



YANKEE POST

Fall 2025 Edition



Presidents Message:

Summer offers educators the chance to rest, recharge, and explore new opportunities for the year ahead. I hope you have been able to do all three.

As I look to the year ahead, I am honored to begin my two-year term as President of the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies. For those I have not yet met, I have been a proud teacher in New Haven Public Schools for the past ten years and have most recently served as CCSS Secretary.

I first joined CCSS during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. In a time of lockdowns and isolation, I sought connection with colleagues navigating the challenges of education, especially in social studies. What I found was a community of dedicated educators whose collaboration and ideas reinvigorated my teaching and gave me tools to help reignite curiosity in my students.

I am continually inspired by the programs that CCSS has afforded not only myself, but educators around the state. One such example came this past year as I taught a new dual enrollment Government class. Professional development from CCSS helped me guide my students in understanding the complexities of a national election, the influence of local politics, and the value of civil discourse. A highlight of my career was watching them travel to Hartford to meet with

policymakers about issues they cared deeply about, confident in their skills to advocate and affect positive change.

Since I joined CCSS, our organization has strengthened partnerships with educational, cultural, and historical institutions across the state. These relationships ensure we remain at the forefront of providing resources and opportunities that help educators excel and develop into leaders in our field.

There is still much work ahead. Elementary educators need more support and time to implement Connecticut's new social studies standards. Teachers across the state face challenges in navigating controversial issues while promoting informed citizenship. Artificial intelligence offers exciting possibilities for the classroom but also presents ethical and pedagogical questions. Our organization aims to increase our advocacy at the state and local level to champion the benefits of Social Studies as a broad discipline. As we approach the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, we are called to recommit to the unfinished ideals of democracy, human rights, and freedom. In all of these endeavors, CCSS will continue to stand beside educators in promoting inclusive, honest, and high-quality social studies instruction wherever it may be found.

I look forward to connecting more at our Annual Conference on October 17 at Central Connecticut State University. We have put together a tremendous program designed to empower educators and engage learners, highlighted by our keynote speaker CT Attorney General William Tong.

In closing, our diverse experiences make us stronger and more effective in moving social studies forward in Connecticut. Whether you are a veteran teacher or stepping into your first classroom, I invite you to take an active role in CCSS. Together, we can advance social studies education in Connecticut and inspire our students to be more thoughtful and informed citizens.

With gratitude,

Maxwell Comando
President, Connecticut Council for the Social Studies

Get Civically Involved:

Join the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies Today! Help us to promote the study of social studies across the state. This [link](#) will take you to the membership page where you have the option of joining online, or printing out a hardcopy form to complete and mail in.



FROM THE EDITORS' DESKS



Stephen Armstrong

LéAnn Murphy Cassidy

A Path Toward Common Ground in the United States

by *LéAnn Murphy Cassidy*

In recent years, political violence has become an unsettling reality in the United States. From confrontations at protests to threats against elected officials, the intensity of political division has spilled over into physical conflict and murder. While disagreements in a democracy are natural, and even healthy, violence undermines the very principles of self-government. Reducing this trend requires a collective effort grounded in empathy, education, and civic responsibility.

Political violence does not arise in a vacuum. It is often fueled by: polarization where partisan echo chambers deepen divisions and strip away the nuance in political debates; disinformation where false narratives spread online can inflame fears and justify aggressive responses; and in the erosion of trust that creates declining confidence in institutions, from elections to the media, which then leads some to view violence as the only avenue for change. Recognizing these roots is the first step toward prevention and shifting the narrative.

Reducing political violence means strengthening the connective tissue of civic life through the promotion of dialogue that brings people together across ideological divides with the hopes of humanizing the “other side.” In this case, civil discussions, town halls, and structured community dialogues can replace suspicion with understanding. Additionally, education is vitally important to bringing about positive transformation. Schools and community organizations play a crucial role in teaching not only the mechanics of democracy, but also the values of compromise, tolerance, and peaceful discourse. On top of improving civic education, political leaders and media figures must model responsible leadership, more restraint, and avoid rhetoric that paints opponents as enemies rather than fellow citizens.

Communities are the frontline defense against political violence. Local initiatives can include: violence interruption programs that are used to de-escalate tensions before they boil over; public pledges of nonviolence where civic groups and faith communities can unite behind shared commitments to resolve conflict peacefully; and increased mental health and social supports that address isolation, economic stress, and trauma. These types of programs help to reduce the vulnerabilities that extremists often exploit.

Technology companies also bear responsibility. Algorithms that amplify outrage and division should be re-examined. Stronger moderation of incitement, transparency in platform policies, and digital literacy campaigns can and must help curb online radicalization.

Reducing political violence in the United States is not about eliminating disagreement. It is about remembering that democracy thrives on debate, not destruction. Each citizen has a role to play, whether by resisting the urge to share inflammatory posts, engaging respectfully with neighbors, or holding leaders accountable for the tone they set.

The United States has endured deep divisions before: civil war, civil rights struggles, and waves of protest. What has carried the nation forward is not uniformity of opinion, but the ability to argue, organize, and reform without resorting to violence. The same resilience is needed now.

If Americans can recommit to the principles of peaceful dialogue, mutual respect, and civic responsibility, then the nation's political conflicts, however fierce, can remain a source of growth rather than destruction.



Connecticut Council for the Social Studies Annual Conference

Join the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies on October 17, 2025, for our Annual Conference at Central Connecticut State University. This full-day event invites educators, administrators, and community partners to engage in meaningful workshops, network with peers, and explore innovative practices that strengthen social studies instruction across all grade levels. Don't miss this opportunity to collaborate, learn, and lead the way forward in social studies education.



Register Now

Gilder-Lehrman's Connecticut History Teacher of the Year, 2025.

Nora Mocarski has over thirty years of classroom and leadership experience in social studies. She currently serves as Social Studies Department Chair and teacher for grades 7–12 at Canton Middle/High School, where she has led curricular innovations, expanded AP offerings, and maintained a 90% average AP U.S. History pass rate over 24 years.

