

SIERRA SOCIAL STUDIES

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

FALL 2010

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY SARAH BROWN

I hope you all have had a fantastic start to the school year and have found your groove after a relaxing or perhaps adventurous summer. My hope is that you are all still invigorated, but know that now that we are a quarter into the school year we may be beginning to show the wear and tear of another busy year.

Within the context of our busy schedules it is often hard to find time to devote to seeking out new curriculum ideas and time to collaborate with colleagues beyond the scope of our own departments. Yet, we know how meaningful and valuable those collaborations can be. One of the primary goals of the Northern Nevada Council of Social Studies is to make those opportunities available to you by highlighting best practices in social studies that you can implement and providing meaningful professional development activities.

This year NNCSS is sponsoring two fantastic events. Our 7th annual

conference is being held on Saturday, November 6th at Damonte Ranch High School. This year's theme is "Making History a Verb: Engaging Students in Social Studies" with keynote speaker Dr. Dennis Denenberg, author of *50 American Heroes Your Students Should Know*. We are lucky to have the support of the Teaching American History Grant to help sponsor this incredible speaker and provide northern Nevada teachers with such a fantastic opportunity. Don't miss it!

Mark your calendars for our second event, the Spring Expo, held on March 31, 2011 at the Nevada Automobile Museum. Our Spring Expo allows us the chance to put a little of the "social" back in social studies while teachers sip wine, peruse the museum, and gather resources from dozens of exciting exhibitors FREE of charge.

I would like to both introduce you to the NNCSS

executive board and extend a huge thank you to each and every one of them for their dedication to the promotion of social studies education in our region. Sue Davis serves as our Executive Director and Angela Orr was a former president now serving as the Assistant Director. Stephanie Hartman is our President-Elect & Webmaster Extraordinaire. Vallarie Larson from Shaw Middle School is our Middle School Representative and Whitney Foehl of Wooster is serving as High School Representative. Laura Moberg from Reno High School is our Secretary and Jamie Thomsen of Depoali Middle School is our Treasurer.

Lastly, please enjoy this fabulous edition of our newsletter which highlights many of the best articles NNCSS has brought to you over the years. Have a great year!



NORTHERN NEVADA
COUNCIL FOR THE
SOCIAL STUDIES

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General George Washington

“LABOUR TO KEEP ALIVE IN YOUR BREAST THAT LITTLE SPARK OF CELESTIAL FIRE CALLED CONSCIENCE”

BY GEORGE!! BY JAMIE THOMSEN

Unbelievable, Incredible, Fascinating, Rigorous, In-depth are all words that I would use to describe my experience with the George Washington’s Middle School Teacher’s Institute. We spent one week on the grounds of the estate and had unprecedented access across the property. Our days were filled with insightful lectures and presentations from professors and scholars from across the country, collaboration amongst the 24 participating teachers, and hands-on activities that bring George Washington alive in the classroom. Through this experience, participants took away an incredible amount of knowl-

edge on George Washington that can be intertwined into many different curriculum units throughout the year. By the time the week was over, we left with great resources, insightful knowledge, and lasting memories that make it possible for us as teachers to span George Washington throughout our curriculum regardless of the grade we teach.



This truly was an experience of a lifetime and I feel very fortunate to have been a part of this institute. I cannot speak highly enough of this

professional development opportunity and I encourage all social studies teachers to apply and experience the real George Washington! Institute applications are typically due in mid-March. For more information on the George Washington Teachers Institute, contact Stephanie Hartman at shartman@doe.nv.gov, or visit the GWTI website at: www.mountvernon.org/learn/teachers_students/index.cfm/ss/116/

ACCESS MULTIMEDIA AT SNAGFILMS.COM

BY JULIANNE KINZIE

If you are anything like the “typical educator” you are bombarded with resources, websites and the “latest and greatest” teaching strategies via e-mail. More often than not, I find a great site only to discover its “blocked” by the district. So, when I find a site that actually has great information AND can be accessed at school, I am only too happy to share. Below is a site I received from glennw@essdack.org at Social Studies Central.

“Try: SnagFilms.com. SnagFilms is a relatively new online service that is commit-

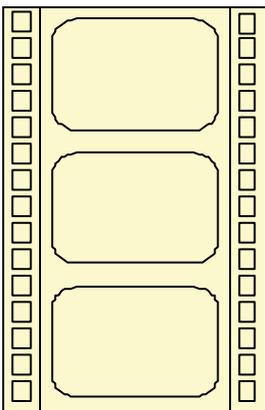
ted to finding the world’s most compelling documentaries, whether from established heavyweights or first-time filmmakers, and making them available to the wide audience these titles deserve. SnagFilms.com is a website where you can watch full-length documentary films for free, but we’re also a platform that lets you ‘snag’ a film and put it anywhere on the web.

They’ve created financial arrangements with a variety of film makers allowing them to host and stream tons of useful

videos. National Geographic and PBS, as well as a mix of independent film makers, have agreed to release educational videos to SnagFilms. I was able to find great stuff on ancient civilizations to Pearl Harbor to Jamestown to Iraq to mummies to the great film Paperclips.”



