President’s Message
By Whitney Foehl, NNCSS President

Allow me update you on what’s new and happening in the world of social studies education in Northern Nevada. NNCSS has two new board volunteers, Marcia Motter and Lindsey Clewell. They are enthusiastic, fun, and positive women who we are happy to welcome. If you too want to be involved with NNCSS, contact Sue Davis (shdavis@washoeschools.net) our executive director. Speaking of Sue Davis, I wanted to let you know that she was recently brought on as the WCSD K-12 Social Studies Program Coordinator. This position provides an advocate to oversee social studies curriculum, work with school leaders, and roll out our new common core standards. This is an important position for the future of social studies and we are sure glad that Sue is our leader! As many of you know, Sue Davis was in charge of the Teaching American History Project with Angela Orr. I am happy to say that Angela Orr has taken over the TAHP grant and will continue to be a leader for that program. The TAHP has brought us some excellent and engaging professional development opportunities over the last ten years and will continue to do so under Angela’s stewardship. Currently they have 33 teachers from 9 schools participating in their Vertical Teams, and another 25 teachers as part of this year’s Cohort. All of these teachers will increase their knowledge of the U.S. Constitution as they look at “Conversations and Controversies” surrounding the living document. I suppose just calling it a “living document” is controversial…please, by all means, converse! Cont. on p. 2…
President’s Message (cont. from front page)…

Lastly, I wanted you to be aware of changes to our conference scheduling. The annual NNCSS conference is usually held in the fall. This year we decided to have it at the end of January, in the slight lull between semesters. We also decided to combine the conference with our spring Expo, so we made the lunchtime longer to give teachers an opportunity to peruse the informational booths and vendors. This change allowed us to lower the registration fee. For 30 dollars you get an engaging guest speaker, teacher lead workshops, breakfast AND lunch, the Expo, and a raffle! What a deal. Plus, my favorite part, hanging out with colleagues you usually have no time to hang out with. There certainly is a sense of a social studies community in Northern Nevada and the conference is a nice reminder of its presence. You all do such important work; creators of citizens, keepers of history, character builders, and shapers of society’s conscience. Appreciate yourselves because you deserve much credit! Hope to see you all at the conference!

Pre-AP Prep Academy…What is it?

By Marcia Motter

*Clayton Middle School Leads the Way*

If you were a student attending Clayton Middle School, you might notice that things are different this year. Clayton has become the only Pre-AP Academy in Washoe County. Over the past year, the administration and staff have been committed to taking classes and attending Springboard and Pre-AP trainings to make the transition a successful one. Pre-AP means that all of our students are being exposed to AP strategies and critical thinking skills that will lead to increased academic rigor. The school-wide focus is to prepare all students for academic success in high school and college.

The Pre-AP math focus is on the eight mathematical common core practices and 21st century learning. Students will leave Clayton with an increased ability to solve non-routine problems, collaborate with peers, and communicate mathematically. In Language Arts, the Springboard Program is designed to prepare students for success through analyzing texts, writing, collaborative work, integrated instructional materials, and the use of formative and summative assessments. The goal of Pre-AP strategies in Science is for students to move from teacher generated to student generated inquiry-based investigations.

In Social Studies, students are focusing on reading, writing, and summarizing texts. Students are learning how to analyze primary and secondary sources using AP strategies such as APARTY and TACOS. Students are then using those skills to answer historical questions called Document Based Questions or DBQs.

The staff at Clayton is excited to implement their new techniques and strategies this year. Our expectation is that our students will be better prepared for future academic success. Exposing students to AP strategies and practices earlier in their career may help relieve some pressures later. Imagine high school students who already know how to read, write, and relate to AP materials and strategies?
Kicking It Old School
By Laura Moberg

I have a well-worn Reno High School T-Shirt that happily proclaims that RHS is “Old School.” It was a hand-me-down from a counselor who retired after my 2nd year of teaching. The T-shirt always gets rave reviews from my students when I wear it for “red and blue Fridays.” And I can’t help but chuckle when I do wear it, because I think that the shirt reminds me of my teaching style. I think that I teach like a teacher would have taught at RHS who was teaching 30 years ago- and you know what? I’m proud of it.

