

Editor's Notebook

Social studies teachers play the vital role of preparing students for citizenship, college, and careers. Through social studies subjects, young Americans learn how our past has shaped our present, and how to evaluate major problems facing the U.S. and the world. In future, they will assume the task of leading a nation confronted by highly complex challenges related to the economy, the environment, social problems, globalization, and world conflicts. Social studies education prepares them for these challenges.

Despite their prime importance, social studies subjects face a dire threat of marginalization by school systems that focus on subjects that are tested and for which schools are held accountable, such as English and math.

We open this issue with a feature that addresses the essential role of social studies, including an article by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, and related observations by the current and four past NCSS Presidents that have been prompted by his article.

Secretary Duncan's article articulates many of the reasons why social studies is vital. Duncan makes clear that "social studies are not a luxury, but a necessity," and that "to marginalize social studies for the sake of reading and math is not only misguided, it is educational neglect." (124) He urges social studies educators to "encourage states and local school boards to develop high social studies standards based on themes and skills and to create authentic growth measures of student learning." (125)

The article is followed by comments from current President Steve Goldberg and past presidents Syd Golston, Michael Yell, Gayle Thieman, and Peggy Altoff.

While welcoming the articulation by the Secretary of the importance of social studies, they also speak to the major problems we face as a result of national and state education policies, and urge changes in these policies.

We at NCSS are eager for a constructive discussion with the Department of Education and state departments of education on the means of putting into practice Secretary Duncan's declaration that "Educators and policymakers need to recognize that social studies is a core subject, critical to sustaining an informed democracy and a globally competitive workforce." (124) Mr. Duncan's article and the comments by NCSS leaders are freely available and reproducible at www.socialstudies.org. NCSS members are invited to discuss them at NCSS Connected, <http://connected.socialstudies.org>. Secretary Duncan has a standing invitation to be a leading speaker at the NCSS national conference in Washington, D.C., from December 2–4. We hope that he will accept so that this necessary discussion can continue.

The remainder of this issue offers readers fascinating features on topics of historical interest and contemporary importance. In a collaborative Teaching with Documents section, Lee Ann Potter and Michael Hussey of the National Archives join with Elizabeth K. Eder of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, to provide a picturesque account of the visit of Britain's Prince of Wales in 1860 to Mount Vernon, the ancestral home

of George Washington. The primary sources presented are a page from the log book of the ship on which the prince traveled and a painting of his visit to Washington's tomb. The suggested teaching activities will engage classes studying this highly symbolic visit.

William H. Freivogel poses the challenging question of whether Julian Assange, the editor of WikiLeaks, is comparable to Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked the Pentagon Papers. In our Looking at the Law column, Freivogel examines the WikiLeaks controversy from a legal perspective, and suggests questions to stimulate class discussions.

Consumer education is an important role of social studies, and one feature in this issue gives a new meaning to "bringing Starbucks to class." Joan Malczewski, Debra Plafker-Gutt, and Robert Cohen present a lesson taught about Starbucks at Stuyvesant High School in New York City that focuses on research conducted on the company by Bryant Simon. The lesson develops students' anthropological skills, as well as their understanding of the economics of coffee, as they investigate the language, branding, and marketing that are integral to the Starbucks enterprise.

As our members look forward to their summer reading, we present two traditional features that mark the end of the school year. The 16-page center pullout presents the latest selection of *Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People*, chosen by a committee of NCSS members, in conjunction with the Children's Book Council, that has identified books published in 2010 with outstanding social studies value and exceptional literary qualities. The second feature consists of reviews of the books that received Carter G. Woodson book awards last year for their excellence in educating young people on race and ethnicity in the United States.

Prentice Chandler presents a lesson plan on the Cherokee Removal. The historical documents that are the foundation of the lesson plan are well suited to activities in which students place themselves in the roles of those who planned the Removal and those who suffered from it.

In his informative Internet column, C. Frederick Risinger recommends some excellent sites for teaching social studies. As with his previous selections, these sites present imaginative teaching suggestions that develop students' skills.

Teachers seeking to use the Internet to connect classes in different countries will be very interested in the article by Annette Boyd Pitts, Charles Dziuban, and Jeffrey W. Cornett. The authors present examples of partnerships organized by The Florida Law-Related Association as part of the Civitas International Program to link civics students across continents to discuss problems facing their communities.

The contributions to this issue conclude with a film review by Greg Snoad of *The Response*, which presents the issues raised by the Guantanamo trials.

As always, the editors of *Social Education* welcome the comments of readers on any of the contributions at socialed@ncss.org. 