A James Madison Fellow, she earned her Master of Arts in Liberal Studies from Wesleyan University, along with advanced degrees in Educational Leadership from Southern and Central Connecticut State Universities. She began her career after graduating cum laude from Ohio University, where she was a Division I softball scholar-athlete.

Her excellence in the classroom has been recognized with multiple “Teacher of the Year” honors, including District Teacher of the Year in Canton (2019–20) and the DAR “Outstanding Teacher of American History Award” (2014). Beyond the classroom, she has served on NEASC accreditation teams, co-founded Canton’s Rho Kappa Honor Society and Model UN Club, produced Canton’s annual Veterans Day Commemoration, and worked with the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies. She also serves her community as a Winchester Board of Education member.

Nora will be speaking during the luncheon session at the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies conference on October 17,



Museum Moments: What's New in History Halls?

September- November Focus: [Putnam Memorial Park](#) - Connecticut's Valley Forge

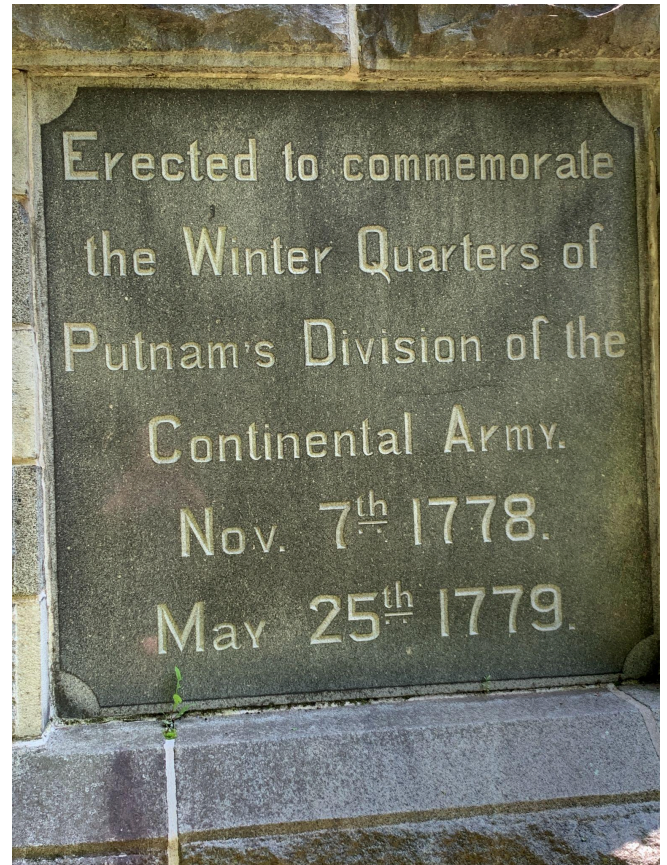


Putnam Memorial Park - Warner Postcards, Warner Postcard Collection, Western Connecticut State University's Archives' Digital Collections. Used through Public Domain and Fair Use.

Putnam Memorial State Park: Encampment and Museum Overview

Putnam Memorial State Park in Redding, Connecticut, often called "Connecticut's Valley Forge," preserves the site of the 1778–1779 winter encampment of Major General Israel Putnam and his troops during the Revolutionary War. The park, established in 1887 as Connecticut's first state park, honors the hardships and resilience of the Continental Army soldiers who endured a bitterly cold winter while training and guarding vital supply lines between the Hudson River and Long Island Sound.

The encampment once housed several thousand soldiers in log huts spread across the hillsides. Today, visitors can explore reconstructed hut sites, firebacks, and the remains of the original camp, gaining insight into daily soldier life during the Revolution. A self-guided walking tour leads through historic features such as the stone chimneys, the officer's quarters, and the guardhouse.

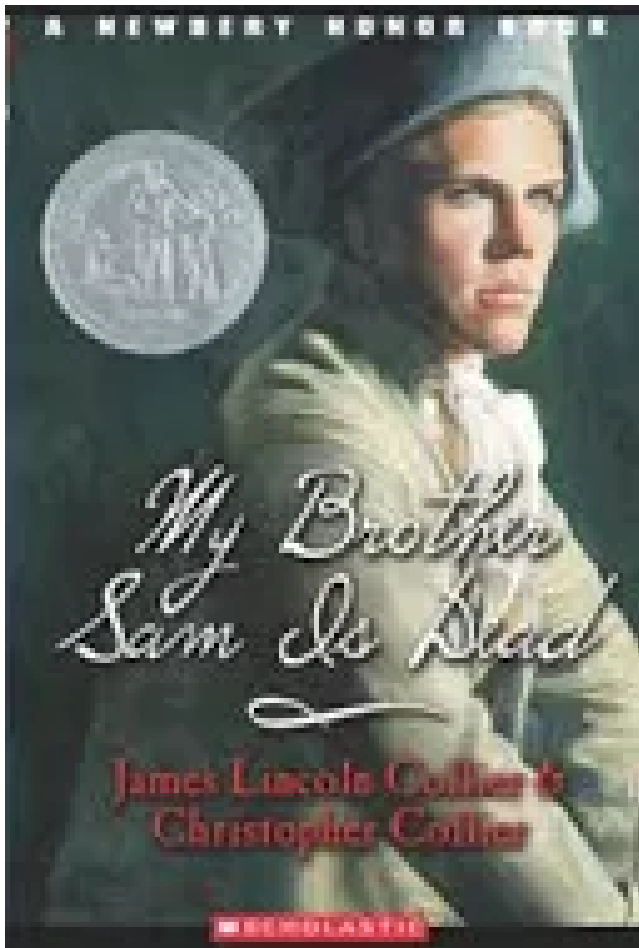


At the heart of the park is the Putnam Museum, which holds artifacts uncovered from the site and other Revolutionary-era items. Exhibits highlight military tools, household objects, weaponry, and documents, helping to connect the archaeological evidence with personal stories of the soldiers. The museum also offers rotating displays and educational programs for schools and the public.