I think that too many history teachers have jumped on the “hip” and “technologically-advanced” bandwagon, leaving behind the basic facts required for any student to truly understand history and the context of specific events within it. I don’t care how many bells and whistles my students can include in a Powerpoint they’ve completed on the War of 1812 if they can’t intelligently discuss the way the French and British had pushed the U.S. around for the 25 or so years preceding the war. And I don’t believe it’s simply my job to facilitate that learning by providing my students with a bunch of readings or projects in order to have that back ground knowledge. I believe it’s my job to teach it- and by teach it, I mean (gasp!) lecture. I feel like lecture has become such a taboo word around educator circles these days… “Oh, you lecture?! Well, my students learned about WWI by creating a Google doc and blogging about it.” Awesome- if you are effective in teaching students by facilitating the content and having them teach it to each other, more power to you. For me, personally, I have never found a situation in which this has been the case.

I am “old school” in that I think that lecturing is a NECESSITY in a history course. I think that students need to MEMORIZE some information. I do not understand history teachers who believe that they can teach history by demanding that their students learn simply via reading a passage from a textbook or a primary source document and then discussing it amongst themselves, or by completing a poster unless there has been some DIRECT instruction from their teacher beforehand to provide context to the activity or project. I don’t understand a history teacher who doesn’t insist that some information be committed to memory, such as the knowledge that the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776, and the Revolutionary War was fought largely after the Declaration was signed. I will give my students a ton of credit- I’m more than convinced that one of my Advanced Placement students, for example, will someday cure cancer- but I don’t know that anyone can have a well-informed discussion about the Populist movement without having received direct instruction on the economic crises that crippled the nation in the 1890’s. And I know this will be a wildly unpopular statement- but I don’t want to hear my student’s opinions regarding historical events unless their opinions are rooted in HISTORICAL FACT. If I see one more historical essay with the phrase “I think that…,” I will scream. I believe that student's personal opinions and/or creativity have become overvalued to the detriment of basic historical knowledge…..“But Laura! That’s so old school!” I know- I wouldn’t have it any other way.
Learning Beyond the Classroom
By Vallarie Larson

I want to share with you my newest favorite technology find that extends learning beyond the classroom. The site is called Edmodo. The web address is www.edmodo.com. Edmodo is a secure social learning network for teachers and students. Edmodo allows students to be connected to your classroom everywhere they go. Students can connect through their computer and it is also available on many phones as an app. Through the site teachers can post messages, discuss classroom topics, assign and grade classwork, share content and materials, and share ideas within their network of peers.

Additionally, the site allows you to post a class calendar, links, videos and assignments. If a student has been absent, the student can keep connected to your classroom through Edmodo. Assignments can be uploaded and available for your students at any time. The site even allows students to submit assignments to you.

Social Studies is a content area in which we have many opportunities to extend learning beyond our classroom walls. Edmodo is an amazing site that allows endless possibilities to achieve this. In one example, a teacher could post a video clip link to a topic covered in class, and have students respond on Edmodo their reaction and questions about the video. This is definitely an engaging way to extend learning. Teachers could also post a virtual classroom discussion topic on the site. A teacher could set up the criteria for student responses ahead of time. As a teacher you can virtually monitor the discussion as it takes place, and check in occasionally on the discussion. Imagine the possibilities of being able to engage students outside the classroom.

The more I use Edmodo, the more I get excited about the possibilities. The site offers many videos to assist you in starting your class account. It is very easy to set up and well worth the time to set up and account for you and your students.

Happy Edmodoing!
Annual Conference

Save The Date:

January 28, 2012

Time: 8:00-3:00

Location: Damonte Ranch High School, Reno, Nevada

Keeping it Real:

Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships at the Heart of Social Studies

With Special Guest

BRUCE LESH

History Teacher and Author of “Why Won’t You Just Tell Us The Answer?”

Teaching Historical Thinking

Conference Rates Have Been Reduced!

$30 registration

Extended Lunch Will Include The SOCIAL STUDIES EXPO with 40 local, state, and national organizations serving social studies teachers
Engaging our Students in History!

