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Welcome to the Fall Edition of the MCSS Toolbox. As this edition is started it is a hot summer day. Hopefully, by the time you get this, the weather will have calmed down and cooled down so students and teachers may enjoy learning together. The organization is loose due to the arrival of items, so look at it all.

From the Editor-

Many issues which can affect us in Michigan as well as social studies teaching and learning in the United States are occurring now. Among those are-

- A former president who has been indicted on several counts, most of which are serious who is running for the office again. (p.10)
- The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) in many facets of our society, including education. (p.1)
- Catastrophic weather events due to global warming which until recently have not been taken seriously. (p.6)
- The teaching about sexual identity at any level has been banned, including books on the topic. (p.11)
- Race continues to be a problem for many leaders, educational as well as political. This includes the current relationship between Whites and people of color as well as teaching about the past, including slavery and such incidents as the Tulsa Oklahoma massacre and Emmitt Till. (p.6)

This issue will speak to these problems, as well as other resources, in the hope that having students at the appropriate age can learn the facts and make up their own conclusions about them in healthy, open dialogues. (pp. 4 & 11)

-Bob Pettapiece

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ChatGPT-

One of the hot topics since the Spring issue is ChatGPT and its use in education. As a former technology instructor for 30+ years, as well as a social studies educator, I see artificial intelligence (AI) as a new tool. Like most tools, it can be a help or can be a problem. I believe it is in our best interest to know about it and to figure out how to best use it, not try to banish it. Like cell phones, it is here to stay. Let's enjoy it.

More on this from NCSS SmartBrief- six months after the emergence of ChatGPT and its variants, educators are investing in training and professional development to comprehend and effectively use generative artificial intelligence in classrooms. With concerns about students' authenticity, assessment changes, and the potential impact on critical thinking, educators aim to demystify AI, provide guidance, and adapt their teaching methods to the technology's capabilities. **Full Story:** [EdSurge](#) (8/3)



Be sure to read the President's Advice starting on page 6!

Editorial Board

Bob Pettapiece, Editor/Publisher
Jim McConnell, Contributing Editor
Cetaura Bell, Copy Editor



MICHIGAN SOCIAL STUDIES OLYMPIAD

Registration for the Olympiad is now open! Dr. Constant and his team have put together another awesome opportunity for students to engage with your content. This year's theme is: "Stand Up! Risk Takers and Change Makers!" I'm excited to see what projects students dream up this year, and if you haven't taken a look at the Olympiad materials yet, everything is available on our website. <https://www.mcssmi.org/Olympiad-24>

The **Call for Proposals** for the MCSS annual conference should be opening this month. This is a great opportunity to share your knowledge and expertise with 300-500 social studies educators statewide! Be on the lookout for an email later in the month officially opening both conference registration and the call for proposals.

Great Resources from Dave Johnson-

MCSS President, Dave Johnson, in his August letter reminded everyone to check out the website: www.misocialstudies.org. It's maintained by the social studies community in the state and is your one-stop shopping spot for standards, resources, webinar/video recaps, and professional development. As we learn of new offerings, we update the embedded Google calendar with all the required information. By September 1st, there should be a ton of events listed for you to peruse and consider attending. MCSS will join our partner organizations in utilizing the calendar on this website throughout every school year as a great way to continue to connect you with the work the ISDs, organizations, and even the state department of education are doing.

Secondly, when I was taking my first tour through the MCSS presidency MCSS collaborated with the

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Michigan Assessment Consortium to work on a Formative Assessment in Social Studies guide much like the one they'd already developed for Science. (Hey we beat Math to the table for once!)

Working collaboratively with the MAC and a few of my MCSS colleagues we drafted, revised, edited, drafted some more, edited some more, cried softly in the dark, revised, continued drafting, etc. for almost three years. At this point the document is released and finished and I'm excited to share it with you. The document can be found on the MAC website here: http://famemichigan.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/FAMEGuide_SocialStudies.pdf

More Great Resources-

The Choices Program at Brown University recently released a new curriculum unit. [The Vietnam War: Origins, History, and Legacies](#) tells the "long history" of the destructive, deadly, and divisive U.S. war in Vietnam based on recent scholarship in U.S. history, Vietnamese studies, and the history of the global Cold War. The curriculum unit is designed for use in both U.S. History and World History classrooms. It is also part of the Choices Program's new [Asian Studies Series](#), which focuses on the history, geography, and politics of selected Asian countries, as well as each country's relationship to the



United States and other parts of the world.

