

NJ Social Studies Network News

A Publication of the New Jersey Council for the Social Studies

May 2015

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NJ Council for the Social Studies

The NJCSS annual fall conference, *Invigorating Your Social Studies Classroom*, will be held over two days-- Tuesday, **October 20** for grades K-8 and Wednesday, **October 21** for grades 6-12. The conference and membership registration form is online at the Council's website: www.njcss.org. Don't wait for September. Register now!

If you have an interesting lesson, program, project or idea that you have successfully implemented in your school or classroom, consider sharing it with others at the annual Fall NJCSS conference. A **Call for Workshop Proposals** for the conference is available online at www.njcss.org. Proposals are due by **June 1, 2015**.

The New Jersey Council for the Social Studies will be presenting an Elementary (K-5) and Secondary (6-12) Teacher of the Year Award at its annual fall conference October 20-21, 2015. If you have an outstanding teacher at your school, send a nomination with three letters of recommendation using the Teacher of the Year Award forms at www.njcss.org to Joseph Kovacs, Awards Committee Chair, at kovjos17@yahoo.com. Nominations are due by **June 15, 2015**.

NJ Social Studies Supervisors Association

NJSSSA Spring Meeting - Friday, **May 8** at NJPSA in Monroe. Includes a presentation from a representative of the College Board regarding AP course redesigns (including the new Euro exam). Teachers are welcome to attend this portion of the meeting; non-members are asked to pay a \$10 fee for breakfast and lunch. To register go to <http://goo.gl/forms/kZ2drcFbZl>

National Council for the Social Studies

SAVE THE DATES: The annual NCSS conference will be held **November 13-15, 2015** in New Orleans. Registration is open!

Social Studies Issues

For the first time since 2011, there is at least a possibility of some federal funding for social studies. The U.S. Senate Committee included funding for U.S. history and civic education in the bill to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. We'll keep you apprised!

Results from the 2014 **National Assessment of Educational Progress** showed that only a small minority of eighth-grade students were proficient in geography (27 percent), civics (23 percent) and U.S. history (18 percent). This has basically not changed since the 1990s. And the gender and racial achievement gaps are widening.

Specific information about New Jersey from a survey of NJ adults conducted in Sept. 2014 by Stockton University revealed that more than half of the NJ adults surveyed could not name a single U.S. Supreme Court justice; 60% believed that the Constitution explicitly protects against discrimination; and 44% did not know that Supreme Court decisions cannot be appealed to the president of the United States for review and reversal. The study, *Understanding the United States Constitution and the Supreme Court: A Survey of New Jerseyans*, was released in April 2015 and can be found at Stockton.edu/hughescenter. The good news was that those "who were taught civic education in school fared better than those who did not."

Several states are considering making civics education mandatory and requiring high school students to pass the U.S. naturalization civics test in order to graduate. At least

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five states – Arizona, Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota and Utah – have passed legislation requiring high school students to pass a civics exam in order to graduate. Similar legislation has been introduced in 17 other states, according to the Civics Education Initiative. Legislation allowing teachers to use the citizenship exam has been introduced in New Jersey.

Unlike almost 40 other states, New Jersey does not require its students to take even a semester of civics at any time in their K-12 education. This is left to local discretion and the vast majority of school districts do not have a required civics course. Most New Jersey students (except those who take an elective American government course, which is usually 10-20% of a high school's student body) are exposed to one to four weeks of civic content knowledge as part of U.S. history, with little emphasis on the role of the citizen. Would a required civics course in middle school help provide a better understanding of U.S. history in high school, where the two-year required curriculum is crowded? Is there room in the middle school program to include a semester of civics? How else might we address the lack of civic knowledge in New Jersey?

Student Events



Make school real: involve you students in a project to improve the community. **Project Citizen** is a project based civic education program for students in grades 3-12. Students identify a problem in their community, research and develop a public policy to address the problem, develop an action plan to get their policy adopted, organize their materials into a portfolio for presentation to the appropriate governmental agency, and reflect on the learning experience. Students learn about government and how to be change agents. They hone their research, critical thinking and communication skills in the process! See projects from the last three years as well as a short video and an overview of the process and the portfolio at <http://civiced.rutgers.edu/projectcitizen.html>. If you would like to send a digital project to the State **Project Citizen** Showcase by **May 22**, register your class today by emailing civiced@njclre.rutgers.edu.

