

# Social Studies in Vermont

The newsletter for Vermont's Social Studies Educators and Supporters

## Fall 2023

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## Fall Message

As you are approaching holiday breaks, I hope that you can take some time to check out Social Studies updates, happenings, opportunities, and resources. Please don't hesitate to reach out to share information/resources that you feel would be beneficial to other educators across the state. Also, as many SU/SDs have experienced staff turnover, please share this newsletter with new staff members and ask them to reach out so I can include them on my distribution list. And always, should you choose to opt out of receiving information from me, just let me know.

## From the AOE:

### PBGR Hierarchies

Sample PBGR Hierarchies have been developed in all content areas, including [Social Studies](#) and [Financial Literacy](#) (World Language is still in the development process). "The exemplar Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirement (PBGR) Hierarchies support equity by providing a cohesive and coordinated vision of student-centered learning across Vermont schools. The hierarchies serve as a foundation for the implementation of standards adopted by the Vermont State Board of Education, Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems, flexible pathways, and personalized learning plans. The Agency of Education recognizes the considerable time and effort that educators and other stakeholders across the state have already put forth developing proficiency-based learning systems and this work is intended to serve as a resource for SU/SDs to consider as they reflect on the key concepts and skills that students should develop within each content area. It is important to note that while there is a separate hierarchy for each disciplinary content area, the hierarchies work together to support student proficiency in those attributes described in a Vermont Portrait of a Graduate (PoG)". ([Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements Hierarchies Development Process](#))

### Social Studies and Literacy

I wanted to share an evidence-rich article that highlights what Social Studies aficionados probably already know, but may be worth sharing: [How Social Studies Improves Elementary Literacy](#).

## Social Studies Updates and Opportunities Civics Empowers All Students (CEAS)

Vermont is participating in a three-year U.S. Department of Education, Georgetown University, and Center for Civic Education [CEAS](#) study to evaluate the effectiveness of the "We the People" program. The project goals include increasing attainment of civic standards, related literacy standards, and social and emotional learning competencies among underserved students in grades 4-8. This past August, elementary school teacher Jenn Tiff (Tinmouth Mountain School) joined 30 NE/NY educators in a five-day training session in Boston. The PD included civic disposition activities, scholar presentations and discussions from Dr. Robert Allison (Suffolk University) on the "Philosophical

Foundations of the American Revolution” and “Road to the American Revolution”. Attendees were given opportunities for pedagogy work with mentors, scholar presentations, discussions with Belmont University School of Law professor and author David Hudson (“First Amendment Principles”, “Freedom of Speech in Schools”, and “Equal Protection and the Constitution”), and participated in a mock hearing. It wasn’t all work as some in the cohort chose to participate in a curated MA Old State House tour and take in a Red Sox game! Vermont middle school educator Keighan Eaker (Leland and Gray) is also participating in this study as control teacher for the 2023-2024 school year.

Year two of the study is just kicking off. **Please reach out** ([martha.deiss@vermont.gov](mailto:martha.deiss@vermont.gov)) if you are interested in participating in this unique study which will help to increase your students’ critical thinking, decision-making and communication skills and provide you with PD (52 hours summer and continuous) and resources. Year two is also open to pre-service educators if you happen to be a cooperating teacher; 6 hours of follow-up support will continue into their first year of teaching.

### **The Vermont 250th**

New resources for the Vermont 250th can be found on the [AOE Social Studies](#) page. The Vermont 250th Commission has established four themes on which to focus the commemoration of the nation’s semiquincentennial. The themes of Forming Identities, Conflict and Struggle, Diversity and Experience, and Legacies are elaborated upon on the website and also align with the American Association for State and Local History’s (AASLH) [Making History at 250](#). Educator resources for teaching the 250th can also be found on the website, and will be updated as we continue to move closer to 2026. The 250th Education and Outreach Committee will once again present a session at the annual VASS conference this December to share opportunities and hear from educators as to how the Committee can best support this teaching and learning.

### **Vermont Archaeology**

Two unique Vermont archaeology-focused PD opportunities will be available in 2024. [Ticonderoga Tuesday’s](#) is offering a free two-hour “Exploring the American Revolution Through Archaeology” in February. In July, you can take a deeper dive in the K-12 Workshop in Place-based Education “Freedom and Unity: The Struggle for Independence on the Vermont Frontier”. Participants will learn about Vermont’s pivotal role in American Independence through innovative learning techniques, archaeological inquiry, and place-based pedagogy. Co-directed by Vermont Archaeological Society’s Dr. Angela Labrador and Teacher Mr. Jason Barney, the workshop earns 40 continuing education units through 20 hours of online activities and a week-long on-site experience at historic sites. \$250 stipends will be available to 24 participants. More details can be found [online](#).