In The Vietnam War, students engage with the following topics:

- The Vietnamese struggle for independence from French colonial rule
- Ways the war in Vietnam was linked to the broader global Cold War

- Diverse views, opinions, and experiences of U.S. military personnel and Americans on the home front
- Personal stories and "bottom-up" experiences from all sides of the conflict
- The war's human costs, including the post-war refugee crisis
- How the war has been remembered and memorialized

The unit's accompanying lesson plans emphasize the development of skills that are essential for social studies and history classrooms, including geography, data analysis, historical empathy, primary source analysis, critical thinking, collaborative work, and more! The unit includes study guides, graphic organizers, and videos. These materials contain questions that can be utilized in formative or summative assessments.

The unit includes the following lesson plans:

- Vietnam's History and Geography: Exploring Google Earth
- Going Deeper with Primary Sources: War in Vietnam, 1945-1965
- Women, Gender, and the Vietnam War
- Creating Historical Narratives: 1960s Social Change at Home and in the Military
- Songs of the Global Revolutions of 1968
- Oral Histories: Mapping the Vietnamese Refugee Crisis
- Build a Timeline of the "Long History" of the U.S. War in Vietnam

The Vietnam War is available in the Choices Program's web-based [Digital Editions](#) and in print. Check out our option for additional Student Texts if you like to use print, but prefer not to spend lots of time making copies!



What is CTRL-F and How Can It Be Used for Teaching? Tips & Tricks

CTRL-F is a digital learning platform that aims to make children better critical thinkers by using step-by-step guidance and activities. The idea is to educate young learning minds in the art of thinking about what they're being told. Rather than taking something at face value, they will learn to question and research facts. Full Story: [Tech & Learning \(8/7\)](#)



The Truth Is Out There

Accuracy and honest work counts, and learning to find the truth in the chaos of the Web can be a challenge. Here are a few Tech & Learning resources to help that pursuit for both you and your students.

[Free Fact-Checking Sites](#)

[Best Free AI Detection Sites](#)

[Best Free Plagiarism Checking Sites](#)

Good luck [from Tech & Learning]!

Columbian College of Arts & Sciences at George Washington produces the **History News Network**, *because the past is the past and the present and the future too*. They have many resources including a new feature, Classroom Activity Kits. Check it out by clicking on the HNN symbol.



Teach Dialogue Skills to Rebuild Our Democracy

by [MIDDLEWEB](#) · 07/31/2023 · updated 07/31/2023
[From NCSS SmartBrief (8/4/23)]

By Shawn W. McCusker, Former social studies teacher & co-author of *Becoming Active Citizens: Practices to Engage Students in Civic Education Across the Curriculum*.

In 2019 professor Shawn Rosenberg presented a paper at the annual meeting of the International Society of Political Psychologists in Lisbon. Within a few minutes the crowd became restless and unsettled, their chatter disrupting the session.

The cause of the disruption was Rosenberg's thesis. Democracy, he said, cannot survive. It will decline and ultimately fail. He argued that as a society we have increasingly failed to teach people how to navigate the responsibilities that are baked into democracy and as a result this lack of skills has led to the collapse of the moderate center of our society and triggered a desperate shift to right-wing populism.

While I don't agree with the premise that there is no hope for democracy, I do agree that our failure to prepare our citizens for the responsibilities of democracy is an existential crisis for our country and our educational system.

A recent Pew Research Center study lays out the problem in terms that are simple to understand. Pew found that 45% of US adults (and 58% of people who closely follow political news) have stopped talking politics with someone because of that person's political beliefs. A great many of us aren't talking to each other about important issues that matter.

Not all of this is a problem that schools need to solve, but as teachers we are uniquely positioned to both model and teach the skills that are essential to making sure that Dr. Rosenberg is too pessimistic and that Democracy has a bright future.

What We Can Do: Debate v. Dialogue

The most important thing teachers can do is ensure that our students are capable of engaging in conversations and confident in their beliefs and values while at the same time remaining open to listening to others who they may disagree with.



The most common way of discussing current and controversial topics is the classroom debate. While I enjoy good debates, they might not be accomplishing what we want them to, and unless we take the time to build foundational skills and dispositions they might actually be getting in our way.

* * * *

Editorial comment: Back in my high school teaching days I had my history students bring in a current event on Fridays. To save time, they were to read the headline and if anyone in the class wanted more details they could ask questions. Many times the headline was enough, but often a discussion followed. As the teacher, I moderated for a while, but then I decided to turn that role over to a student; a different one each week. WOW! Short version, we had some great discussions on wide ranging topics and opinions. Despite differences of opinions, I do not remember having to intervene, perhaps my positive memories of long ago have tainted my recollections. Bottom line, when students feel empowered they can do good things.