Together, the encampment and museum provide a powerful link to Connecticut's role in the American Revolution. They serve not only as a memorial to General Putnam and his men but also as a living classroom where history, archaeology, and nature meet.

Great Reads in Social Studies for Young Readers:

In honor of America 250, we will be reviewing a wide range of books.



Book Review: *My Brother Sam Is Dead*

By James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier

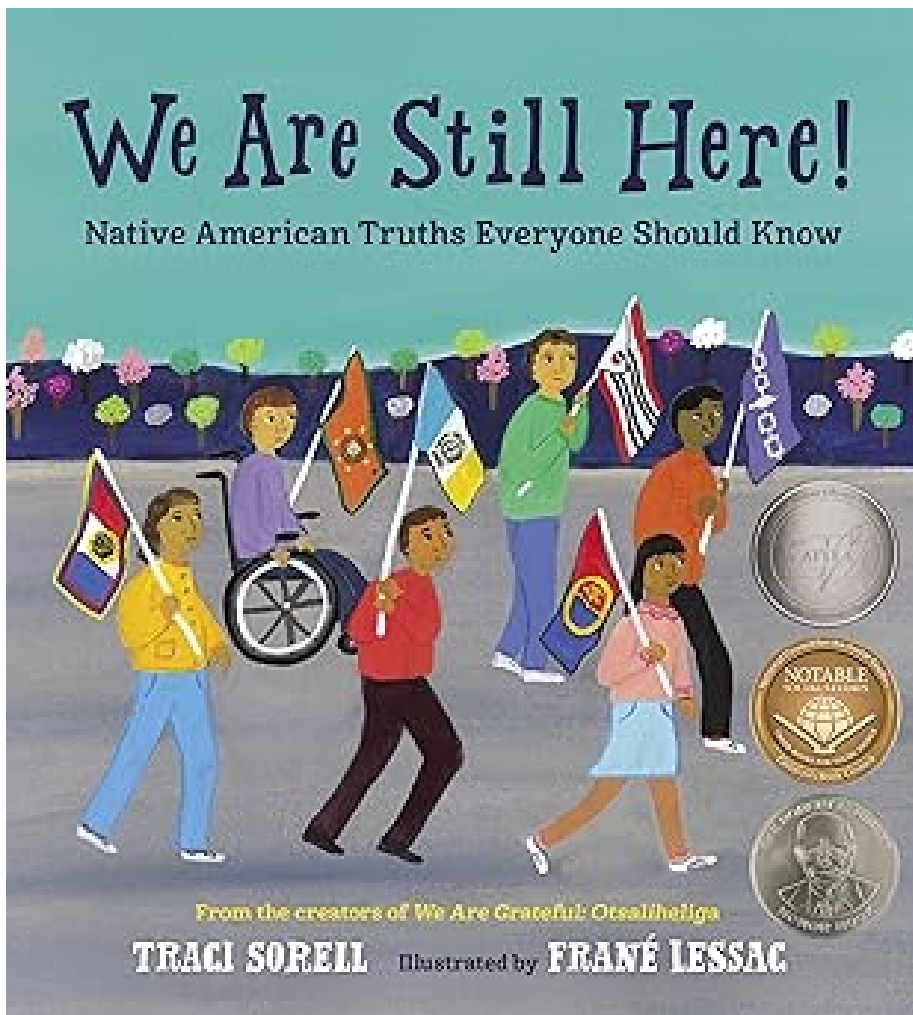
My Brother Sam Is Dead is a powerful historical novel set during the American Revolution, told through the eyes of Tim Meeker, a young boy caught between loyalty to his family and the pull of independence. The book captures not only the excitement of the Revolutionary War but also its harsh realities; the fear, hunger, betrayal, and devastating loss that ordinary families experienced.

At the heart of the story is Tim's older brother, Sam, who joins the Patriot cause against their father's wishes. Their father, Mr. Meeker, is loyal to the British Crown and believes that war brings only destruction. This conflict tears at the family, leaving Tim torn between the brother he admires and the father he respects. The authors skillfully use this family struggle to mirror the larger divide within the colonies themselves.

One of the most striking strengths of the book is its honesty. Unlike many Revolutionary War stories that focus only on heroes and victories, *My Brother Sam Is Dead* shows the cost of war: the confusion of choosing sides, the cruelty of soldiers from both armies, and the suffering of civilians. Readers come away with a deeper understanding that history is never as simple as good versus evil.

The style is clear and straightforward, making it accessible for young readers while still raising big, important questions. The ending is tragic yet realistic, leaving a lasting impression about the true price of freedom and the personal sacrifices behind historical events.

Verdict: *My Brother Sam Is Dead* is both heartbreaking and eye-opening. It's an excellent choice for middle and high school readers because it combines engaging storytelling with historical truth. Anyone interested in the American Revolution, or in the ways war changes families, will find this book unforgettable.



Book Review: *We Are Still Here!: Native American Truths Everyone Should Know*

By Traci Sorell, Illustrated by Frané Lessac

We Are Still Here! is an important and eye-opening picture book that shines a light on Native American history and the realities Native Nations continue to face today. Written by Traci Sorell (Cherokee Nation) and illustrated by Frané Lessac, the book uses a creative format—a classroom presentation by Native students—to share truths that are often left out of school textbooks. Each page presents a different topic, such as assimilation, allotment, termination, sovereignty, language revival, and cultural preservation. These truths are explained in clear, powerful language, making complex ideas understandable for young readers while still

meaningful for older audiences.

The vibrant, colorful illustrations by Frané Lessac add energy and life to the narrative, helping to show both the pain of historical injustices and the strength of Native communities today. The repeated phrase “We are still here!” is a powerful reminder of resilience and survival. It pushes back against the idea that Native peoples only exist in the past and instead celebrates their presence, contributions, and future.

