

Sierra Social Studies

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President's Message

By Sarah Brown, NNCSS President

I hope you all have had a fantastic first semester so far. I know we are all excited and anticipating a much deserved winter break! I'd like to first take a minute and introduce myself and our new board members to you all. My name is Sarah Brown and I currently teach World History and World Cultures at Spanish Springs High School. For the last two years I served as President Elect under Angela Orr. Angela has now moved into her new position as Assistant Director and we are so pleased that she is planning to remain a member of our board and continue offering her advice and guidance. This September I assumed the role of President and am excited to share with you some of our new plans for this year and our new additions to the board.

Unfortunately, our previous secretary, Christine Hernandez, has relocated back to Oahu. However, we are fortunate to welcome our new secretary, Laura Moberg who teaches AP U.S. History at Reno High School. Reluctantly we also said goodbye to our Middle

School Vice President, Julianne Kinzie, who resigned this fall. We are excited though to welcome Vallerie Larson to the board as our new Middle School Vice President. Vallerie is currently the social studies chair at Shaw Middle School. We have also sadly said goodbye to our University Representative, Kathy Obenchain who has assumed a new position at the University of Texas, Austin.

In addition to some changes on our board, we have made some exciting changes to our annual conference. As you recall we have traditionally held our annual conference in the Spring. While the conference proved to be incredibly successful year after year, we listened to recommendations from you all and have now moved the annual conference to the fall. In doing so we hope to provide enriching opportunities for you all to gain valuable resources and ideas that you can implement throughout the year as you develop your curriculums and lessons.

In place of our Spring conference we are

holding our first annual Social Studies Expo! **MARK YOUR CALENDARS!** This event will be held at the National Automobile Museum after school on Thursday, April 1st. We expect over 20 exhibitors from the local community to participate. In addition to gaining fabulous resources, we thought it was time we put the **SOCIAL** back in Social Studies. Wine and refreshments will be offered and a chance to peruse the exhibit hall at the museum and win fabulous prizes.

Lastly, I'd like to extend a warm welcome to our new members who joined NNCSS at our conference last Spring. We value your participation and are excited to have you on board. Increasing our membership has become a priority for NNCSS as we recognize the necessity to give social studies a voice. We hope to offer exciting opportunities for you and welcome your comments and advice as we move forward through the year.

Have a very Happy Holiday Season!

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A New Look to the TAHP Website *By Sue Davis*

Looking for lesson ideas? Visit the Teaching American History Project website. Since 2002 over 1,000 lessons have been written by northern Nevada teachers and are available for you to download. The lessons are conveniently listed in chronological eras and often link to websites which contain primary sources. All lessons feature historical content, step by step directions, primary sources, assessments, and teacher resources.

A sampling of Civil War lessons available on the TAHP Website:

- Take Two: Hollywood's Changing Perspective of the Civil War by Keith Cole

- The Way of the War- Battles: Generals and Tactics of the Civil War by Johanna Ser-gott

- The Other War: Uncovering Battles of Race, Class, Gender, and Ethnicity during the Civil War by Katie Menante Anderson

- Understanding the Affects of the Civil War on Families through Primary Sources by Daniel Bow

A new feature added to the TAHP website is “**Ask the Historian.**” A link is provided on the website, which will direct your question to Professor Thomas Smith, a Visiting Assistant Professor at the Uni-

versity of Nevada, Reno. His research looks to understand the connection between reformers and the development of a transnational discourse of rights in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Professor Smith is currently working with TAH History Cohort Project.