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Another article on the need for classroom discussion from the AFT Magazine; [The Urgent Need for Frequent, Free Classroom Discussion](#).

Opportunities from the MDE

From Scott Koenig, Social Studies Consultant

1. [The African American Student Initiative \(AASI\)](#) is looking for participants. This is an amazing learning experience and will transform you and your practice.
2. [The Teaching Comprehensive History \(TCH\) Webinar Series](#) is in the planning process. The TCH team is collaborating with Michigan Virtual for module learning and is working on future webinars for the next season. Please keep an eye on the website for content and future updates.
3. The MDE launched the [Personal Finance Memo](#). Please reference this document to assist you with personal finance understandings under the new law. The MDE is also working closely industry, education partners, and students to help drive supports for this new requirement. Please reference the personal finance [website](#) for foundational resources and future updates/supporting materials. A special thanks to Mr. Derek D'Angelo ([MCEE](#) President) for all his care and collaboration for this work thus far.
4. I'd like to plug getting involved in Formative Assessment learning! Please look at learning through the [Formative Assessment for Michigan Educators](#) (FAME) website. This work is crucial to boosting learning processes for you and your students.
5. If your school is looking at improving teaching and learning the "fullness of history" and cultural competency work, the recent state school aid budget has allocated 6 million dollars for this work to be done at the local level. The MDE is currently working on a competitive grant for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to access these funds. I share this so you as might want your school/district/ISD collaborative to apply for these funds and be a leader in this work. I will share more information as this grant work is finalized.
6. Looking to boost your personal finance expertise? Please look at the [Michigan Council on Economic Education's](#) (MCEE) website for professional development opportunities.



7. **HONORING STUDENTS!!!** I am pleased to report that [The Michigan Council for History Education \(MCHE\) Awards Committee](#) has opened the [2024 USSYP application](#)! Let's get the word out for this opportunity to be part of the United States Senate Youth Program.
8. Also, USSYP supports the [U.S. Presidential Scholars Program](#). Please know that students must be nominated by their school, community, or organizational leaders. If you have top candidates that should be considered for nominations please have them get their name in the USSYP opportunity but also email me their name(s). I will work with you to support your student(s) nomination(s).



What is National Geographic Kids and How Can It Be Used for Teaching? Tips & Tricks

National Geographic Kids takes the famed publication's traditional photography and reporting background and distills that into a one-stop-shop for nature, history, and more for young visitors. From rare culture to natural curiosities to outer space, the website is crammed full of compelling and eye-catching content that will engage a wide range of ages. Full Story: Tech & Learning (7/24)



Join the 2024 NCHE Conference, History at the Crossroads in Cleveland March 7-9, 2024. [More details](#)

& Consider



Books, Censorship, and Anti-intellectualism in Schools

by Emily J.M. Knox from Phi Delta Kappan March 26, 2020

Efforts to remove certain books from schools are rooted in a strong belief in the power of books to introduce people to new ideas and to change their minds. . . . [Read the article.](#)



Teaching Students to be Skilled Citizens

by Jack Schneider, Eric Soto-Shed, and Karalyn McGovern from PDK (5/21/23)

To decide what students should learn in civics, let's begin by looking at what skilled citizens do.

Civics has long been neglected in the preK-12 schools. Yet there is growing support for civics education, coming from a broad range of voices. In 2021, for instance, more than 300 experts from across the political spectrum released The Roadmap to Educating for American Democracy, which was swiftly endorsed by six former secretaries of education — Republicans and Democrats. And new civics requirements have been introduced by both Republicans and Democrats in states like Indiana and Massachusetts. A window of opportunity seemingly has opened. . . . [Read more.](#)



How to use ChatGPT as a learning tool

from the APA Monitor (June 2023)

Rather than weaken student effort, artificial intelligence can help prepare students for the real world by encouraging critical thinking—with a few caveats. Here's advice from psychology instructors about how to use ChatGPT and other AI technology wisely. . . . [Read on.](#)



How AI could save (not destroy) education

Sal Khan, the founder and CEO of Khan Academy, thinks artificial intelligence could spark the greatest positive transformation education has ever seen. He shares the opportunities he sees for students and educators to collaborate with AI tools -- including the potential of a personal AI tutor for every student and an AI teaching assistant for every teacher -- and demos some exciting new features for their educational chatbot, Khanmigo. [A TED Talk](#)

Teaching with Current Events Self-Paced Workshop

This *free* workshop introduces Facing History's approach to teaching with current events, which includes reflection, pedagogy, and teaching strategies. For more information or to join, click [here](#).