This book is not just a history lesson—it is a call to recognize and respect Native voices. It works beautifully in classrooms, offering teachers a way to spark conversations about fairness, identity, and justice, while also encouraging children to think critically about whose stories are told in history books.

We Are Still Here! belongs in every school and library. It is both educational and inspiring, making it a valuable resource for anyone who wants to learn the truths of Native American history and celebrate the resilience of Native Nations.

Verdict: *We Are Still Here!* is a powerful, essential book that educates, inspires, and affirms the ongoing presence and resilience of Native Nations.

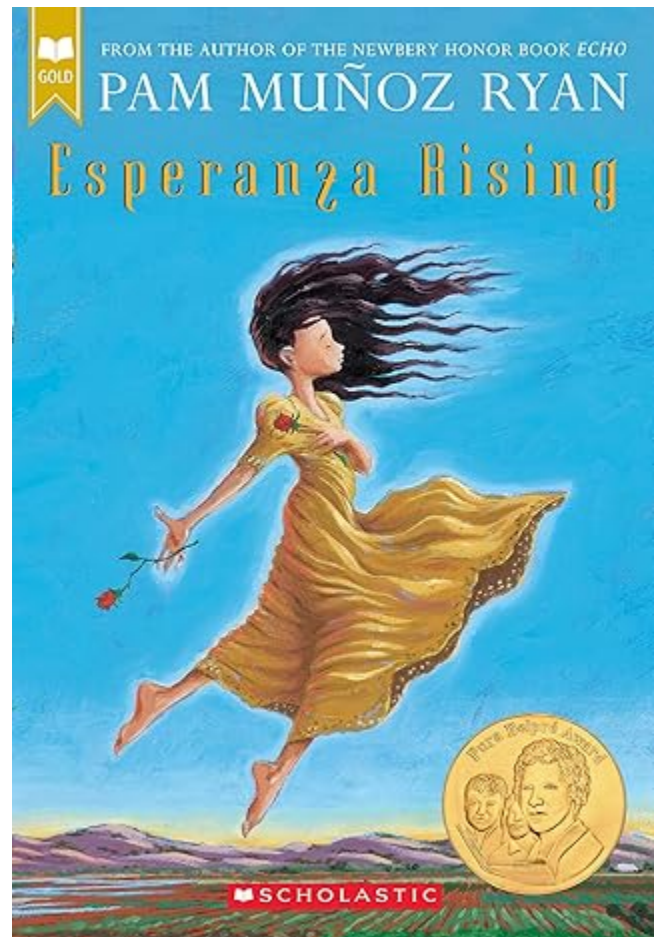
Book Review: *Esperanza Rising*
by Pam Muñoz Ryan

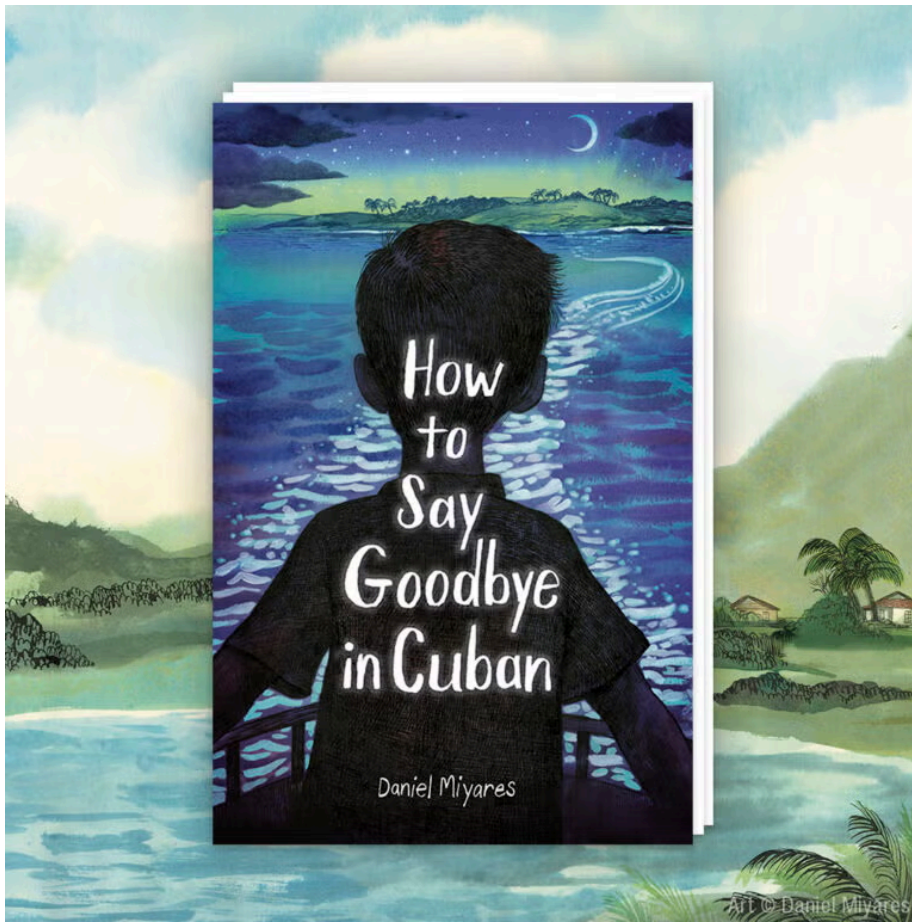
Pam Muñoz Ryan's *Esperanza Rising* is a beautifully written historical novel that tells the story of Esperanza Ortega, a young girl growing up in Mexico in the 1930s. At the beginning of the novel, Esperanza lives a privileged and sheltered life on her family's ranch, surrounded by love, wealth, and tradition. However, when tragedy strikes and her family is forced to flee to the United States, Esperanza's world is turned upside down.

