

In this issue, Allan Lichtman launches *Social Education's* coverage of the 2008 presidential elections by forecasting which party is likely to win the popular vote in November, based on his "Keys to the White House" formula. *Social Education* has published the formula and Lichtman's predictions in each presidential election year since 1996, because they have a better track record than other predictive methods. Developed by Lichtman and the Russian mathematician Vladimir Keilis-Borok, the Keys take account of a wide array of factors—politics, economics, social forces, international affairs and the personal charisma of candidates. Lichtman will return to our pages in October with a final prediction based on the Keys just before the election.

Our Teaching with Documents column offers a historical angle on presidential election campaigns. Christine Blackerby introduces readers to the work and accomplishments of Clifford K. Berryman, the celebrated cartoonist whose career spanned more than half a century (and is the focus of a collection of more than 100 publicly accessible cartoons on the National Archives website). Her accompanying suggestions recommend ways of using political cartoons by Berryman about presidential elections in the classroom.

One of the highlights of this issue is a special section edited by Valerie Ooka Pang on teaching about natural disasters. The articles draw from and build on the experience of schools in San Diego County following the forest fires that wrought havoc on the area last October. Evaluations of the challenges and responses of schools, accompanied by suggestions for activities that can encourage community service and critical thinking by students, are the focus of the opening article by Pang, Marcelina Madueño, Miriam Atlas, Tamiko Stratton, Jennifer Olinger and Cindy Page. In a related feature, three teachers (Dana Riggs, Marcelina Madueño and Miriam Atlas) provide a moving account of the personal experiences of their students, who lived through the fires. Their recollections highlight not only the fears and sorrows of students but also their willingness to help neighbors and their eloquence at describing their responses to the emergency once they returned to the safety and supportive environments of their school communities.

Ilene R. Berson and Michael Berson point out in the third article of the special section that "Faster and more efficient coverage on television and the Internet is increasingly exposing children to traumatic images of natural devastation both at home and abroad." (27) They recommend websites and interactive resources that will enable students to understand natural disasters and provide guidance to teachers on how to help students cope with them, evaluate their causes and solutions, and improve their own capacities for crisis problem solving.

C. Frederick Risinger's Internet column addresses the challenge of teaching students to think analytically about history in the era of No Child Left Behind, in which social studies

subjects are often marginalized and a focus on standardized testing inhibits the development of critical thinking skills. He introduces the reader to exceptionally valuable websites that promote historical analysis and thinking.

Joseph Kahne and Ellen Middaugh review the state of civic education in schools. Their Research and Practice column points out that students typically "take only one semester-long course on American government" (34)—unlike the situation in the 1960s, when it was common "for students to take multiple courses in civics covering not only the structure of American government, but also the role of citizens and the issues they and the government face." (34) Kahne and Middaugh pose the question, "What is high quality civic education and who gets it?" and conclude that students have inadequate opportunities at school to develop civic commitments and capacities, and that minority students are the group most likely to be deprived of a good civics education.

Michelle Parrini's Looking at the Law column examines Supreme Court cases related to the integration of schools. Historic Court decisions in the cases of *Brown* (1954) and *Swann* (1971) required the desegregation of schools and endorsed initiatives to integrate education. Recently, however, the Court has struck down integration policies by school districts in Louisville and Seattle on the ground that they are too broad. Parrini examines the legal issues arising from initiatives to increase diversity in schools, and presents activities that can bring the subject into the classroom.

At a time when foreign policy looms large in American politics, Ann Claunch offers a historical perspective by examining two critical periods in U.S. history in which foreign policy decisions with lasting consequences were made. She contrasts Woodrow Wilson's idealistic but unsuccessful commitment to the League of Nations with the pragmatism of Roosevelt at the Yalta Conference of 1945. In an article reflecting the theme of this year's National History Day projects—"Conflict and Compromise in History"—she introduces primary documents and class activities that will allow students to evaluate today's foreign policy challenges in the light of the experience of the past.

As is customary in the January-February issue of *Social Education*, the opening feature includes highlights from the address of the NCSS president at the annual meeting that recently took place. President Gayle Thieman describes what NCSS can do to meet the five major challenges facing social studies educators: living in a global age; creating a powerful and authentic social studies curriculum; preparing students for life in a digital era; working with diverse learners; and advocating for the social studies.

As always, the editors of *Social Education* welcome the comments of readers on any of the contributions to this issue at [socialed@ncss.org](mailto:socialed@ncss.org). 