Advice from MCSS President, Dave Johnson

In January of 2023, Education Week ran an article entitled: “[5 Big Challenges for Schools in 2023](#)”.

Three of the five things in their list directly connect to social studies classrooms. Schools have faced bans on topics and materials that have fallen under the blanket throw-away term “Critical Race Theory,” which has made it harder for schools as a whole to address staff shortages. After all, who wants to teach social studies if the study of the past will be misconstrued in so many possible ways?

The second challenge for schools was identified as an “increased call for more paternal control over what students learn.” If you’ve been in the field of education even briefly, you know that in Michigan, parents have always had the ability to have a voice in the education of their children. The content at every grade level is carefully laid out in standards documents that ensure we’re all doing our best to teach students about the depth and breadth of history that has shaped the world today.

The fifth challenge outlined in the Education Week article was “Teaching about climate change.” While the Michigan Standards only specifically call out climate change by name six times - 4 times in 6th grade World Geography and twice in HS Civics, even other grade levels that get into climate zones around the nation and world face a possible backlash from people who believe acknowledging the increase in extreme weather around the world is indoctrination.

These challenges alone can seem insurmountable for teachers, both old and new. Thankfully, the revision to our state standards, which began in 2014 and concluded in June 2019, provides educators with the tools they need to tackle some of these challenges head-on.

Enter the C3 Framework.

The C3 Framework - released in 2013 by the National Council for the Social Studies - provides a framework for teachers to practice inquiry in the classroom. What better way to explore some of these sensitive topics than with a broad, arguable, compelling question that allows students to analyze a variety of data, perspectives, accounts, etc., to come to their own reasoned conclusion about what happened in the past, or what’s happening today in our world. A strong inquiry allows students to come to their own reasoned conclusions and communicate those findings in various ways. Students might participate in a debate about climate change. They might use inquiry to create a digital documentary about the rise in youth activism nationwide. They might analyze voter turnout over a long period of time to determine trends in policy, platforms, and ideology. None of these things teach students what to value - but they do teach students what to do to stay informed about what’s happening in the world.

Your Standards are your Guidepost.

Assemble a group of people to create or update standards in any discipline, and you’ll never run out of ideas of what you could fill any class at any grade level. The problem is, realistically, you could make the case for us to offer twice as many social studies courses as we currently do. We need more civics, economics, geography, and history at every grade level - and when the needs of those four disciplines within social studies are added to the needs of English, Math, Science, the arts, computer science, world languages... There simply isn’t enough time in the day to teach everything we need to teach. The state standards provide a good guidepost on where to focus. While we recognize the need to go deeper in nearly every standard than we currently do - there’s enough there to provide you support, guidance, and, yes - justification - on where to spend your time regardless of your content specialty.

The State Organizations Are Your Friends.

I’m currently president of the Michigan Council for the Social Studies, but I also serve on the Michigan Council for History Education board and as a trustee on the Michigan Geographic Alliance board. While I’m not on the Michigan Council on Economic Education or Michigan Center for Civic Education boards (My bucket list keeps growing!), all five of the

**Michigan
Council for the
Social Studies**



state content organizations provide training, resources, and support for teachers. Getting connected with one or all of these organizations provides you with a wealth of tools and expertise that can help you navigate almost any challenge that may arise. Reach out to your district representative or the board as a whole if you find yourself in need of an assist.

There are no easy solutions to what Education Week brought forth in their January 2023 article. As a field, we've grappled with some of them for years, and there's no end in sight to things like the teacher shortage. Those of us in the field, however, have plenty of opportunities to continue to level up our instructional practices to teach social studies well and the duty to prepare each student who walks through our classroom doors with the knowledge to participate in civic life.



Book Reviews

Crooked: The Roaring '20s Tale of a Corrupt Attorney General, a Crusading Senator, and the Birth of the American Political Scandal

by Nathan Masters

Reviewed by Dr. Jim McConnell, Dearborn Schools (retired)

I just finished reading this fascinating story of corruption during the administration of President Warren Harding. The author did not focus on Harding or on Teapot Dome, the most famous, or infamous, scandal of the Harding years, but rather on the activities of Attorney General

The Amazon book review best explains this complex narrative: "The riveting, forgotten narrative of the most corrupt attorney general in American history and the maverick senator who stopped at nothing to take him down." Read the full review on [Amazon](#).