In California, Esperanza and her mother join thousands of Mexican migrant workers struggling to survive during the Great Depression. The novel portrays the harsh realities of labor camps, poverty, prejudice, and the physical demands of agricultural work. At the same time, it highlights themes of resilience, hope, and personal growth. Esperanza must learn humility, adaptability, and strength as she helps support her family and builds a new life from hardship.

Ryan weaves rich symbolism and cultural detail into the narrative, such as the recurring imagery of the phoenix-like "rising," which represents Esperanza's transformation and renewal. The prose is accessible for middle-grade readers yet layered with meaning, making it a strong choice for classroom discussions about history, immigration, and social justice.

Verdict: *Esperanza Rising* is both heartbreaking and uplifting, offering readers an emotional journey that blends history with universal themes of perseverance and identity. It is a timeless story that belongs on every middle school reading list, appealing to young readers while encouraging empathy and understanding across cultures.





Book Review: How to Say Goodbye in Cuban
By Daniel Miyares

Daniel Miyares's *How to Say Goodbye in Cuban* is a poignant and visually striking graphic memoir that brings history to life through the eyes of a child. The story follows Miyares's father, Carlos, who grows up in Cuba during the 1950s and early 1960s. At first, his childhood is filled with small joys: playing baseball with friends, learning from his grandfather, and enjoying the rhythms of rural and city life. When his father wins the lottery, the family's circumstances improve, but political unrest soon changes everything. As Fidel Castro and the revolution reshape the country, Carlos's family loses their business, faces increasing

uncertainty, and ultimately makes the painful decision to leave Cuba behind. For Carlos, this means saying goodbye not only to his home, but also to friends, traditions, and a way of life he thought would last forever.

What makes the memoir especially powerful is its artwork. Miyares uses watercolor and ink illustrations to capture both the beauty of everyday childhood moments and the darker mood of political change. Bright, vibrant colors evoke joy and belonging, while muted tones and stark black-and-white panels highlight moments of fear, loss, and transition. The balance of personal story and historical context is another strength. Readers not only follow Carlos's emotions but also gain insight into the Cuban Revolution and the upheaval it caused for countless families.

The narrative does occasionally shift abruptly between family moments and historical events, which can make the pacing feel uneven. Some dialogue also reads a bit simply, likely because it is tailored to younger readers. However, these are small drawbacks compared to the emotional honesty and accessibility of the story. Miyares manages to capture the universal themes of resilience, identity, and the search for belonging in a way that feels both deeply personal and widely relatable.

Verdict: *How to Say Goodbye in Cuban* is a heartfelt, beautifully illustrated memoir that brings a turbulent period of history into focus through the lens of a boy forced to leave everything behind. It is an excellent choice for middle-grade readers, families, and classrooms, offering both an emotional journey and a valuable window into the immigrant experience. Highly recommended.

A Long-Time Connecticut Teacher Becomes an Author!

By: Steve Armstrong

LéAnn Cassidy, a 38-year veteran of teaching social studies, is now a published author! A member of Connecticut Council for the Social Studies, LéAnn has recently published *Inked in Rebellion: Voices of Liberty- A Story of the American Revolution*. This book for young readers is available in both print and digital versions; the first review of the book on Amazon is a completely fantastic one!

LéAnn describes herself as a “reading and writing nerd” when she was a kid. During her teaching career she planned to write a number of books (a number of them may be published in the future). Two things motivated her to finish *Inked in Rebellion*. She wanted to finish the book for the commemoration of America 250 next year. In addition, several years ago, LéAnn was given a teaching schedule that no longer included United States history. Writing this book allowed her to connect back to the subject that she loves (in 2018 she was recognized as the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History Connecticut History Teacher of the Year).



LéAnn specifically wanted the major character of the book to be a female figure: she notes that many of the historical fiction books about the Revolutionary War era are young boys. As noted above, LéAnn has several other books in the works: all of these books will have main characters that are from a marginalized group. LéAnn notes that being a teacher has absolutely helped her write this book: after decades of experience, she knows what will excite students. LéAnn recommends her book for students ages 7-11.

LéAnn weaves several messages into this story, but she really wants students to realize that revolutions do not always happen from wars. In this book, she shows that revolutions can also begin with words. Again, LéAnn wants to remind the reader that girls can be important players in important events! Students have enjoyed her book thus far, and think it is very “cool” that their teacher is actually an author! LéAnn allowed her students to help her choose the speaker for the audio version of the book. Her students listened to a number of potential readers and came up with the “winner.”

In our discussion, LéAnn noted that there are many teachers that think of being writers. Her advice to them is to go for it. LéAnn recommends that “If you have a story to tell, tell it!”. She states that there are publishing companies that are looking for new writers, and that they can be very helpful throughout the writing, editing, and production processes.

LéAnn Cassidy can be reached at leannmurphycassidy@gmail.com



Connecticut Chronicles (State History & Geography)

Notable historical events that occurred in Connecticut September to November:

September

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| September 6, 1781 | The Battle of Groton Heights - British forces under the command of Benedict Arnold attack New London and Groton. Fort Griswold defenders surrender and suffer heavy losses. |
| September 7, 1979 | The first broadcast from ESPN occurs from Bristol, Connecticut. |
| September 21, 1938 | The Great Hurricane of 1938 strikes Connecticut. |
| September 26, 1633 | Arrival of the first English settlers in what is now Windsor, Connecticut. |

October

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| October 3, 1979 | An F4 Tornado strikes Windsor Locks causing major damage, injuries, and deaths. |
| October 5, 1991 | Large public protest, by tens of thousands of people, at the state Capitol in Hartford protesting a new income tax. |
| October 14, 1918 | During the influenza pandemic, Hartford officials called for the closing of schools, theatres, and public gathering places in response to public health concerns. |
| October 31, 1687 | The hiding of Connecticut's Royal Charter in the hollow of what became known as the Charter Oak, after Sir Edmund Andros demanded its surrender. |

November

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| November 14, 1939 | New Haven born Paul A. Sperry got the patent for the "Sperry Topsider," the iconic boat shoe. |
| November 21, 1914 | The Yale Bowl opened and hosted the first Yale vs Harvard game without 68,000 spectators. |
| November 5, 1974 | Ella Grasso was elected governor (first woman elected in her own right as a U.S. state governor) of Connecticut |
| November 23, 1863 | The creation of the 29th Regiment of the Connecticut Infantry, the state's first African American regiment during the Civil War. |

These events highlight Connecticut's rich history and its contributions to significant national developments.