The **Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund** is sponsoring a Memorial Day Student Video Contest. Short videos (5 minutes or less) will be accepted by students in grades 4-12, addressing: What does honor in times of war look like?

The grand prize winner will win a trip to Washington, DC (with guardian) to participate in VVMF's Memorial Day ceremony on the National Mall. Three finalists will have their videos featured on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund website and on social media in the month of May, with exposure to over 300,000 followers. Go to <https://vvmf.wordpress.com/2015/03/09/memorial-day-video-contest-open-for-students/> for more information.

Mahatma Gandhi Peace and Harmony Art & Writing Contest invites middle and high school students to send original works of art or writing based on the quote: "Nonviolence is a weapon of the strong." The deadline for mailing an entry is **June 15th**. For more information go to <http://www.nj.gov/education/holocaust/stawards/gandhi.pdf>.

Awards and Prizes

Social Studies Teacher of the Year Awards

The **New Jersey Council for the Social Studies** will be presenting an Elementary (K-5) Social Studies Teacher of the Year Award at its annual fall conference on October 20, 2015 and a Secondary (6-12) Social Studies Teacher of the Year Award at its fall conference on October 21, 2015. If you have an outstanding teacher at your school, send a nomination with three letters of recommendation using the Teacher of the Year Award forms at www.njcss.org by **June 15, 2015** to Joseph Kovacs, Awards Committee Chair, at kovjos17@yahoo.com.

Professional Development

The Spirit of the Jersey's Festival will be held at Monmouth Battlefield State Park on **May 9** from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. rain or shine. This annual festival spans more than 350 years of life in the Garden State, with more than 150 exhibitors representing every stage of New Jersey history. Meet our last royal Governor, William Franklin; chat with George Washington and ask Molly Pitcher what it was really like at the Battle of Monmouth? For additional information visit www.njhistoryfair.org.

On the **70th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz** bring your students to meet local Holocaust Survivors at Brookdale Community College on **May 12**, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. For more information go to <http://www.nj.gov/education/holocaust/programs/051315Tomorrow.pdf>.

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The NJ Department of Education is sponsoring the last of its series of webinars on **Using Primary Sources** for elementary educators by the National Archives on **May 13**, 3:30-4:30 p.m.

The New Jersey Historical Commission and the 1759 Vought House, a Revolutionary War Loyalist Homestead, will present The American Revolution on the Home Front, a one-day conference at Clinton Township Middle School in Clinton on Saturday, **May 30th**. Highlights include:

- The Revolutionary War and Slavery in New Jersey
- Panel discussions on the Revolutionary Experience.
- Tours of the 1759 Vought House, New Jersey's only interpreted Loyalist house museum.

Click [here](#) for more program and registration information.

The NJ Commission on Holocaust Education is sponsoring a workshop, **“Utilizing Resources in the Classroom to Teach about Bias, Bullying, Genocide, Holocaust and Prejudice,”** on Tuesday, **June 2**, from 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. at Mercer County Community College Conference Center in West Windsor. To register go to: <http://education.state.nj.us/events/>

New Perspectives on the Past: 2015 New Jersey History & Historic Preservation Conference offers more than 20 educational sessions and field workshops over two days (**June 3-4**) at the Hotel ML in Mount Laurel. For more information and to register visit the conference website: <http://njpreservationconference.org/>.

Summer Institutes

Advanced Teaching with Primary Sources Seminar. If you have participated in any of the Basic Teaching with Primary Sources workshops that have been offered by the NJ Center for Civic Education at Rutgers University over the past three years, you are invited to the Advanced TPS Seminar on **June 30**, from 9 to 3 p.m. at Rutgers to share, discuss and improve your lessons and prepare to facilitate a workshop in your school district about inquiry or evidence-based learning using primary sources. Register by **June 15th** by sending an email with a lesson incorporating primary sources to agardner@njclre.rutgers.edu.

“Untold History Summer Institute” will be held Friday-Sunday, **July 10-12**, at the East Side Middle school in New

York City. To reserve space contact Eric Singer at es1355@gmail.com.