Don't Wait-Visit the TAHP website today to find lessons and resources!!

www.washoe.k12.nv.us/americanhistory

21st Century Skills in the Social Studies Classroom

By Jamie Thomsen

In order to help prepare students for life outside the classroom, 21st century skills; that is, the skills and knowledge students need to be proficient in to succeed in work and life in the 21st century, are being stressed in many schools. It is essential for all students in the 21st century to be proficient in their core subjects as well as the 21st century content like global awareness, civic literacy, and financial and economic literacy including other skills like information literacy and critical thinking skills. So, what does this look like in the social stud-

ies classroom? For many of us, the 21st century content is already intertwined in our daily social studies classes. Civic literacy is touched upon in many of our classes when discussing rights, duties, and obligation of citizens and teaching how government works and why it is important to stay informed on current events. Outside of civic literacy, analyzing primary sources and teaching students bias are tools many of us teach to our students. Taking this a step further and having the students utilize technology and other digital resources to express or show the knowledge

knowledge gained from the resources incorporates the 21st century skills aspect. Also, having students utilize online databases for research and accessing information through various outlets falls under the skills necessary for the 21st century. On a weekly or even daily basis, discussing multiple perspectives and modern day relevance of social studies content helps students relate the content to real world issues. For more tools and resources on how to apply 21st century skills into the social studies classroom, check out www.socialstudies.org

A Change of Focus: Making the Questions Essential Again

By Angela Orr

What we all know to be true – that an education devoted to the formation of active and informed citizens must focus on the big issues and questions of our time – too often does not guide our teaching. That is, as teachers, our goals of enticing students to question history and see connections in its recurring themes do not often translate well into our teaching practices. It is easy to forget that connections that are clear to us are veiled, at best, for our students. So it becomes our duty to explicitly guide our students down a path of big questions and across the bridges that link past and present through enduring issues.

One way to accomplish this task more seamlessly is to incorporate essential questions (EQs) into your curriculum. In the past, many of us have been taught to use essential questions to look at specific unit content (i.e. Why did the Civil War occur?). To me, this question is a great historical question, but it is not essential. It does not lead me to look deeper into the recurring and enduring issues of history and today. Instead, a new conceptualization of EQs must

emerge. These new EQs aide students in making connections between time periods and are as relevant for studying the history of the Renaissance as for looking at the Roaring Twenties and critiquing the Digital Age. Essential questions should be built around controversy and multiple perspectives. They should be difficult to answer and require students to form their own opinions and back those opinions up with evidence. They should transcend time and subject matter.

If a question really is “essential,” then it should frame our curriculum and guide the year’s study for students. With four or five essential questions focusing the year, you can help students to tackle the enduring issues in our history and begin to see history as a dynamic story to unfold rather than a static story to be told.

So what do essential questions look like? A few examples might be enlightening: a) Should liberty be limited? b) Why do social, economic, and political inequalities exist? c) What types of relationships should exist between government, institutions,

and individuals?

Each of these questions could guide the study of history from ancient societies to current issues. As posed, each has no right or wrong answer. They require students to take a stance rather than simply make a list of appropriate responses (as is the case of more traditional essential questions like, “Why did the Civil War occur?”). They represent the controversy surrounding enduring issues.

And if they also represent the focus of your curriculum, students may begin to feel more engaged in the process of meaning making. Using EQs provides consistent opportunities for students to see the relevance of their study of history, and because the questions require thinking at high levels, it also allows for great rigor. Finally, a focus on EQs gives us the momentum necessary to “de-clutter” our curriculum and spotlight the big picture while clearing out the details that don’t matter in teaching for active and engaged citizenship.

“If the hypothesis introduced is true – that any subject can be taught to any child in some honest form- then it should follow that a curriculum ought to be built around the great issues, principles, and values that a society deems worthy of the continual concern of its members.”

(Jerome Bruner, *The Process of Education*, 1960)

Travel the World: For FREE!

By Sarah Brown



As social studies teachers we have the fortune of having an almost endless amount of professional development opportunities at our finger tips. What astonishes me though is that very few teachers seem to be unaware of these opportunities and as a result let them pass on by. Not only are they unaware of the existence of these opportunities, but also that the major-

ity of them are FREE. Those teachers that have become aware of these opportunities have hit a gold mine of resources and travel adventures both in the U.S. and around the world.