An Ordinary Man, An: The Surprising Life and Historic Presidency of Gerald R. Ford"

by Richard Norton Smith

Reviewed by Dr. Jim McConnell

Early this summer, I read the LARGE biography of President Gerald Ford. I especially enjoyed the

sections on Nixon/Agnew/watergate, on the Vietnam war, Ford's pardon and the Election of 1996 and 1980, since I recalled little of either; the Reagan challenge to Ford in 76 and Carter's very narrow loss to Reagan in 1980.

The book includes a great amount of trivia from the perspective of the writer who was very fond of Ford. A noted presidential scholar, Richard Norton Smith served for many years as Director of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum and Library. He then was the founding Director of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield, Illinois. (The Lincoln Museum is well worth a trip to Illinois to visit the museum and other nearby presidential sites.

If this sounds good, you might also enjoy "Presidents: Birthplaces, Homes, and Burial Sites: A Pictorial Guide" by Rachel M. Koolman.



HSM expresses concern about historical knowledge:

History comprehension is at its lowest ever. The 2023 National Assessment of Educational Progress revealed that only 13% of eighth grade students scored proficient in history, and adults are in a similar boat. Polls show that less than 30% of U.S. adults can demonstrate a basic understanding of history. For information about the historical Society of Michigan, visit www.hsmichigan.org



Want to learn about Michigan Historic sites, state Museum and state Capitol tours?

To learn about Michigan's official historic sites and how to arrange a Michigan History Museum tour and a State Capitol tour, (including the NEW Capitol Visitor center), check out these three websites:

*Michigan Historic Sites at <https://www.michigan.gov/mhc/museums>

*Michigan History Center, Lansing, at <https://www.michigan.gov/mhc>

* State Capitol visit <http://capitol.michigan.gov/tours>

Politics is democracy in action. . . . Vote wisely!

Educators share strategies to enhance social studies

From NCSS SmartBrief

Social studies and civics educators have ideas to share for navigating the challenges posed by state laws limiting certain classroom instruction. Shared in this blog post by high-school social studies teacher Larry Ferlazzo, the approaches include summarizing current events, emphasizing role-playing for historical immersion and employing explicit direct instruction to enhance student understanding and engagement.

Full Story: [Education Week](#) (8/17)

[Editor's Note: The first strategy on teaching current events is very good.]



Mich. educator shares history lessons to counter myths

From NCSS SmartBrief

A website created by Matt Vriesman, a veteran high-school history teacher in Michigan, offers 40 lesson plans that are more in alignment with the US history standards of the College Board and its Advanced Placement courses and exams. In this interview, Vriesman explains the origin of the site and why it challenges the narratives often seen in textbooks that use "pure myth that served a purpose of minimizing racial injustice and Black agency."

Full Story: [Chalkbeat/Detroit](#) (8/15)



Best Digital Icebreakers

By Diana Restifo

From Tech & Learning (8/14/23)

Back to school time is here and it's essential for educators to start building a comfortable and secure atmosphere in their classrooms from day one.

One way to ease into the new year is with icebreakers - shared exercises and activities that help students shed their first-day anxieties and get to know their new classmates. Teachers can also learn about their new classes through icebreaker activities, which carry none of the usual stress of assignments and exams.

Unlike many other classroom activities, icebreakers aren't graded and have no "right" answers. Participation is the only required element!

The following icebreakers are designed to engage kids' interest and make them feel at home with their new classmates. Expect laughter (but not mayhem).
[For details click [here](#)]



Teaching US History Using US Coins

Ideas from the [US Mint](#)



How Smithsonian Programs Support Teacher Collaboration



Smithsonian

The Smithsonian Institution collaborates with teachers in various ways beyond traditional field trips, supporting pre-K-12 schools through regular interactions and specialized programs, writes Ashley Naranjo, manager of educator engagement and strategic partnerships in the Smithsonian Office of the Undersecretary for Education. In this blog post, Naranjo writes that these collaborations enhance teaching practices, benefit students and inform educational resources shared nationwide. Full Story: [SmartBrief/Education](#) (6/29)



History Channel Offers Great Series, *The Food that Built America*

by Jim McConnell

My wife Annette and I have found this series entertaining, educational and worth watching. It is well-written, thoroughly researched, and fascinating. I think we have watched every episode of every season. I would assume you can find it *On Demand*.