Hispanic History in Connecticut

Hispanic history in Connecticut is deeply rooted in migration, culture, and leadership. After Puerto Ricans were granted U.S. citizenship in 1917, many began moving to Connecticut in the 1920s and 1930s, drawn by work opportunities in factories, farms, and domestic service. The migration grew rapidly in the 1940s and 1950s, when industries in Hartford, New Britain, Waterbury, and Bridgeport recruited large numbers of Puerto Rican workers. Smaller groups of Cubans arrived after the 1959 revolution, and the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act opened the door for more Dominicans, Colombians, Mexicans, and other Latin Americans to settle in the state.

By the 1960s, Connecticut's Latino community was organizing to preserve culture and fight for equity. The Puerto Rican Parade of Hartford, first held in 1964, became a vibrant annual celebration of identity. Activist María Colón Sánchez emerged as a central figure, leading the fight for bilingual education in Hartford and co-founding institutions like the Puerto Rican Parade Committee and the Community Renewal Team. In 1978, her successful lawsuit ensured bilingual education throughout Hartford schools, and the same year saw the founding of the Hispanic Health Council, an influential organization dedicated to Latino health and social services. By the 1980s, Sánchez had become the first Puerto Rican elected to Hartford's Board of Education, and in 1992 she broke another barrier as the first Hispanic woman elected to the Connecticut General Assembly.

The Hispanic community's institutional presence grew steadily in the 1980s and 1990s, with organizations such as the Hispanic Coalition of Greater Waterbury (founded in 1988) expanding services in education, advocacy, and workforce development. Connecticut formally recognized Hispanic Heritage Month in 1997, highlighting the contributions of Latinos to the state's history and culture. The Latino population surpassed 300,000 by 2000, with Puerto Ricans making up the largest share, though Dominican, Mexican, and Central American populations also grew quickly.

In politics, representation increased as leaders like Pedro Segarra rose to prominence. Elected to Hartford's City Council in 2005, he later became the city's first openly gay Puerto Rican mayor in 2010. Meanwhile, the state created the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission in 2013, furthering advocacy at the policy level. By 2014, Connecticut's Latino population had topped 500,000.

The 2020 Census revealed that Hispanics/Latinos made up nearly 17% of the state's population, or more than 600,000 residents, with Puerto Ricans accounting for about half. In 2021, Connecticut native Miguel Cardona, of Puerto Rican heritage, made history as the first Latino from the state to serve in a U.S. presidential Cabinet when President Joe Biden appointed him Secretary of Education. That same year, Connecticut became the first state in the nation to require all public high schools to offer courses in Black and Latino Studies, ensuring that Hispanic contributions are taught as part of the American story.

Today, Hispanic communities continue to shape Connecticut's cultural, political, and social fabric. Festivals, parades, and community organizations celebrate heritage while addressing ongoing challenges in education, health, and economic opportunity. Leaders such as María Colón Sánchez and Miguel Cardona symbolize the lasting impact of Latino advocacy, resilience, and achievement, making Hispanic history an inseparable part of Connecticut's identity. [Hispanic Federation](#)

Key Dates in Hispanic History in Connecticut

Early 20th Century

- 1917 – *Puerto Ricans are granted U.S. citizenship under the Jones–Shafroth Act. This later enabled many Puerto Ricans to migrate to Connecticut for jobs in factories, farms, and domestic work, especially during the mid-20th century.*
- 1920s–1930s – *Early Puerto Rican families begin settling in Hartford, New Haven, and Bridgeport, forming the foundation of the state’s Hispanic communities.*

Mid 20th Century

- 1940s–1950s – *Large-scale Puerto Rican migration to Connecticut due to industrial and agricultural labor demand. Hartford, New Britain, Waterbury, and Bridgeport become key centers.*
- 1959 – *The Cuban Revolution sparks migration of Cuban families to Connecticut, though in smaller numbers compared to Puerto Ricans.*

1960s–1970s

- 1964 – *The Puerto Rican Parade of Hartford is established, one of the oldest cultural celebrations of Puerto Rican heritage in the U.S.*
- 1965 – *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 removes restrictive quotas, allowing broader Latin American immigration (Dominicans, Colombians, Mexicans, etc.) into Connecticut.*
- 1978 – *María Colón Sánchez, Puerto Rican activist and community leader, wins a lawsuit against Hartford Public Schools that secures access to bilingual education citywide.*
- 1978 – *Founding of the Hispanic Health Council in Hartford, providing health and social services to the Latino community.*

1980s

- 1983 – *María Colón Sánchez becomes the first Puerto Rican elected to Hartford’s Board of Education.*
- 1988 – *The Hispanic Coalition of Greater Waterbury is established to support education, advocacy, and services for Latinos in Waterbury.*

1990s

- 1992 – *María Colón Sánchez becomes the first Hispanic woman elected to the Connecticut General Assembly.*
- 1991–1995 – *Significant growth of Dominican, Colombian, and Mexican populations in urban centers.*
- 1997 – *Connecticut formally recognizes Hispanic Heritage Month, celebrated statewide with parades, festivals, and school activities.*

2000s

- 2000 Census – *Connecticut's Hispanic population passes 300,000, with Puerto Ricans making up more than two-thirds.*
- 2005 – *Hartford elects Pedro Segarra (Puerto Rican) to the City Council; he later becomes mayor.*

