

Social Studies in Vermont

The newsletter for Vermont's Social Studies Educators and Supporters

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End of Year Message

What a year it has been! Educators across the state have risen to the challenge of teaching in multiple learning environments and adapting curricula and teaching methods to engage all students. The experience of teaching through a pandemic has to have been challenging, yet many educators have identified 'silver linings' as the year progressed; new technologies and teaching strategies were gained, as well as stronger relationship bonds formed with students and parent/guardians. These silver linings can help to reshape education as recovery is planned for the upcoming school year. As summer vacation becomes a reality, take time to relax, refresh and rejuvenate!

A Contentious Topic

"As of June 14, legislators in 21 states have introduced bills that would restrict teaching critical race theory or limit how teachers can discuss racism and sexism. Four states have signed these bills into law" (Education Week). As many state legislatures grappled this spring over how U.S. History should be taught, educators from Vermont and Alabama attended joint professional development sessions and discussed how Peace could be the underlying focus of both U.S. History and Civics. Tackling concepts such as conflict analysis, positive/negative peace, empathy, compassion, and taking action, educators from both states benefitted from hearing each other's points of view. They also were able to share C3 Inquiry Design Model units tackling topics like immigration ("Has the U.S. Lived Up to the Creed Inscribed on the Statue of Liberty?") and political corruption ("Can Investigative Journalism Keep the Government in check?") with their students. Six professional learning webinars were capped off with the educators having the opportunity to sit in on the [Charlotte Teacher's Institute](#) (CTI) Teacher Scholars program entitled *Racial Equity in the Classroom*. Teachers in the Charlotte, North Carolina-area program each shared a unit they developed during the year through this Yale University-affiliated program; units ranged from "The Rights of Autistic Children Through the Eyes of Natalie in *Al Capone Does My Shirts*" (grade 5) and "'Little Women': Eradicating the Adultification of Black Girls" (PreK). Note: these are two examples of the 2021 session which have not yet been posted on CTI's website, but many units developed by educators for previous sessions are available on the site.

The following is a powerful thought to consider as we listen to all perspectives in this 'contentious conversation':

“History is an attempt to reconstruct and interpret actual events and lived experiences. It follows rules of evidence and is peer-reviewed and debated. I think what a lot of Americans understand is heritage, which is a romanticized version of the past, usually devoid of the darker chapters. You know, these are the feel-good stories and, in some cases, stories that don't really deal with historical evidence, which isn't to say, by the way, that things don't happen in history. Of course, there are historical facts. The interpretation of those facts, however, is precisely what historians do. And I think a lot of people aren't necessarily familiar with that process”. (Julian Hayter)

I suggest reading (or listening to) National Public Radio's interview with University of Richmond historian Julian Hayter entitled, “[Understanding the Pushback Against Critical Race Theory in Schools](#)”, to fully benefit from his thoughtful commentary.

Professional Learning

Facing History and Ourselves: Summer offerings are open to any educator who is looking to use or integrate a [Facing History and Ourselves](#) unit in their curriculum and will be particularly relevant to 6th–12th grade U.S. history, humanities, and English Language Arts teachers and curriculum specialists. Summer seminars will take place between Monday and Thursday over one calendar week, while summits will run Tuesday through Thursday. Topics are varied, including *Holocaust and Human Behavior* and *Teaching for Equity and Justice Summit*. Registration fee is \$50.

Facing History also offers free [summer webinars](#) that last approximately 60 minutes and provide a great way to get introduced to a theme, practice, or particular historical moment. Summer topics include a conversation with Dr. Erika Lee to explore the history and contemporary realities of immigration in the United States and *The Only One in Class: Antisemitism in the Classroom* with Dr. Arthur Ullian. Also, [On-demand webinar](#) offerings include topics such as *Becoming a Multiracial Democracy* and *Whose Vote Counts?*

Center for Civic Education: Two free, self-paced courses are offered by the Center for Civic Education. The *We the People* course takes you from the philosophical foundations of the U.S. Constitution through the modern interpretation and application of its ideals. The *Strengthening Democracy in America* will deepen your understanding of the American political system and your rights and responsibilities in it.

Teacher Resources

Many Lenses: “Smithsonian museums collect America's heritage—from national treasures to the objects of everyday life. [Many Lenses](#) is a way of seeing Smithsonian collections through the eyes of museum staff who collect, preserve, interpret, and display these objects for the public. Because each Smithsonian Museum has a different mission and our curatorial staff have different areas of interest and expertise, there are myriad ways a single object can be seen and understood. For the launch of Many Lenses,

staff at the **National Museum of African American History and Culture**, **National Museum of the American Indian**, and **National Museum of American History** selected an artifact from their collections to highlight and interpret. Curators from the other museums were invited to tell us what they see when they look at these objects. What stories are revealed because of who is speaking? What meanings are ascribed because of who is writing?"

Educating for an American Democracy: The [Educating for an American Democracy](#) (EAD) initiative “demonstrates that an ideologically, demographically, and professionally diverse group can agree about history and civics content, as well as pedagogy. This detailed consensus, presented in a broad [Roadmap](#) that allows states, localities, and educators to assess and prioritize their own approaches, will encourage investments in civics and history at all levels”. EAD provides K-12 [resources](#) curated by theme, grade level and resource type.

History UnErased: [History UnErased](#) brings “LGBTQ history into the mainstream curriculum to ensure all students, today and beyond, learn a more complete story of America and a more empowering reflection of who *We the People* includes, promoting genuine understanding and equality for all LGBTQ people”. Their instructional resources, *Intersections* and *Connections*, are offered for a one-time fee per school.

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 listserve 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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