

Editor's Notebook

The social studies disciplines teach students both about historic milestones and issues of contemporary significance. This edition of *Social Education* features several articles on such topics, as well as incisive analyses of the challenges of developing meaningful assessments and meeting the Common Core State Standards.

This coming January, we will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. In this issue's Teaching with Documents column, Lee Ann Potter examines the preparations made by the Lincoln Administration to distribute copies of the Proclamation to embassies and consulates overseas, where it rallied international sympathy to the Union cause. The featured documents are the letter from the Secretary of State requesting the printing of the Proclamation, and an accounts ledger recording its printing cost.

When Franky, a drug-sniffing chocolate Labrador owned by the Miami-Dade Police Department, identified the scent of marijuana in a local home in 2006, he started a chain of events that is now being reviewed by the Supreme Court. In our Looking at the Law column, Catherine Hawke and Tiffany Middleton examine the Fourth Amendment issues that have arisen from the seizure of marijuana and the arrest of Joelis Jardines in that episode. Their suggestions for teaching about this and related cases will place the Fourth Amendment at the center of lively classroom discussions.

Historically, young voters have been less likely to go to the polls than older ones. Diana Hess suggests that schools can play an important role in improving turnout among the young. Among her recommendations is the inclusion of more voting-related topics in the curriculum (e.g., the history of suffrage movements, and more in-depth instruction about the electoral process and contemporary political issues). She also suggests that schools can play an important practical role in showing students who have reached voting age how to register, and how to go about casting their vote.

Formative assessment is an important tool for increasing student achievement, as Sam Wineburg, Mark Smith and Joel Breakstone point out, because its goal "is not to grade students but to pinpoint where they are having trouble and then to take appropriate instructional action" (291). The authors describe a recent initiative in which they used the Library of Congress collection of primary sources to generate effective formative history assessments that can offer teachers a new means of improving the performance and capabilities of their students.

Chauncey Monte-Sano describes the challenges of evaluating history essays. One problem is that conventional rubrics often prioritize writing skills over historical understanding. In this issue's Research and Practice column, she shares procedures that she has developed for evaluating essays that give appropriate weight to the quality of a student's historical thinking and analysis, and illustrates her approach with specific examples of student writing.

Stewart Waters and William B. Russell III advocate a stronger focus in the world history curriculum on the impact of World War II on the subsequent international commitment to the protection of human rights. Citing the widespread violation of rights during that war, they emphasize the need to teach about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other major human rights initiatives that have stemmed from the need to prevent a recurrence of the wartime atrocities.

Joanne Dufour reviews the effects of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and its subsequent amended versions. Her case study focuses on a young Chinese immigrant to the United States, Yee Quong Yuen, who was ordered deported in 1910, but was subsequently allowed to stay after his appeal against the decision was upheld. The featured document is a record of the young man's interrogation by an immigration inspector.

Fred Risinger reiterates the need for social studies teachers to "defend our subject in the curriculum [and] mobilize public support for social studies and citizenship education" (299). His Internet column identifies strategies and websites that can help our members to achieve those goals.

An exciting new initiative by NCSS during the last year has been the establishment of a social studies honor society for students—the Rho Kappa National Social Studies Honor Society, which was originally developed in Florida through the Florida Council for the Social Studies. Mary T. McCullagh, who teaches in a Miami school that has a Rho Kappa chapter, describes the excitement and benefits that Rho Kappa can bring to students.

The Common Core State Standards have now been adopted by 45 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. There are many questions about the impact these standards will have on the social studies disciplines, which are entrusted with responsibilities for the development of student literacy. Michelle Herczog presents a strategy that helps to meet the Common Core standards through instruction based on important documents that gives students a profound understanding of the texts of the documents. She offers a detailed exemplar for presenting the Bill of Rights to a fifth grade class. (Her suggested lesson can also be adapted to other grade levels.)

Alan Singer demonstrates the value of the use of primary sources for dealing with challenging topics in classes on history, government, and current events. He offers recommendations of specific texts that can enhance the discussion of same-sex relationships, the debate about the form of government that best fits human nature, and class examinations of the real meaning of "literal" interpretations of the U.S. Constitution.

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