Two years ago I had the chance to travel to South Korea after applying for and receiving a fellowship for the Korea Society Study Tour. I spent three weeks, all expenses paid, visiting and traveling through South Korea. My responsibility, create a lesson plan. That's it. No other strings attached. It sounds almost too good to be true. Yet there are numerous trips like these out there. If you'd like to go to Germany, apply with the Goethe

Institute by February 15th. How about Costa Rica this summer? Apply through Toyota's Teacher Program by January 5th. Bottom line – if you want to travel here's your free opportunity. Contact me for websites and suggestions at sabrown@washoe.k12.nv.us.



Stopping the Frustration: How to bring the internet to Your Students and Keep Your Sanity *by Vallerie Larson*

You finally get access to the computer lab, and you have a great activity planned. As the class settles in, you have the website written on the board. Many students begin to type in the web address, several have trouble typing it correctly. You move around trying to help as many students as possible. The great computer activity has turned into more of a frustrating challenge than you had ever realized.

I discovered a way to make my computer time with my students more productive after experiences like this. I bookmark, using social bookmarks, the sites I want my students to visit. Social bookmarks limit the time students spend looking for information and allow students to get to the website quickly to allow for the most productive use of time.

Social bookmarks also have additional benefits. You can access your bookmarks from anywhere, as long

as you are on the internet. Your students can also easily access them from anywhere as long as this is a preference you set up. While browsing pages, you can easily bookmark a page you come across that you want to remember. Social bookmarks can also be accessed from year-to-year, and will be there when your computer goes down, or your school network!

There are many social bookmarking sites. My favorite site has many education groups already on it and it tends to have less ads. The site I use is www.ikeep.bookmarks.com. I have primary source research sites bookmarked, photos and other primary sources for various units, websites, video and audio bookmarked. The website is very easy for students to use and easy for me to manage my bookmarks.

Give social bookmarks a try, you'll have a more productive class computer time while keeping your sanity!



Perils of a First Year AP U.S. History Teacher *By Laura Moberg*

Never in a million years did I imagine one could work so hard to feel so, at times, immensely inadequate. And yet, day after day, that is how I feel when I stand in front of my 95 AP U.S. History juniors. My students this year are, on the whole, humble, respectful, and amazingly intelligent young people. They constantly challenge me to be not only a better teacher, but a better student as I struggle to stay ahead of them, and as I struggle to anticipate their questions and concerns. It regularly seems like an impossible task. I never could have imagined how intense the AP teaching experience would be, and no one could have prepared me for the amount of work it would take to teach and facilitate the learning of some of the most innately gifted people I have ever met- albeit in 17-year-old's bodies.

"I knew that it would be this much work, but I didn't want to scare you away from doing this," said John Gilbertson, my mentor and a 25-year plus veteran of the AP U.S. History program.

"Thanks," was my begrudging response. Begrudging because as hard as teaching AP is and as many hours over the summer, after school, and every Sunday come hell or high water as it takes, teaching AP, thus far, has also been tremendously rewarding. There is a real sense of satisfaction that comes

with teaching something that you are truly passionate about and having a totally captive and totally receptive audience- and an audience that's willing to engage! What a novel thing! I had become accustomed to, over the last 5 years, relying upon a trusty handful of students in each class to assume the role of the "interested, engaged" student. Not that I dismissed the others or ceased trying to reach those students who weren't naturally drawn in, I just knew that some students tended to gravitate towards history and that some students, no matter how many "thinking outside the box" projects or discussions, did not, and would not, find history inherently interesting. Now imagine a class full of students who are willing and excited to absorb and discuss historical content. It was eye-opening to me.