Here is the promo for the most recent season: "Season three of the popular nonfiction series "The Food That Built America" will satisfy viewers' appetites by sharing the origin stories of a new group of bold pioneers behind America's most iconic food empires such as Orville Redenbacher, Ettore "Chef" Boiardi, Wally Amos, Debbi Fields, and Tom Carvel among others. Before these brands became household names, they came from brilliant – sometimes ruthless – visionaries who revolutionized food and changed

the culinary landscape of America forever. Through dramatic recreations, fascinating facts, and expert commentary, this season delves into the unbelievable stories of grit, creativity, and determination by these culinary entrepreneurs whose unrelenting innovation helped them come out on top.”

Opinions

HOW AMERICA GOT MEAN

By [David Brooks](#)

In a culture devoid of moral education, generations are growing up in a morally inarticulate, self-referential world.

[Editorial Note: While this situation may not be resolved by social studies teaching, I think we should consider it.]

Over the past eight years or so, I’ve been obsessed with two questions. The first is: Why have Americans become so sad? The rising rates of depression have been well publicized, as have the rising deaths of despair from drugs, alcohol, and suicide. But other statistics are similarly troubling. The percentage of people who say they don’t have close friends has increased fourfold since 1990. The share of Americans ages 25 to 54 who weren’t married or living with a romantic partner went up to 38 percent in 2019, from 29 percent in 1990. A record-high 25 percent of 40-year-old Americans have never married. More than half of all Americans say that no one knows them well. The percentage of high-school students who report “persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness” shot up from 26 percent in 2009 to 44 percent in 2021.

My second, related question is: Why have Americans become so mean? I was recently talking with a restaurant owner who said that he has to eject a customer from his restaurant for rude or cruel behavior once a week—something that never used to happen. A head nurse at a hospital told me that many on her staff are leaving the profession because patients have become so abusive. At the far extreme of meanness, hate crimes rose in 2020 to their highest level in 12 years. Murder rates have been surging, at least until recently. Same with gun sales. Social trust is plummeting. In 2000, two-thirds of American households gave to charity; in 2018, fewer than half did. The words that define our age reek of menace:

conspiracy, polarization, mass shootings, trauma, safe spaces. . . . [For the rest of the article, click [here](#).]

In a recent interview on NPR, David Brooks said, *The most important story about why Americans have become sad and alienated and rude, I believe, is also the simplest: We inhabit a society in which people are no longer trained in how to treat others with kindness and consideration. Our society has become one in which people feel licensed to give their selfishness free rein.*



Heros & Villains

From the [Bill of Rights Institute](#)

[One answer to the concerns of David Brooks.]

What happens to a republic if virtue is not practiced? In a nation founded on constitutional principles such as individual liberty and consent of the governed, civic virtue must be central to all civic education. To teach civic virtue is to help preserve our republic by developing the

character of students. This civic resource avoids shallow topics, inviting teachers and students to dive straightforwardly into robust, history-based topics. Through rich narratives, critical questions, meaningful discussions, and personal application, teachers and students will examine the civic virtue assumptions of our nation’s Founders and their relevance today.

Educators are encouraged to begin exploring this resource with our [Thought Activity for Educators](#). It provides important background for teaching character through the lens of virtue. A student’s first introduction to the resource should be the [Defining Civics Virtue](#) lesson which can be paired with the [Benjamin Franklin and Civic Virtue](#) lesson or used as an introduction to any of the 24 lessons provided.



Teacher: History, Civics Vital for Elementary-schoolers

From NCSS SmartBrief (7/10/23)

The recent National Assessment of Educational Progress revealed poor proficiency in US history and civics among students, which highlights the need to prioritize social studies education, writes Nardi Routten, a fourth-grade teacher in North Carolina who is a member of the board that oversees NAEP. In this article, Routten writes about ways in which educators can incorporate lessons in social studies, including by visiting local landmarks, such as Palace, the official residence of the British governors of North Carolina in the 1700s.

Full Story: [Edutopia](#)



More Teaching Tools

6 Counterintuitive Strategies to Boost Student Learning

By Andrew Boryga in [Edutopia](#) (April 21, 2023)

When it comes to finding ways to get big wins in the classroom, it's sometimes the approaches that feel a little unconventional that are the most successful.

Sometimes the best practices aren't obvious—they challenge cherished notions, upend decades of conventional wisdom, or just feel kind of eccentric.

We often look to teachers and researchers as we source innovative teaching practices and strategies that require out-of-the-box thinking but lead to big impacts in the classroom: greater academic independence, for example, or high-order thinking and reasoning.

