

# The POINT!

E-Letter for Western Pennsylvania Social Studies Educators  
Vol. 13 No. 11  
November 2020

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## **NCSS Joins AHA in Signing Statement on the "White House Conference on American History"**

Silver Spring, MD -- The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Board of Directors recently approved NCSS to sign on to a statement authored by the American Historical Association (AHA) and supported by over three dozen additional organizations condemning the recent "*White House Conference on American History*," deploring the tendentious use of history and history education to stoke politically motivated culture wars.

The AHA is a nonprofit organization founded for the promotion of historical studies, which provides leadership for the discipline by protecting academic freedom, developing professional standards, supporting scholarship and innovative teaching, and helping to sustain and enhance the work of historians.

Both NCSS and the AHA strongly encourage you to share the statement with your networks.

**[Read the Statement](#)**

### 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.

S&S, like all places where people congregate, is not open to the public at this time. Please visit on line: [soldiersandsailorshall.org](http://soldiersandsailorshall.org)

**SUPPORT SOLDIERS AND SAILORS MISSION & HELP "FILL THE HILL" WITH U.S. FLAGS ONM OUR FRONT LAWN**

### Carnegie Museum of Natural History. All rights reserved.

The museum welcomes all visitors. We work to assist visitors with disabilities in obtaining reasonable and appropriate accommodations, and in supporting equal access to our websites, services, programs, and activities. Please note that requests for accommodations at our museums should be made at least two weeks prior to your visit. For specific questions about wheelchairs, strollers, or other programmatic or equipment needs, or specific questions or concerns regarding accessibility for visitors with disabilities at the museums, talk with Visitor Services staff at the museum admissions desk, email

### Heinz History Center

**November 11 7:00 p.m. Virtual Program**

Our annual Treasures in the Archives is an opportunity to see highlights from one of the largest collections of historic materials in Western Pennsylvania.

**The archivists who work with these items every day will share the rarely heard stories behind some of their favorite collections. Collections featured in past Treasures in the Archives have included building movers, boxers, butchers, old saloons, famous families, overlooked community stories, and the lost history of a notorious home for ex-offenders.**

This signature event on the Detre Library & Archives calendar is a chance to learn about the lives of Western Pennsylvanians through one-of-a-kind photographs and documents.

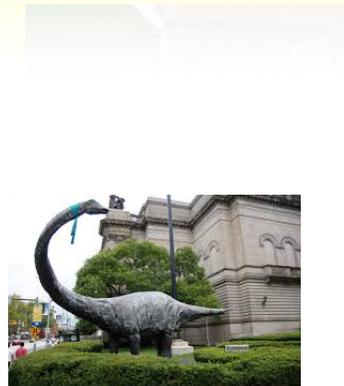
**ADMISSION**

This program is free, but donations are appreciated. Please register online.

This program will be presented virtually.

Live captioning and American Sign Language interpretation will be provided.

[\*\*Register now\*\*](#)



# The Point

For  
Western Pennsylvania  
Social Studies Educators  
EDITORS  
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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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## Teachers share online student-engagement tips

Encouraging students to use the public chat box on Zoom can help get them talking and connecting, writes Stephanie Scott, a sixth-grade teacher in Ohio. In this article, Scott and other teachers share how they keep students engaged, including Oregon middle- and high-school teacher Lorian Schmidt, who kicks off each class with a 10-minute activity -- such as asking students to find objects in their homes -- that inspire creativity and engagement. **Full Story:** The New York Times (tiered subscription model) (10/14)

## Little data known on return to in-person learning

Roughly two months since some schools returned to in-person instruction, there remains little comprehensive research or data to show how it is going or what strategies might be most effective. Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, said tracking reopening could have helped, but without it "everybody's just completely on edge and anxious about what's going to happen because there's no national guidance."  **Full Story:** CNN (10/12)

## What if reading curriculum included history?

The recent study connecting more social studies to higher reading scores leads columnist Jay Mathews -- who admits social studies was his favorite K-12 class -- to suggest that "rebel" English teachers could slip more social studies topics into their literacy curriculum. Natalie Wexler, author of "The Knowledge Gap," says she has witnessed second-graders, whose reading lessons included history, search eagerly to find out who won the War of 1812. **Full Story:** The Washington Post (tiered subscription model) (10/11)

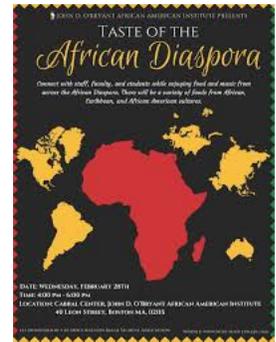
## Why critical thinking is needed across school subjects