### **Vermont Alliance for the Social Studies (VASS)**

VASS will be holding its’ 29th annual conference in Burlington on December 7, 2023. Two keynote speakers, Andrew Garber, counsel for the Brennan Center’s Voting Rights and Elections Programs, and Gretchen Skidmore, Director of Education Initiatives at the U.S. Holocaust Museum will support K-12 sessions led by local educators, as well as state and national social studies-focused leaders. The VASS Board has responded to your feedback and scheduled more elementary and middle school sessions than in the past (while maintaining robust offerings for 9-12 educators), including sessions such as, “Our Town as a Classroom”, “The Standard Equipment of a Civil War Soldier”, and “Creative Methods for Engaging Middle School Students”. Other session topics include humanities extracurriculars, Holocaust education, and war-time history. To [register](#), or for more information, see the [flyer](#), [brochure](#), or Vermont Alliance for the Social Studies [website](#).

## 2nd Annual Vermont Holocaust Education Week

Save the date, with more information to come, for the 2nd Annual Holocaust Education Week April 1-5, 2024. The theme this year is “Connections Across Genocides: The Holocaust to Today” and through this week inquiries, lessons, and resources will be shared, and speakers will afford rich learning experiences for your 7-12 students. Visit the [Vermont Holocaust Memorial](#) for updated information.

## Civics Updates from the Office of the Secretary of State

Last Spring, the Office of the Vermont Secretary of State hired a new position to focus on civic education and voter engagement. Over the last six months, several K-12 education projects have gotten off the ground.

- Secretary of State, Sarah Copeland Hanzas, would love to visit high schools to talk about voter registration and all things civics. Please send the Office of the Secretary of State (contact below) a message if you'd like to schedule a visit.
- The Office of the Secretary of State has convened a Teacher Advisory Group (TAG) to guide the development of new civic education resources. TAG is interested in more members and is especially seeking K-5 educators for an upcoming project. TAG is also focused on collecting best practices from across the state. If you don't want to commit to joining the Teacher Advisory Group but do have a great example of a Vermont-specific Civics lesson or project that you're willing to share, the Office would love to hear from you.
- The Freedom and Unity Comic, created in partnership with Vermont Humanities and the Center for Cartoon Studies, has been reprinted. If you'd like some copies to use in the classroom, be in touch. If you have used this resource in your classroom, please reach out to share.
- If you'd like to learn more about the projects the Secretary's office has in the works and provide some feedback, make sure to attend the workshop at the VASS Conference on December 7.

Contact: Robyn Palmer, (802) 261-5833, [robyn.palmer@vermont.gov](mailto:robyn.palmer@vermont.gov)

## Rowland Fellow Focused on Civics

Christopher Sheehan, a Twinfield Union School social studies teacher, has been awarded a fellowship with the Rowland Foundation for the 2023-25 school years. He is one of six teachers in the state to be granted a release from teaching duties to pursue projects intended to create positive change in their school. The \$100,000 award will be used to pay for a year-long substitute, travel for school visits and then project implementation. Sheehan's project will focus on increasing civic engagement in the school and the communities it serves, and to facilitate conversations about difficult topics in order to strengthen our democracy. According to Sheehan, “We live in a world of polarization in politics, and we have to be vigilant in protecting our democracy. It is becoming increasingly hard to have conversations about politics in the classroom and around the dinner table. But those conversations are vital.” As a Fellow, he plans to visit schools and organizations that have had success promoting civics around the state and nation. “There are some exciting things going on around civics in education.” says Sheehan. “I want to learn what I can from those doing this work, and develop a program that is specific to our needs in central Vermont.” Success for Sheehan would mean students actively engaged in making change at all levels of government and community.

If you would like Chris to visit your classroom, or would like to learn more about his work, reach out at [chris.sheehan@ccsuvt.net](mailto:chris.sheehan@ccsuvt.net).