In an effort to highlight some of these more surprising insights, we've put together a list of six effective and evidence-based practices, backed by educators and by research.



Use CRAAP test to vet online sources

From [NCSS SmartBrief](#) (4/21/23)

[A name students should remember]

AI and abundant online misinformation make it important for students to learn how to identify credible information and sources, and the CRAAP test -- which stands for currency, relevance, authority, accuracy and purpose -- provides a strong framework

for teaching the skills, writes Trevor Muir, an author and educator. Activities like bracket-style competitions for sources and classroom debates can help students learn how to properly evaluate information, writes Muir. Full Story: [Edutopia](#) (4/20)



FACING HISTORY & OURSELVES

From NCSS SmartBrief (4/18/23)

This six-lesson unit delves into the history and legacy of the murder of Emmett Till, considering what we can learn from it as we work to achieve racial justice.

About This Unit

In this six-lesson unit, students will explore the history and legacy of the murder of Emmett Till. In particular, they will consider how Till's murder and the courageous choices of his mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, inspired a generation of activists to work towards racial justice. Students will then reflect on the lessons this history holds as we work to achieve racial justice and how it might inform their civic choices.

Click here for the [unit on Emmett Till](#).



Trump indictment: Teaching unprecedented history as it unfolds

BY [LEXI LONAS](#)

From NCSS SmartBrief (4/17/23)

The first-ever indictment of a former U.S. president is giving social studies and civics teachers a chance to teach American history as it happens.

The opportunity is complicated, however, by the inherently divisive nature of Donald Trump.

Some educators are avoiding the subject altogether; others let their students watch Trump's arraignment live on Tuesday.

Anton Schulzki, a high school social studies teacher in Colorado Springs, Colo., said it "turned out my class met at the same time" as Trump's Manhattan court appearance.

"I actually had a separate plan for today, so we were able to kind of do a little bit of both. My students had some work to do and as they were doing the work, we were kind of watching what was going on. We had some informal discussions because they had some questions about, you know, how does the process work," said Schulzki, who is also a former

president of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). [\[Full article\]](#)



Empower Students Using PopEd's Activism Toolkit

It's not always easy to teach hope in tandem with global challenges, but it's important that we do. To help teachers out, we've created an Activism Toolkit for students in grades 6-12 around the world. The Toolkit educates teens on topics ranging from climate change to poverty to gender equality, then provides advocacy resources for taking action by tabling, volunteering, influencing lawmakers, and more. Challenge your students to take the first step in becoming changemakers today!

[Access the free toolkit now](#)

[Population Connection is the national grassroots population organization that educates young people and advocates progressive action to stabilize world population at a level that can be sustained by Earth's resources.]



Taking a reasoned stance against misinformation

by Wayne Journell in the [January 7, 2021 Kappan](#)

Teachers need a framework to help them determine what issues are open for discussion and what evidence is worthy of consideration in the classroom. . . .

Fortunately, the literature on teaching controversial issues offers a road map that can help teachers navigate such tensions. If they can point to clear and reasonable guidelines that explain why they will entertain some arguments but not others — including arguments that may be popular with some students and parents — then that puts them on firmer ground. They can show that they've been principled and fair-minded in deciding which ideas deserve to be taken seriously in the classroom, and they can protect themselves from the accusation that those decisions are politically partisan, or that they're trying to indoctrinate students. . . . (Click on the link above for the entire article.)



Colo. students tackle 3-month biography project

Around 60 elementary and middle school students in the Weld RE-1 School District in Colorado recently completed a three-month biography writing project. The students identified a role model and then **researched**, created and presented a book about them. Full Story: [The Tribune \(Greeley, Colo.\) \(free registration\)](#)



For Psychology Teachers-

The APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS), the APA Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, and the APA Education Directorate are pleased to share that a new unit lesson plan on Gender is now available to teachers online. This optional lesson plan, designed specifically for use in high school psychology courses or as background for psychology teachers, includes four lessons, two appendices, six classroom activities, and references and resources. The four lessons cover:

- Gender as a Biopsychosocial Construct
- Cultural and Historical Considerations about Gender
- The Importance of Pronouns
- Seeking Support at School

The lesson plan was written by Molly Strear, PhD, of San Francisco State University; Carrie Lorig, EdS, of Georgia State University; Kris Varjas, PsyD, of Georgia State University; and Hilary Rosenthal, MEd, of Bolingbrook, Illinois. This project was supported by a grant from the American Psychological Foundation David and Carol Myers Fund to Support Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools.