2010s

- 2010 Census – *Hispanics/Latinos make up 13.4% of Connecticut's population (approx. 479,000).*
- 2010 – *Pedro Segarra becomes the first openly gay Puerto Rican mayor of Hartford.*
- 2013 – *Connecticut establishes the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (later folded into the Commission on Equity and Opportunity).*
- 2014 – *Hispanic/Latino population surpasses 500,000 in CT.*

2020s

- 2021–2022 – *Connecticut becomes the first state in the U.S. to require Black and Latino Studies courses in all public high schools.*
- 2020 Census – *Hispanics/Latinos account for nearly 17% of Connecticut's population (over 600,000 people).*
- 2023 – *Reports show that Puerto Ricans make up about half of all Hispanics in Connecticut, though Mexican and Dominican populations continue to grow rapidly.*

- *2024 – Hispanic Heritage Month celebrations expand across Connecticut, highlighting Afro-Latino history and broader Latin American cultural contributions.*

World Watch in Social Studies Globally:

Here are several key issues and emerging trends around the world that social studies educators, students, and policymakers are likely to want to watch closely. These reflect what’s changing in how we teach about societies, citizenship, history, and global issues and what skills students will need.

➤ **Education in the Context of Global Conflict and Migration**

- Wars, climate disruption, and political instability are displacing people. Schools are increasingly dealing with migrant/refugee students, requiring curricula & services that address trauma, cultural adjustment, and social cohesion. [OECD](#)
- The strain of conflict also puts pressure on education funding and continuity. [OECD](#)

➤ **Inequality: Within & Between Countries**

- While many countries have made gains, inequality (in income, resources, quality of schools, etc.) is still rising inside countries. Social studies can help explore the historical causes and current effects of inequality. [OECD+1](#)
- Access to education (especially for disadvantaged or marginalized communities) remains uneven. Gender gaps, rural vs urban divides, language, and ethnicity are some of the dimensions. [OECD+1](#)

➤ **Climate Change, Environment, & Sustainability**

- The environmental crisis is influencing societies in many ways (migration, policy, disaster risk, cultural impacts). Social studies curricula are increasingly expected to include climate literacy, environmental justice, and sustainability issues. [OECD+1](#)
- Not just content, but also how education systems adapt: schools facing extreme weather (heatwaves, floods) are being disrupted, which in turn affects learning equity. [Reuters](#)

➤ **Technological Change, Digital Literacy & Generative AI**

- The rise of AI, big data, social media, and digital platforms is changing how information is consumed and shared. Issues include how to teach students to evaluate sources, understand biases, avoid misinformation, and be responsible digital citizens. [OECD+1](#)
- There is also concern about “digital neocolonialism” — where educational technologies end up imposing values, language, or perspectives of wealthier/Western societies on others. Finding equitable frameworks is a big topic. [arXiv](#)

➤ Civic Education, Citizenship, and Polarization

- Democracies (and non-democracies) are facing rising political polarization, misinformation, and in some cases, challenges to democratic norms. Social studies has a role in promoting critical thinking, civic values, and media literacy. [OECD+1](#)
- Questions of which narratives are taught (nationalism, history, wrongs of colonialism, etc.) are under debate. Whose voices are included, how history is represented, and how to reconcile contested pasts are key issues. [OECD+1](#)

➤ Diversity, Equity, and Representation in Curriculum

- More focus on including diverse perspectives: Indigenous histories, minority cultures, gender identities, etc. Ensuring history/social studies isn't a single narrative but multiple, often contested ones. [University of Michigan](#)
- Also inclusive pedagogy: culturally responsive teaching, multilingual education, recognizing different learning styles and backgrounds. [HEDCO](#)

➤ Assessment & Large-Scale Learning Measures

- There is increasing use of cross-national and large-scale assessments that go beyond basic literacy and numeracy to include things like civic knowledge, global competencies, socio-emotional skills. This changes what is valued and what is taught. [OECD](#)
- Also more interest in formative assessment, performance tasks, project-based assessment rather than only standardized tests. [OECD](#)

➤ Mental Health, Well-Being, and Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

- The stresses of modern life, post-COVID effects, social media, etc., make students' mental health and well-being a growing concern. Social studies can help by providing space to explore identity, ethical issues, community, civic responsibility. [OECD+1](#)
- Schools are being asked to do more holistic work (not just teaching facts), helping young people build resilience, empathy, dialogue skills. [OECD+1](#)

➤ Global Citizenship & Cosmopolitanism

- In a more interconnected world, many education systems are exploring global citizenship: what responsibilities do people have beyond their own borders? How do we teach about global issues (inequality, environment, migration, etc.) in ways that connect local and global action? [UNESCO](#)
- There's tension between promoting national identity vs global awareness (or cosmopolitan identity). How curricula balance those is under debate. [UNESCO](#)

➤ **Teacher Support, Burnout, Professional Development**

- As all these changes accumulate, demands on teachers are increasing: needing to integrate new content (e.g. climate, AI, civic debates), adopt new pedagogies, manage diverse classrooms, etc. Supporting teachers (training, mental health, resources) is crucial. [Mental Health Lead](#)
- Also supporting teachers to be able to engage with controversial topics in age-appropriate ways (history of injustices, debates, contested events). [Mental Health Lead](#)

Civic Sparks: History's Hot Topics Around the World

Memory & Historiography of World War II / the Holocaust

Who gets to tell the story, what gets emphasized or downplayed (e.g. local complicity, victimhood, resistance) is still a big and contentious issue, especially in Eastern Europe. [TIME](#)

Holocaust Remembrance & Shtetl Life

Museums and historical sites are increasingly working to preserve and revive knowledge about Jewish communities destroyed in the Holocaust (e.g. shtetls), thus confronting gaps and erasure. [Reuters](#)

Climate Change & Human History

Scholars and the public are looking more closely at how climate (especially warming) has shaped societies, contributed to migrations, disasters, and how we remember and record those histories. For example, data showing heat-related deaths are being linked explicitly to human-caused warming. [The Guardian](#)