National History Day

National History Day is a nationally acclaimed history education program that challenges students to become historians, explorers, investigators and leaders. Recognized for its leadership in history education, National History Day makes history come alive through active student learning.

Students may enter one of five categories of competition—

- Papers
- Exhibits
- Performances
- Documentaries
- Websites

There is a junior (grades 6 through 8) or senior (grades 9 through 12) division and students may work as individuals or in groups in every category except papers.

History Day fulfills state requirements in the social studies and can be used to complete many Classroom-Based Assessments. The program is flexible and provides an ideal framework to teach research, writing, critical thinking, interpretation, and presentation skills. The skills used in developing a History Day project meet Common Core Standards and students report that doing History Day prepared them for college and work well than any other assignment in their education. Students learn history when they do history, and History Day gets them excited and engaged in learning.

Nevada has two competitions; one in the north and one in the south. Northern Nevada’s state competition will be held on March 24, 2012 at Carson High School. Winners from each area will be invited to compete in National History Day in College Park, Maryland on June 10-14, 2012.

To learn more about History Day and how to incorporate the program into your classroom, a History Day training will be held on November 14th, Monday from 4:00-7:00. The Northern Nevada Teaching American History grant will offer a $90 stipend for attending the training and competing in the History Day competition. To register for the November 14th History Day training, please contact Sue Davis @ shdavis@washeschools.net. The 2012 National History Day Theme is…..
Annoyed. Worried. Perplexed. It’s a fairly common reaction. New standards, new standardized tests, new requirements for overworked teachers…cue the ominous music and the evil laughter.

And in the case of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), a melancholy mood may seem even more apt. Social studies teachers are now being asked to embrace and implement a set of standards written BY and FOR English Language Arts teachers - a set of standards focused on literacy. But, instead of fretting over the possible impact of this shift towards CCSS, social studies teachers should embrace the opportunity to teach to these standards, which are aligned, in large part, with best practices in social studies education. These standards are ripe with possibilities to engage students in analysis of primary and secondary sources and to engross them in text-rich dialogue, both written and verbal.

One such Common Core standard is **Writing Standard 1 – Argumentative Writing.** Over the course of this school year, Middle School Instructional Leaders (IL) and other interested teachers will work to better understand how to implement effective instruction in argumentative writing. As a group, we will dissect the standard, come to common understandings of effective practice and instructional strategies, develop a District-wide assessment tool that allows science, social studies, and ELA teachers to develop students’ skills in argumentative writing, evaluate current practices in teaching writing, and develop rich lessons on argument in social studies.

**So what should you know about argumentative writing in social studies?**

- Argumentative writing does not constitute aggressiveness or hostility. That is, argument is not fighting. Instead, the proper context for thinking about argument is one “in which the goal is not victory but a good decision, on in which all arguers are at risk of needing to alter their views, one in which a participant takes seriously and fairly the views different from his or her own” (Fulkerson, 1996, p. 16).

- Argument, as a genre of writing, is made up of three main elements: claims, reasons, and evidence. Counterclaims and logic are also important, but instruction should be centered first on understanding how to formulate a well-written argument with claims, reasoning, and evidence.

  - Claim: a simple statement that asserts the main point of an argument
  - Reasoning: the “because” part of an argument; the explanation for why a claim is made
  - Evidence: support for the reasoning in an argument; the “for example” aspect of an argument; the best evidence is text-based, reasonable, and reliable.

- Argumentative writing must be taught and not simply assigned. It is complex and requires modeling. Before teaching students to write argumentative essays, teachers should focus on well-developed argumentative paragraphs.

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**Common Core Writing Standard 1 (at the 6-8th grade level)**

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

- Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
- Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating and understanding of the topic or text.
- Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- Establish and maintain a formal style.
- Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

**This standard increases in complexity for grades 9-10 and 11-12.**

So, do not allow your initial fears about Common Core to manifest. No scary movie music, no evil laughter. CCSS is a gift to social studies teachers. It makes our best practices relevant and gives us benchmarks to which we can rise.