I signed up for a “Tip of the Week” e-mail from Social Studies Central and once a week it arrives with a useful tip to use in my classroom. It is a great site and source for social studies teachers.



GOOGLE DOCS; SOLVING THE LOST FILE EXCUSE

BY SHYLE IRIGOIN

Any teacher who has set up a student-centered, engaging project in the school's computer lab has invariably faced a myriad of computer woes. Whether it is a report using Microsoft Word or a presentation using PowerPoint, the frustration that sets in once students can't access their project files can destroy a constructive, educational activity. Another computer lab pitfall is the issue of having the current version of the file, where students may have forgotten to save an updated file and are stuck having the re-construct the progress they have lost. The eventual impact is not only a lack of meeting the content goals as well as a decline in student behavior, stemming from massive frustration over the project's many problems.

One ideal solution is to use Google Docs, available at <http://docs.google.com>. You can either upload a file the students start in the lab

(including format in DOC, XLS, ODT, ODS, RTF, CSV, PPT) or you can create basic documents from scratch using the web site. You don't have to be an expert; there are easy tutorials and step-by-step guides to walk students through the process of creating and working on files. Even better, any student who has access to the internet at home can continue to work on the files without the fear of someone forgetting their flash drive.



Another concern when working on computerized projects is the issue of multiple students working on the same project on different computers. In the past, a group of four students would crowd

around a keyboard with a lot of time wasted and little actually accomplished. Google Docs not only allows simultaneous students to work on files but it saves the multiple versions of the files and it allows users who are registered work simultaneously. Teachers, be smart and have students add you as someone who can view the files; this way if they forget their password you still have access! To register people to collaborate on a document, just enter the email addresses of the group members and the teacher.

Google Docs will require students to register on Google first, so any project you initiate will need to have time planned for the registration process. Overall, Google Docs can greatly simplify projects, reduce lost work time, and result in a more professional and complete project, so log on and see how it can work for you!



THE
FRUSTRATION
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DESTROY A
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NEW NNCSS WEBSITE MAKES IT'S DEBUT!

BY STEPHANIE HARTMAN

The Northern Nevada Council for the Social Studies has unveiled a new website!

If you visit anyplace this winter, it should be the NNCSS website at: www.nvsocialstudies.com.

The pages of this website are



chock full of information about teaching social studies, NNCSS events, back issues of newsletters, online resources, and professional development (pd) opportunities. Wonder what fun and exciting pd opportunities are

available this summer? Check the NNCSS website? Want to know more about best practices in teaching economics? Check the NNCSS website! What's the latest in Nevada social studies? You know where to go! Book mark this site today!

NEXT STOP... GERMANY *BY JULIE WAKEFIELD*

This past July, I had the pleasure of spending two weeks in Germany with the Goethe Institute Transatlantic Outreach Program (TOP). Heat and humidity aside, it was a phenomenal trip that I am still learning from. The Goethe Institute sends 100 teachers and administrators to Germany each year with the goal of bringing Germany back into the US classrooms. So, why Germany?

Germany is a key player in the European Union and an example of economic stability throughout Europe (remember Germany was going to help bail out Greece?). Their geographic location, legacy of literacy and political thought, and successful reconstruction after World War 2 are what make Germany a strong, world player. In addition to being the homeland of many our ancestors, Germany is quickly becoming a country of immigrants.

So, my two weeks began in hot, humid Chinatown region of Washington DC at the Goethe Institute office. Here we met the others we would be traveling with and received the do's and don'ts of the trip! The best part of the 24 hours we had in DC was watching the third place World Cup game with Germany in a building full of Germans (and other diehard Germany fans!!) We were bummed they lost, but World Cup fever did not die down once we hit Germany.

We landed in Munich where we stayed for four nights. While in Munich, we learned bicycles could be more hazardous to the pedestrian

than a vehicle or bus. And, they do have ice for us tourists! We visited a number of schools since Bayern is the only state in Germany that was still in session. However, we did not get to observe many classes because the students were sent home at noon due to the heat and lack of A/C. While in Munich, we also met with the Secretary General of the Goethe Institute, visited the State Ministry of Education, the Academy for Teacher Training in Dillingen and last but not least, the famous Ludwig Chiemsee castle.



RAY O'RODARIO

From Munich, we took the fast train (with a broken A/C) to Frankfurt. We were in Frankfurt a very short time with our main purpose being a visit to Deutsche Bank since they are one of the sponsoring funders of the TOP program. After Deutsche Bank we visited Deutscher Fussball-Bund, where we were able to receive a much better understanding of why 'soccer' rules in Germany. (You will have to come to session at the conference on Nov 2 to find out why!) Just be ready for Summer 2011 when Germany hosts and is predicted to dominate the Women's World Cup! But only time will tell!

The next stop was Weimar, home to Goethe and Schilling, two great German poets. Weimar is a great small town and we learned how important weekends are to the Germans. Most shops and restaurants are closed on Sundays but the parks are overflowing with families! It was great to see the

cities preserving family time. A short ride from Weimar we experienced the sobering Buchenwald concentration camp.

