Resistance, Freedom, and Legacies* (a one-year license is now free in Digital Editions).

Recently updated units include *The U.S. Role in a Changing World* and *Responding to Terrorism: Challenges for Democracy*. Other units cover the American Revolution, westward expansion, civil rights, immigration, and more!

**Explore Our U.S. History Series**      **We the People: A New Nation**

Rather than taking the usual approach of learning history from only the perspective of elite political leaders, students consider the opportunities, hardships, aspirations, and questions facing people across society in the United States in its earliest years—from 1783 to 1830. [Explore the unit](#)