Look no further for back-to-school planning resources and explore free, standards-aligned, innovative teaching tools and resources from the National Constitution Center.

The Center has what you need to plan and implement a dynamic, impactful civic education program this school year:

- [Constitution 101](#): Includes 15 course modules, each offering classroom-ready lesson plans, interactive videos, student activities, assessments, and more. You can implement the

semester-long curriculum, or pick and choose the modules that fit best into your existing schedule.

- [Classroom Resource Library](#): Discover hundreds of additional engaging resources for students to apply what they've learned, including fun, light-lift activities—perfect for a break between instruction.

Our Education Team is ready to provide you with the tools you need to teach the U.S. Constitution—contact us directly for support at education@constitutioncenter.org.



Why teachers need to draw on drama of history

History lessons face a fate of being dull, writes Jonathan Den Hartog, professor of history at Samford University in Alabama. Den Hartog writes in this commentary that teachers can make lessons more interesting for students than reciting names and dates by examining the drama of the real events, the turning points in history and how events could have gone differently as well as researching historical sources and engaging in debates. Full Story: [RealClearHistory](#) (8/24)



Strategies to celebrate Black history year round

Black history should be part of teaching and learning throughout the school year, writes Amir Taron Ayres, an instructional supervisor at a charter school in New Jersey. In this article, Ayres asserts that teachers should teach students about Black history from prior to enslavement and about African diaspora, including Black people in Mexico.

Full Story: [Edutopia](#)



More **FREE** stuff from the Hoover Institute at Stanford University.

We are excited to announce we recently teamed up with the Hoover Institution at Stanford University to give teachers a simple way to engage students with real life examples. The collaboration, *Building Block of Prosperity*, is available now on our website.

Check out our ready-to-go lesson plans, fun activities, and engaging videos. Access everything at no cost [HERE](#).



Students research, create portraits of women in history

Second- and third-graders at a **Michigan** elementary school have created portraits of influential women from history, including inventor and actress Hedy Lamarr, Olympian Wilma Rudolph and playwright Lorraine Hansberry. Choosing from among 41 "trading cards" of historical women, students conducted research, wrote reports and created portraits of their historic figure that will be displayed at a local science center through the end of March for Women's History Month. Full Story: City Pulse (Lansing, Mich.)



Beyond the Founding Fathers: A More Inclusive Way to Teaching the Founding Era From NCSS SmartBrief (2/28/23)

Invite students to think critically about the complexities of the U.S. founding while showing them how to honor the legacy of the historic minorities who are often missing from textbooks despite making pivotal contributions to the pursuit of integrity and inclusivity in the democratic ideals we continue to uphold today. (Go to the [Website](#).)



New Psych Lesson Plan: Stress & Health

The APA Committee of Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPSS) and the APA Education Directorate are pleased to announce a new [6-lesson unit plan Stress and Health](#), developed by Stephanie Franks, MS, Stacie Spencer, PhD, and Ann Vanichkachorn, MD. The six lessons cover:

- What is Stress?
- Types of Stress
- The Stress Response
- Chronic Stress and Mental and Physical Health
- Coping and Stress Management Strategies
- Promoting Mental and Physical Health

Each lesson includes a general overview, definitions of key terms, and a content outline; the lesson plan also includes fifteen classroom activities, eight critical thinking exercises, one laboratory exercise, references, and a resource list.

Free from PBS

A new approach to digital media for U.S. History classrooms, with attention to multiple perspectives, fostering civic identity and a more complete understanding of the past.



Designed for grades 6-12 and available FREE on PBS LearningMedia, the U.S. History Collection is organized by 16 eras of U.S. History and nine historical thinking skills. Browsable by era or skill, these media-rich resources can reach a broad range of student learners. Quality media humanizes people from the past, develops student empathy, and facilitates connections between past and present. The U.S. History Collection retains alignment with standard survey curriculum scope and sequence while elevating multiple perspectives. More details [here](#)!



One final word, the next issue of the MCSS Toolbox is scheduled for the spring of next year, around the MLK holiday. While it seems like a long way off, please think about writing a short (or longer) article for the Toolbox. Start it now, work on it when you have time. Also letters to the editor or an Opt-Ed piece would be good. **Deadline is February 28th.** Please send articles in a DOC format to me at pettapiece@wayne.edu.

Thank you in advance, Bob Pettapiece, Editor.

Have a successful school year!

Michigan Council for the Social Studies



Tomorrow's Leaders Learn Today