Students need academic skills that they can apply to the real world, including to engage in civics through respectful debate and finding solutions to problems, says Pablo Wolfe, founder of the Coalition of Civically Engaged Educators. In this article, Wolfe and others say critical-thinking skills are important across all subjects, including math and social studies, as well as democracy. **Full Story:** School Library Journal (10/12)

*Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you. Ruth Bader Ginsburg, US Supreme Court justice 1933-2020.*

### African diaspora education brings up emotions in students

Students at an Atlanta high school have reacted with everything from shock to frustration to pride to what they are learning in an Advanced Placement Seminar that includes African diaspora. The College Board's African diaspora curriculum is also being taught in an Alabama high school where students have identified some research topics, including African-American English as a valid dialect and Black women and their hair in the workplace. **Full Story:** EdSurge (10/19)



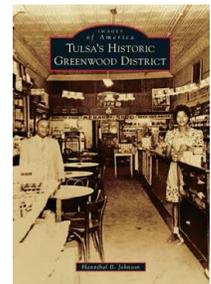
### Principal: Black students see themselves in history class

A full-year African American history elective is debuting in 15 Virginia schools this year, including Henrico High School where 16 students signed up for the class that starts with ancient Africa. Taught by history teacher Derick Vance, the class is important because students at the predominately Black school need to see themselves in what they're learning, says principal Karin Castillo-Rose. **Full Story:** WTVR-TV (Richmond, Va.) (10/8)



### Some Ill. lawmakers seek Black history in classes

A bill has been introduced by members of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus to develop a statewide curriculum for all students to learn Black history. Rep. La Shawn Ford, a former social studies teacher, says earlier exposure to such lessons can help students better understand each other and stem racial tension. **Full Story:** WSIL-TV (Carterville, Ill.) (10/7)



### Graduates: Work with tribes to learn, teach history

Two graduates of Thompson School District in Colorado say the schools can do more since the August retirement of mascots at two schools: Connect with a specific Native American tribe and work together on respectful and representative history lessons. One of the students, Corey Lovato, says the schools have an opportunity to learn and teach more about the history of tribes. **Full Story:** The Reporter-Herald (Loveland, Colo.) (10/1)



### **CHOICES**

#### ***Confronting Genocide: Never Again?***

Trace the development of the United Nations and the Genocide Convention; explore the evolution of the international community's response to genocide; and examine six case studies, including the Holocaust.

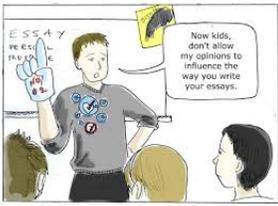


#### **Explore our unit on Genocide**

### **Study: Racism deals \$16T economic blow to US**

The US economy likely has taken a \$16 trillion hit in the past two decades because of systematic racism against Black Americans, a Citigroup study says. According to the study, addressing this in four key areas, including housing and wages, could add approximately \$5 trillion to the gross domestic product in the next five years. **Full Story:** The Hill (9/24)





### Teachers share approaches to politics in class

It is impossible to keep politics out of the classroom without doing a disservice to students who will need critical-thinking skills as adults, according to educators and experts responding to this blog post. Among them is school principal Jen Schwanke, who offers questions for educators to ask themselves when challenged about politics in the classroom, including whether a discussion fosters understanding about the world.

**Full Story:** Education Week Teacher (tiered subscription model) (10/13)

### Do students have a right to civics education?

A judge dismissed a class action lawsuit initiated by students in Rhode Island seeking better civics education to prepare them to vote and engage in society. An attorney representing the students said they planned to appeal. **Full Story:** Education Week (tiered subscription model) (10/14), The Associated Press (10/14)



### Choices Program, Voting

In a heated political atmosphere it can be challenging for students to engage in meaningful civil conversations about the United States and its political future. One entry point to encouraging civil discourse is for students to begin with an analysis of personally held values.



The latest free *Teaching with the News* lesson from the Choices Program, **Voting in 2020: Values and Policies during a Pandemic**, allows students to consider how different people prioritize and even define their personally held values in different ways. In this lesson, students will:

- Assess the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the 2020 election.
- Identify and prioritize the values that shape their personally held beliefs.
- Explore the presidential candidates' positions on key policy issues.
- Gather evidence from news articles and public opinion polls to analyze an issue and its role in the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

### Explore Voting in 2020



### Democracy

“Who Counts” is the latest installment in the *HumIn Focus* series created by the Penn State Humanities Institute and produced by WPSU.

