

Social Studies in Vermont

The newsletter for Vermont's Social Studies Educators and Supporters

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Welcome

I can't think of a time in my life when social studies education has felt so important. I have often felt that we have gotten scheduling side arm and our classroom time and/or level of importance has been minimized. It isn't a Vermont thing, it's a national sentiment. An EdSurge State of EdTech 2019 report states that "venture capital devoted to social studies over the past three years has been too small to measure - possibly a reflection of overall underinvestment in the subject". The primary purpose of social studies education "is to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world" (National Council for the Social Studies). Since we live and interact in a society that brings us into contact with individuals of differing ethnicities, cultures, abilities, identities, religions, and socio-economic backgrounds whose beliefs and thinkings will inevitably differ from our own, it just makes sense that social studies is part of a well-rounded education and advance social studies to being more than the 'lima bean on the curricular plate' (Paul Fritchett, UNC-C).

Portrait of a Graduate

A Vermont Portrait of a Graduate (PoG) clarifies the expectations for College and Career Readiness as described in the [Vermont Education Quality Standards](#). It specifies the cognitive, personal, and interpersonal skills and abilities that students should be able to demonstrate upon graduation. Evidence of how social studies education can prepare our students to be active citizens in our democracy can be found in the [Social Studies Portrait of a Graduate](#).

Social studies can:

- provide students with the intellectual context for studying how humans have interacted with each other and the environment over time. This knowledge enables students to develop and hone a sense of self as lessons from both the past and present serve as a guide to future goals;
- assist students to develop the ability to make evidence-based claims, or counter claims, to support or dispute their thinking through the analysis of resources and application of learned material;
- help students to understand that their words can leave an impact, therefore they will think first of their intentions before they communicate in print, in person, or digitally;

- prompt students to ask questions in their efforts to clarify how the world works, and their roles within it. Students will learn to engage in lifelong civic practices to bring about positive change through a commitment to democratic values;
- build a foundation which enables students to challenge bias, prejudice and stereotypes; guide students to take ownership of their learning through engagement in the inquiry process. As they construct arguments, provide explanations, listen to, and share ideas and perspectives students are learning to be cognizant of bias and value the dissonance of opinion.

State-Wide Focus on Personal Finance Education

In 2019, the Agency of Education (AOE) began a collaborative project with Champlain College's Center for Financial Literacy, with funding provided through a grant from the Northfield Savings Bank Foundation, to improve personal finance education within Vermont. Through this collaboration, a Professional Learning Community (PLC) of sixteen K-12 content-area and special education educators from across the state was created to highlight age-appropriate personal finance resources and tools; develop sample financial literacy grade-banded K-8 and 9-12 performance indicators and Proficiency Based Graduation Requirements (PBGRs) which can be implemented in an interdisciplinary manner; identify connections between Personalized Learning Plans and financial literacy; and, provide state-wide K-12 training on how to teach and assess personal finance topics.

The AOE-developed K-12 PBGRs has highlighted a "Spotlight on Equity" to provide a list of considerations for the purpose of providing an equity literate and socially conscious lens to the teaching and learning of personal finance. This Spotlight also serves to recognize the historic economic exclusion and marginalization of minority groups and communities. When grade-level appropriate, educators may use the topics to critically engage students in socially relevant financial literacy opportunities. Neither the enumerated considerations, nor the resources, are a complete list but rather a starting point on which to begin historically and socially relevant learning with a focus on personal finance. All documents and resources will be available on the AOE Financial Literacy website in February.

Belated Kudos

We the People

On March 9, 2020, the Vermont State Finals of the *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution* took place at the Vermont History Museum and Statehouse Pavilion March after a several-year hiatus.

Vermont Bar Association members and state legislators served as judges for the program. Students from St. Johnsbury Academy, Poultney High School and Williamstown High School competed and presented arguments on issues covering voting rights, due process, separation of powers, citizenship, separation and populism.

Each team of students was given four minutes to present evidence on judge-selected questions from a list provided to the students in advance by the Center for Civic Education. The judges then followed up the presentations with six minutes of impromptu questions.

St. Johnsbury Academy students were the overall winner; both St. Johnsbury and Poultney earned the opportunity for their students to compete in national competition in Washington, DC, but unfortunately, COVID-19 did not allow for student travel.

No Vermont schools are competing this school year, but if you would like to learn more about the program, or find opportunities for free professional development, visit the [Center for Civic Education's](#) website.

Vermont 2020 History Teacher of the Year

Congratulations go out to Windsor School educator Keighan Eaker, as she was selected by Gilder Lehrman as Vermont's 2020 History Teacher of the Year! Since 2004, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, a national organization dedicated to K-12 American history education Keighan, recognizes exceptional teachers of history in kindergarten through grade 12 in the U.S., Washington D.C., the U.S. Territories and Department of Defense schools. Keighan received her bachelor's degree at Castleton State College in 2011, and in 2013 she completed a master's degree in curriculum development and instruction from Castleton University; in December 2020 she completed a second master's in education leadership. Keighan's passion for history, geography, and inquiry methods have been combined in her classroom as she creates an atmosphere in which history is directly correlated to students' lives through undertaking research projects, analyzing community-based issues, and understanding national trends.