The Newseum is offering free, three-day institutes, **“Primarily Digital: Teaching Media Literacy to Plugged-In Students,”** on **July 13-15** for novices and July 22-24 for advanced. Application deadline: **May 10th**. Visit the [website](#) for full details including detailed institute descriptions, attendee benefits and eligibility requirements.

Putting the Pieces Together: Integrating Civics and Economics into U.S. History. The NJ Council for Economic Education and the NJ Center for Civic Education are sponsoring their third joint summer institute **July 22-23** at Rutgers University in Piscataway. This two-day program for middle and high school U.S. history, economics and civics teachers includes ten hours of professional development focused on decision-making in the past and today. A \$50 registration fee is required. Application deadline: **May 30**. Go to <http://civiced.rutgers.edu> or www.njcss.org for an application and additional information.

Global Exploration for Educators Organization (GEEO), offers 8-21-day professional development travel programs for teachers to India/Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bali/Lombok, Italy, Eastern Europe, Portugal/Spain, Greece, Uzbekistan, Vietnam/Cambodia, Thailand/Laos, Belize/Guatemala, Morocco, The Baltics, China, Eastern Turkey, Western Turkey, Zambia/Botswana/Namibia/South Africa, New Zealand, The Galapagos, Costa Rica, and Peru. Educators can earn graduate school credit and professional development credit while seeing the world. Deadline: **June 1**. Go to www.geeo.org for details.

Resources for Teachers

“Transformation and Remembrance” is a documentary by NJEA’s television series, Classroom Close-up, about a group of New Jersey educators visiting Holocaust sites in Germany, Czech Republic, Poland and the Netherlands and their students. The video can be found at <http://classroomcloseup.org/transformation-remembrance/>

Commemorate Memorial Day on **May 25th** by visiting a cemetery where the graves of war veterans will be decorated for the observance. Many of New Jersey's oldest churches are home to graves dating back to our nation's

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earliest years. For example, graveyards at Elizabeth's First Presbyterian Church and Shrewsbury's Christ Episcopal Church are the final resting places of Revolutionary soldiers. Take a few moments to visit your local cemetery to remember those who fought for the freedoms we enjoy today.



To commemorate the 350th anniversary of the founding of New Jersey, the New Jersey Historical Commission has sponsored the development of a series of 90 second videos, "It Happened Here in New Jersey," highlighting innovation, diversity and liberty in the history of New Jersey. The videos are available on the Commission's website at <http://nj.gov/state/historical/>, and the NJ350 website at <http://officialnj350.com>, along with lessons.



Put a Little New Jersey in Your Classroom. Commemorate the 350th anniversary of New Jersey by incorporating lessons about New Jersey into your curriculum! Over 30 lessons with correlations to New Jersey and common core standards, primary source documents and images and other handouts, focus questions, objectives, and links to additional resources and places to visit in New Jersey, are online at <http://civiced.rutgers.edu/njlessons.html> and www.njcss.org. Upper elementary teachers could use these lessons as a full curriculum about New Jersey history. More lessons for secondary grades will be added on a regular basis. If you have a lesson about New Jersey that you would like to share, send it to Arlene Gardner at agardner@njclre.rutgers.edu.



Crossroads of the American Revolution has a variety of educational resources about the American Revolution in New Jersey at www.revolutionarynj.org/learn; as well as lectures, walks, exhibits, reenactments and games from Bergen County to Cape May at www.revolutionarynj.org/events. To get a first-hand perspective about the American Revolution, visit "Your Revolutionary Neighbors," short stories about individuals who "lived, worked, struggled and fought in the American Revolution" at www.revolutionarynj.org/meet-your-revolutionary-neighbors.

Sept. 12th is Teacher Appreciation Day at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Discount tickets are available for teachers, staff, and families and friends for the rematch of the 2014 Rutgers football win in Seattle. The game will take place at Rutgers Stadium in Piscataway. For tickets and more information about Teacher Appreciation Day, contact the Rutgers Ticket Office at 866-445-4678 Monday-Friday 9:00-5:00 or email tickets@scarletknights.com.

New Jersey Council for the Social Studies

President: Bill Wingren, Montclair High School
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Executive Director and Editor: Arlene Gardner

If you have information about an event, resources, professional development or other activity of interest to social studies educators, please send it by the end of the month for inclusion in the next month's enewsletter to Arlene Gardner at agardner@njclre.rutgers.edu. Information will be included at the discretion of the editor.

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