I have yet to think about my future with the AP program. It is just enough for me to think about my daily agendas for next week, let alone next year. For now, I am just hoping that at least a few of my students actually pass the AP Exam in May, and even if they don't, that they take away an appreciation for and a knowledge of the history of this great nation- and an understanding that I haven't taken the task of developing that appreciation and understanding lightly and have been so honored and humbled in the attempt.

Your Vote, Your Responsibility!

By Stephanie Hartman

In September, 2009, the Nevada Secretary of State's office, in conjunction with the Nevada Department of Education received a \$45,000 grant to implement a voting program for Nevada's high school students. Nevada was one of only seven recipients of a 2009 grant from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission that will allow us to not only to hold another mock election in 2010, but begin building a community of responsible voters. This project consists of two main parts: the *Civic Awareness Expo*, a half day event to be held at participating high schools, and a mock election also held at the high schools. The *Civic Awareness Expo* will be a half-day event held in secondary school auditoriums or multi-purpose rooms that provides information on voting and elections in a cross-curricular, interactive environment. The Mock Election Day is an opportunity for students to cast their votes. Students in 12th grade U.S. Government courses will serve as the "local election officials" and administer their school's Mock Election Day activities. These activities should be held in the Fall of 2010.

In addition, participating teachers will have the opportunity to participate in professional development that will help them to implement the Your Vote, Your Responsibility Program. (con't pg. 8)

WIN AN IPOD NANO!

Attend the Spring Social Studies Expo and purchase raffle tickets to be entered in a drawing to win an iPod Nano 8 (8GB).

Drawing will take place at the NNCSS Spring Expo on April 1st.



Planning and Management; They're Better Friends Than You Think

By Whitney Foehl

Everyone knows that management is the cornerstone of teaching but few recognize that management goes well beyond curbing misbehavior and discipline. Sure, when we think of classroom management we think of unwanted student actions and certainly a well-regulated class with rules, guidelines, expectations, and procedures in place will help with that. Perhaps we even have a discipline plan to help be fair and consistent when making constant decisions about how to handle this misbehavior. But, what does lesson planning have to do with it?

Often we forget that well-planned out lessons that incorporate relevancy for motivation can keep the class engaged and on task. The worst problems with management will come when teachers *wing it* because they haven't thought through the tough spots like transitions, student attitudes towards the content, the materials themselves, as well as other important steps like scaffolding or valid assessment. This is especially true for pre-service or new teachers but can

also trip up the seasoned teacher. Veteran teachers often work off the cuff because they are already content experts, or have done an activity before, maybe even several times. But isolated information or activity does not make a completed lesson. Of course if *winging it* means you talk at the students for an hour or two, you're likely to have no management problems because your students are in the land of daydreams or if not, and they step out of line, you'll easily notice and put them back in order. I'm not convinced there is much learning taking place though. At any rate, a well-planned lesson that considers pace, orchestration, activity, scaffold, and attention to students' curiosity and interests, usually translates into thoughtful, well-executed learning with clear objectives and instruction. Considering which questions you will ask, vocabulary you will teach, bigger concepts or themes you will address, how much content to include and in what format and time frame it will fall...there is so much to think about and plan for! When all of these considerations

are organized into your lesson, the classroom and your students become more manageable.

While time is always in short supply as a teacher, we can also recognize the long term benefits of spending time upfront to plan. Spending time to make well-planned out lessons that are both engaging and relevant will carry over for years to come. Sure, you'll reflect and make adjustments, but you'll have those lessons for the life of your career. What is the benefit of *winging it*? Nothing, you wing it one year you'll be winging it for years to come, not to mention that you'll be stuck with management problems to boot. It goes without saying, if the lesson is a mess the students will be too. So make the connection between your lessons and the students' behaviors and attitudes. Classroom management is more than just discipline.

Counting Your Pennies?