From Weimar, we again traveled by train to Berlin. We stayed in Berlin for the duration. While in Berlin we were able to see all the sites and visit many AMAZING places. You would never know when you were in the former East Berlin or West Berlin. It is a booming city! We toured the Bundestag, visited the Federal Agency for Civic Education, talked to an official in Kreuzberg who informed us about the many challenging of integrating the Turkish immigrants, walked the city, took public transportation (I am terrified of getting lost on public transportation!) and ATE. We had German food (of course!) and Italian, Vietnamese, Mexican, lots of desserts and best of all...Donar Kabobs!! The Turkish sandwich that has become the symbol of Germany! They are really yummy and if anyone is looking for a business opportunity, let me know, I think they would be HUGE here!

Anyway, this was a fast-paced, information filled two weeks in Germany that I will be processing and learning from for a number of years. I highly recommend this trip to anyone who interested in bringing any amount of information about Germany into their classroom.

To find out more about the Goethe Institute TOP program and travelling to Germany on an all expenses

paid trip, visit their website at:

<http://www.goethe.de/ins/us/lp/prj/top/enindex.htm>



THE JAMES MADISON FELLOWSHIP *BY SHYLE IRIGOIN*

Like most educators, I wanted to develop my understanding of the Constitution and its impact on our lives beyond what I learned in undergraduate training and the textbooks. As a result, I am one of a growing number of national educators (1,000 members as of 2010) who have been awarded a James Madison Fellowship. It has enabled me to pursue my master's degree and has greatly enhanced my understanding of the content we are all charged with teaching.

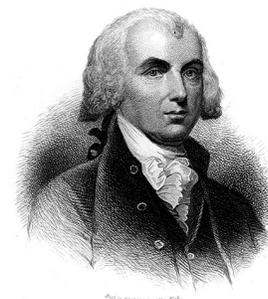


During the bicentennial of the US Constitution there was a national discussion on the proficiency of America's educators in the Constitution. As a result, Congress and private groups came together to form the James Madison Fellowship as a way of instructing constitutional principles by providing support for graduate study that focuses on the Constitution. Awardees have up to \$24,000 over a six year period to complete their master's degree in a field of con-

stitutional focus. Awardees must also attend a summer Constitutional Institute at Georgetown University where leading historical, governmental, and political science scholars work with the fellows to strengthen their understanding of the US Constitution and its role in American history.

The application process is not difficult, but early planning helps your chances enormously.

For more information, please visit www.jamesmadison.com



President
James Madison

“AS LONG AS
THE REASON OF
MAN CONTINUES
FALLIBLE, AND HE
IS AT LIBERTY TO
EXERCISE IT,
DIFFERENT
OPINIONS WILL
BE FORMED.”
-JAMES MADISON

21ST CENTURY SKILLS IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM *BY JAMIE THOMSEN*

In order to help prepare students for life outside the classroom, 21st century skills; that is, the skills and knowledge students need to be proficient in to succeed in work and life in the 21st century, are being stressed in many schools. It is essential for all students in the 21st century to be proficient in their core subjects as well as the 21st century content like global awareness, civic literacy, and financial and economic literacy including other skills like information literacy and critical thinking skills. So, what

does this look like in the social studies classroom? For many of us, the 21st century content is already intertwined in our daily social studies classes. Civic literacy is touched upon in many of our classes when discussing rights, duties, and obligation of citizens and teaching how government works and why it is important to stay informed on current events. Outside of civic literacy, analyzing primary sources and teaching students bias are tools many of us teach to our students. Taking this a step further and

having the students utilize technology and other digital resources to express or show the knowledge gained from the resources incorporates the 21st century skills aspect. Also, having students utilize online databases for research and accessing information through various outlets falls under the skills necessary for the 21st century. On a weekly or even daily basis, discussing multiple perspectives and modern day relevance of social studies content helps students relate the content to real world issues.

For more tools and resources on how to apply 21st century skills into the social studies classroom, check out:

www.socialstudies.org



NORTHERN NEVADA COUNCIL
FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES

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NNCSS Social Studies EXPO

SAVE THE DATE!
Thursday, March 31, 2011

3:15-6:00 p.m.

Join the Northern Nevada Council of the Social Studies for an afternoon at the National Automobile Museum. Mingle with colleagues and chat with representatives from local organizations and text book companies who can provide resources for your classroom. The event is free and includes complimentary wine, complimentary entrance to the museum, and a raffle for cool social studies materials. Help us put the “social” back into social studies!

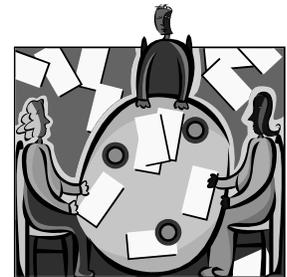
NNCSS WEBSITE MAKES
IT'S DEBUT!

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If you have something that you would like to share with fellow Social Studies teachers please email your ideas and articles to the Newsletter Editor, Sarah Brown. NNCSS is always looking for creative and energetic people to help in promoting exceptional classroom practices and ideas.

Editor, Sarah Brown

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