## Teacher Resources

### Council on Foreign Relations

The [Council on Foreign Relations](#) (CFR) is an independent, nonpartisan membership organization, think tank, and publisher dedicated to being a resource for its members, government officials, business executives, journalists, educators and students, civic and religious leaders, and other interested citizens in order to help them better understand the world and the foreign policy choices facing the United States and other countries.

Are you talking about the news in your classroom? Do your students have questions on issues like climate change, the Israel-Hamas war, or immigration? CFR Education has created a library of free authoritative, accessible, and accurate learning resources that can help your students understand the complex world of international relations. Sign up for the [CFR Education newsletter](#) to receive free teaching and learning resources straight to your inbox.

Find three CFR education opportunities for your students below:

1. [World101](#): An award-winning collection of multimedia explainers for students with little or no background knowledge of international relations and foreign policy. With accessible, jargon-free language and instructor-designed teaching resources, lessons on the World101 platform are non-partisan and developed in partnership with CFR experts.
2. [Model Diplomacy](#): The Model Diplomacy simulation program invites high-school, college, and graduate students to step into the shoes of decision-makers on the National Security Council or United Nations Security Council to debate the world's most pressing issues with dozens of full-length case studies, an expanding library of short-form scenarios covering current and historical events, and exclusive video content featuring commentary from foreign policy experts.
3. [Convene the Council](#): Developed in partnership with iCivics, one of the nation's leading providers of educational games, Convene the Council empowers students to understand the basics of how U.S. foreign policy gets made and the ways in which countries and international organizations can influence foreign policy.

### PBS Learning Media

Find a broad array of lessons, units, videos, and activities that can be easily filtered by grade level, resource type and content at [PBS Learning Media](#). Content covers, Civics, Economics, Geography, U.S. History, and World History. The AOE and Vermont Public have also been collaborating for several years and have created a collaborated space of resources on the Vermont AOE and Vermont Public Partnership [webpage](#).

### **Statistics in Schools**

[Statistics in Schools](#) (SIS) brings school subjects to life using real-world Census Bureau statistics to create materials for use year after year for K-12 students. Explore this site for engaging resources and activities in history, civics geography, and sociology as well as other content areas for interdisciplinary learning opportunities.

### **Thomas Jefferson's Monticello**

Visit [Monticello for Educators](#) to learn about the virtual and onsite offerings for educators and students, including digital education programs and the Monticello Teacher Institute at the University of Virginia.

### **Student Opportunities**

#### **Governor's Institutes of Vermont (GIV)**

[Governor's Institutes of Vermont](#) is in the process of finalizing its catalog but you can pique your students' interest by sharing the following [2024 Institute blurb](#). Social Studies students may find both [Global Issues and Youth Action](#) and [Entrepreneurship](#) institutes of interest.

#### **American Foreign Service Essay Contest**

[The American Foreign Service Association](#) is offering an essay contest for students to respond in 1,000-1,500 words to the following prompt:

"Over the past 100 years the Foreign Service has faced a multitude of challenges such as world war, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, humanitarian disasters, global pandemics, and economic crises. In a 1,000-1,500-word essay please identify what you believe will be the biggest challenge to face the Foreign Service in the future. The essay will describe this challenge and clearly define how American diplomats can help mitigate it".

Contest deadline is April 1, 2024; visit the website for all guidelines.

#### **The 1787 Prize**

[The 1787 Prize](#) is an essay competition, sponsored by the National Council for the Social Studies, for students in grades 11-12. This year, the students are to respond to the following prompt:

While our understanding of democracy has matured, how might you re-envision the following two aspects of the Constitution?

- The division of rights and responsibilities among the Federation
- The division of power within the Federal government, including the role of the Senate and the Electoral College

See the [webpage](#) for full information; submissions are due by March 31, 2024.

## Weekly Field Memo

If you don't already receive the Agency of Education's (AOE) Weekly Field Memo, you easily can [subscribe online](#). The AOE created the weekly field memo to keep subscribers up to date with current education policy, state-wide education initiatives, and official messages from the AOE. The field memo also includes education-related items from other state agencies. And, at the AOE's discretion, they may include other events or information from other organizations not directly affiliated with the AOE.

*Disclaimer: The views, opinions, and resources shared in this listserv are solely those of the original contributors. The Agency of Education does not endorse the views expressed by these contributors and reserves the right to refuse submissions. Questions related to any of these resources should be directed to the organizations, people and opportunities as shared.*

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