The 2009 Nevada Legislature approved Senate Bill 317 (SB 317) requiring that Nevada's public and charter high schools provide instruction in financial literacy. In an effort to assist school districts with immediate implementation of instruction in financial literacy, the Nevada Department of Education created the Financial Literacy Task Force comprised of teachers and district personnel from around the state to develop a Financial Literacy Guidance document. The purpose of this document is to provide school districts with the requirements of SB 317, an interpretation of the language of SB 317, the correlated state standards, and resources for teaching financial literacy. It is the responsibility of the local school districts to determine where financial literacy will be included in the curriculum. The document will be made available to all school districts after the first of the year. For more information, contact either Sue Davis at shdavis@washoe.k12.nv.us or Stephanie Hartman at shartman@doe.nv.gov.



Northern Nevada Teachers Attend National Convention in Atlanta

By Sue Davis

Twelve educators from Northern Nevada attended the National Council for Social Studies annual conference in Atlanta, Georgia from November 11-15, 2009. The NCSS conference provided over 400 sessions, workshops, and clinics, which dealt with ideas as well as new directions in social studies education. Topics of the workshops included 21st century themes and skills, working with diverse learners, effective instructional strategies for the social studies, promoting critical thinking and deep understanding, and creating knowledgeable and effective citizens. Conference highlights included keynote speakers; Eric Foner (Columbia University History Professor), John Lewis (SNCC leader of Civil Rights era), and Greg Mortenson (Author of *Three Cups of Tea*).

Six social studies educators from Northern Nevada presented the following sessions at the 2009 National conference.

- Kit McCormick and Judy Sutherland- “Primary Sources to Die For: Death records, Obituaries, and Tombstones” & “ Children Making a Difference”
- Stephanie Hartman and Sue Davis- “Through the Looking Glass: Becoming a PSI (Primary Source Investigator)”
- Rob Stone: “Listen Up! Using iPods to inspire Civic Engagement and Meaningful Writing”
- Angela Orr and Kathy Obenchain- “Annie: The Case of an Exemplary Social Studies Teacher”
- Stephanie Hartman and Margaret Ferrara- “Helping to Form a Collective Voice for Social Justice”

The Northern Nevada Teaching American History grant provided funding for ten educators to attend the NCSS conference; Rob Stone (Reed HS), Brian Wallace (Eagle Valley MS, Carson), Judy Sutherland (Caughlin Ranch), Marie Johnson (Caughlin Ranch), Jenny Chandler (Carson HS), Nicole Daniels (Carson HS), Kathy Dilger (Carson MS), Angela Orr (TAH Master Teacher), and Sue Davis (TAH Director).

Your vote,Your Responsibility Program (con’t from pg. 5)

Teachers can choose one of two professional development courses (end of April or June) in which to participate. The five hour professional development seminar will be available for participating teachers. The first part of the seminar will focus on election administration. Topics include (but are not limited to): election laws, regulations and procedures, duties and responsibilities of election administrators and poll workers, voter registration process, and other election-related topics. Teachers will also receive instruction on best practices for hosting the *Civic Awareness Expo* and administering the school’s Mock Election.

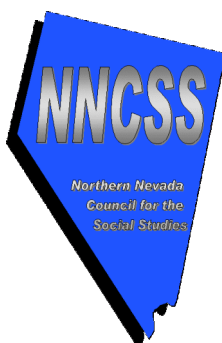


If you are interested in getting your school and students involved, the deadline for notification is February 12, 2009 for school participation and March 15, 2010 for teacher participation. Please contact Stephanie Hartman at shartman@doe.nv.gov for more information, or to sign – up to participate!

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Dedicated to Supporting Quality Social Studies Education to all of Nevada's Children

If you have something that you would like to share with fellow Social Studies teachers please email your ideas and articles to the Newsletter Editor, Sarah Bothun. NNCSS is always looking for creative and energetic people to help in promoting exceptional classroom practices and ideas.

Editor, Sarah Bothun

sbothun@washoe.k12.nv.us

***NNCSS wishes
you a Happy
Holiday Season!***