And Click on this Video



## Rendell Center

Check out our lesson materials on The Presidency at <https://rendellcenter.org/programs/presidential-lessons> .

Also, we invite you to participate in our 2020 Citizenship Challenge with this year’s question on the electoral college:

*“Should the Constitution be amended to eliminate the Electoral College system for selecting the President and be replaced with the national popular vote?”*

Additional information on the Challenge can be found at <https://rendellcenter.org/experiential-learning/citizenship-challenge-2020>



## Historical Society of Pennsylvania

HSP is excited to offer two of our popular genealogy courses virtually: *Foundations of Genealogy I* and *Researching Your Irish Ancestors*. We received quite a bit of feedback about these courses recently and wish to thank everyone for their suggestions. We realize we live in unprecedented times, and COVID-19 has affected our daily lives in many ways.

To help make our programs more accessible, we are reducing the price for both courses. *Foundations* will now be \$300 for General Admission, \$250 for Friends of HSP. *Researching Irish* will be \$225 and \$175 for General Admission and Friends of HSP, respectively. Additionally, the dates have been changed— *Researching Irish* begins on Tuesday, November 3 and *Foundations* begins on Wednesday, November 4. Click below for more information and to register!



## Teacher shares Chromebook trick for split screen

A Florida teacher's Facebook post revealing a hack to help students use a split screen on their Chromebook -- so they can view their work and the video -- has gone viral. Carol Cleaver said she learned about the trick on the Bitmoji Classroom page. **Full Story:** Good Morning America (10/15)



## School mural honors Blackfeet elders

A mural on Heart Butte Public School in Montana honors Blackfeet elders Mountain Chief, John Spotted Eagle, Running Crane and Arrow Top. Art teacher John Pepion partnered with artist Louis Still Smoking to paint the mural to honor the elders of the local community. **Full Story:** Missoulian (Missoula, Mont.) (9/9)



*Words, when written, crystallize history; their very structure gives permanence to the unchangeable past. -Francis Bacon, essayist, philosopher, and statesman (1561-1626)*

**Constituting AmericaTitle: Constitution, Contest, Civil Civic Conversation**



Constituting America free classroom presentations promote teaching the Constitution or demonstrating a Civil Civic Conversation. Our "We The Future" contest allows students using their talent in essays, songs, Public Service Announcements and STEM Projects using the Constitution as the theme. The conference session and classroom presentations are adaptable to any situation in person or virtual allowing for audience participation.

The teaching of the Constitution and instruction on how to have a Civil Civic Conversation engages students to become active citizens. Skills will be taught on how to teach students ways to converse without getting upset and agreeing to disagree.

**Should students be made to keep cameras on?**

Over 75% of educators report that students who learn live online are required to keep cameras on if they have them, according to a survey by the Education Week Research Center. This comes despite concerns from some teachers that the requirement could put some students at a disadvantage, including those from lower-income households who may not want their classmates and teacher to see their homes or those who have lower bandwidth. **Full Story:** Education Week Teacher (tiered subscription model) (10/20)



**Podcasts: "We the Teachers" and "In Their Own Words"**

"We the Teachers" features audio from our webinars, sharing the same insight and analysis in a podcast format. Each podcast features a single topic or question from American history and government with in-depth exploration of relevant documents. [TeachingAmericanHistory.org](http://TeachingAmericanHistory.org)



**Okla. students learn to write in Cherokee, cursive**

Students today have weaker fine-motor skills than their predecessors, according to Anita Lightcap of Tahlequah Public Schools, which makes cursive writing more difficult but no less important for reading historical documents and meeting Oklahoma education standards. Preschoolers at Cherokee Immersion School start by learning to write and speak Cherokee, and printing in English and then work on English cursive writing in third through fifth grades. **Full Story:** Tahlequah Daily Press (Okla.) (10/20)



**D.C. museum tells the tale of words**

Planet Word, a \$60 million immersive museum set to open in Washington, D.C., is devoted to words, reading and language, and aims to capture the attention of 10- to 12-year-olds before they lose interest in books, says its founder Ann Friedman. The museum has offerings for people of other ages, including a 20-foot wall of words, an interactive world-language space, and exhibits on humor, rhetoric and persuasion. **Full Story:** The Washington Post (tiered subscription model) (10/21)



*No human being is illegal. -Elie Wiesel, writer, Nobel laureate (30 Sep 1928-2016)*