Some of you may also know Keighan as she has served as Treasurer of the Vermont Alliance for the Social Studies and expertly ran the Vermont Geography Bee for years. Congratulations! Information for the [2021 History Teacher of the Year](#) has been released.

Student Opportunities

Hildene Lincoln Essay Competition 2021

Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home runs the Lincoln Essay Competition for Vermont's 8th graders, dividing the state into four competitions. Students are invited to focus on "the unalienable rights" in the Declaration of Independence by answering this prompt:

Choose one issue that you think demonstrates how our nation either is or is not honoring the ideal that all people have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Give three examples to support your position. Finally, suggest one step that could either further strengthen our course or get our nation back on track and explain why this step would be effective.

First place winners receive \$500, second place \$400, third place \$300, and up to four honorable mentions of \$200 each which the judges may choose from anywhere in the state. The deadline for submissions is **February 26, 2021**. Please consult their website to identify your contest entry region and to find a complete application packet [online](#) (including important guidelines and tips). For any questions reach out to Stephanie at stephanie@hildene.org or (802) 367-7960.

Vermont History Day State Contest

Due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, the Vermont History Day state contest will now be an all-virtual contest on Saturday, April 3, 2021. See the [Vermont History Day website](#) for updated details and deadlines. The contest is open to all Vermont students in grades 5-12. Projects can be about any topic in history (not just Vermont history) related to the annual theme of "Communication in History: The Key to Understanding." Students may also want to participate in the [VTDigger History Invitational](#) which is using the same theme as a focus for student research and writing. Contact Victoria Hughes at victoria.hughes@vermonthistory.org or (802) 828-1413.

Global Citizenship: Engage

Go Global VT presents *Global Citizenship: Engage*, a virtual student conference April 5-8, 2021. Students will have the opportunity to engage through keynote speakers, facilitated discussions, and virtual activities which examine the natural, built, cultural and socio-political worlds to reshape our collective understanding of global citizenship. Participants will explore ways to be changemakers by thinking globally and acting locally. As GoGlobal recognizes the challenges that COVID-19 presents to education, the conference is designed with intentional flexibility. Whether students join for a single speaker or participate in all activities across the four-day conference, participants will leave with a better understanding of their role as global citizens. This conference is designed for

students in grades 7-12, although some activities are appropriate for younger audiences. Individuals and classrooms are encouraged to register. For more information and to register, visit [GoGlobal online](#). Questions can be sent to connect@goglobalvt.org.

Teacher Resources

Black History Month Resources

The [Rutland NAACP](#) has created vibrant and insightful [resources](#) for Black History Month 2021 and beyond – for study in the classroom or self-learning. Also, the Smithsonian Institution offers a host of [history and heritage online events](#). Celebrate diversity all year long!

Financial Literacy Professional Development

The Center for Financial Literacy at Champlain College, in partnership with the Vermont Agency of Education, is offering free professional development for all Vermont K-12 educators with a focus on the successful implementation of the *JumpStart National Standards in K-12 Financial Personal Finance Education*. These standards, adopted by the Vermont State Board of Education in 2018, allow for the teaching of personal finance in an interdisciplinary or standalone manner. Educators can earn up to 7 hours in professional development training; credit will also be given for partial completion. Sessions will be led by local and national experts. The first 400 educators to complete all training sessions will be given a \$50 Amazon gift card with suggestions for grade-appropriate personal finance classroom resources. This professional development opportunity will be available both live and On-demand, with the option of educators completing the sessions at their own pace from March 3rd to May 31st, 2021. Please complete the [registration](#) to participate in this professional development opportunity. This training is made possible by a grant for the Northfield Savings Bank Foundation. Contact: John Pelletier at jpelletier@champlain.edu or Martha Deiss at martha.deiss@vermont.gov.

PBS Teacher Planning Kits

[PBS Teacher Planning Kits](#) include bundled media and materials that can be used during in-person or remote instruction, both with or without internet access. Planning sheets for elementary and secondary education are divided into three sections: “watch,” which includes the program; “teach,” which connects activities, games and lessons to the program; and “explore,” which provides additional resources about a specific topic or theme. For more information visit the [AOE’s Vermont PBS webpage](#) or the [Vermont PBS Distance Learning](#) page.

Peace Education with a Focus on Civics and U.S. History

The Vermont Agency of Education has partnered with [NewGen Peacebuilders](#), educators in Alabama and North Carolina and the [Birmingham Civil Rights Institute](#) to develop "U.S. History & Peace," a Beta set of peace education lessons and activities. This work is aligned with the C3 Standards and uses the Institute of Economics and Peace's "[8 Pillars of Peace](#)" as a framework on which the Inquiry Frameworks were developed. This new content includes compelling questions, lessons, activities, data, resources, and case studies/examples which are designed to support Middle and High School Civics and U.S. History teachers to constructively discuss issues and opportunities of peacebuilding. Session modules include topics such as "What is Peace?", "Power and Peace", "Harm and Healing", and "Human Rights and Compassion"; the series culminates with virtual museum tours and panel discussions. Educators will receive access and training for Canvas Modules; student Inquires can be utilized in a remote or classroom settings. Interested educators or educational professionals are encouraged to visit the [registration](#) page to learn more and to register for this unique opportunity for free professional development and classroom resources. Contact Martha Deiss at martha.deiss@vermont.gov or Debra Semmler at debra.semmler@cms.k12.nc.us.

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 may also include 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.

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