Free Speech, Nationalism, & “History Wars”

Debates over how the past is taught or presented are often part of broader political or cultural conflicts: What versions of national history are promoted, what is omitted or altered, and who controls the narrative. Examples include countries reconsidering colonialism, national myths, or revisionist views. [The Wall Street Journal](#)

The Role of Religion in Education

Centuries-old debates (like evolution vs. creationism) are still alive, especially in how religious beliefs or traditions are included, excluded, or conflicted within school curricula. [AP News](#)

Decline or Erosion of International Law & Norms

With rising geopolitical tensions, there are concerns about whether international treaties, legal norms, and multilateral institutions are being respected, upheld, or being undermined. This also links to how history is used to justify or challenge current policies. [The Guardian](#)

Decolonization of History / Colonial Legacy

Reexamining the effects of colonialism in different parts of the world: its historical damage, cultural erasure, and how postcolonial societies are reconstructing their narratives. This also involves questions about restitution (of artifacts, land, etc.), reparations, and teaching about colonial pasts in school. (This is part of broader “history wars” too.) [Council on Foreign Relations](#)

Education & Curricula Changes

What gets taught in schools (which eras, which regions, which stories) is a big topic. For instance, teachers in the U.S. say they focus heavily on certain eras (Revolution, Civil Rights) but less on others (native peoples before European arrival, recent decades) because of lack of resources or training. [Education Week](#)

Historical Roots of Social Inequality

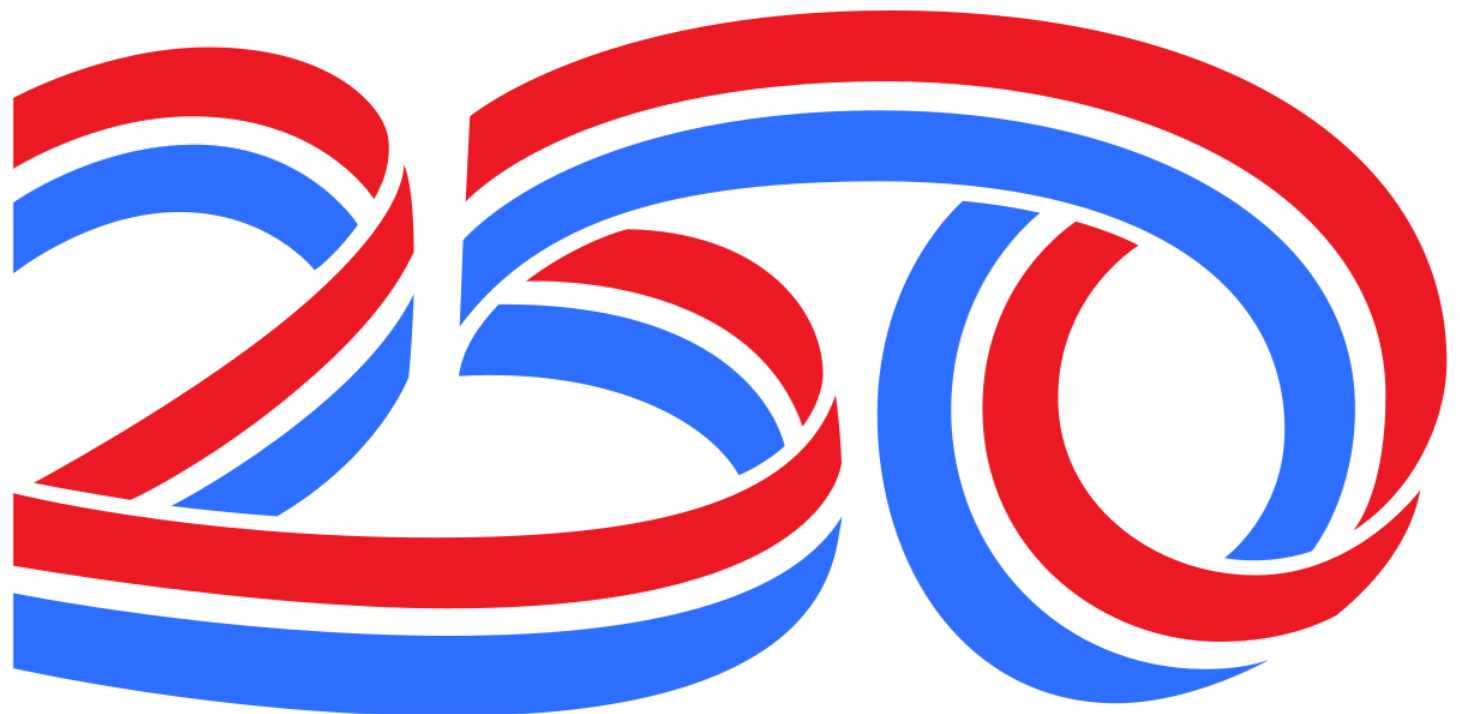
Historians increasingly study how past practices — slavery, colonialism, segregation, land dispossession, caste, gendered oppression — have long-term effects on wealth, opportunity, political power, and identity. [Center for American Progress](#)

Artificial Intelligence, Technology & the Past

How modern tools (AI, big data, digital archiving, remote sensing, etc.) are being used in history: both to unearth new archives or perspectives, and to risk distortion, surveillance, bias in what is preserved or foregrounded. [Pew Research Center](#)

These topics reflect the dynamic interplay between historical understanding and current societal developments in 2025.

AMERICA



Greetings! As you all know July 4, 2026 will be the 250th anniversary of the birth of the United States. There is an America250 Commission in Connecticut that is planning statewide events; many communities in Connecticut have local commissions that are planning events for their cities and towns. The statewide America250 Commission has an education subcommittee; Steve Armstron has the honor of serving as the chairperson of that group.

If you go to the Connecticut America250 website (<https://ct250.org/>) you will find many resources that will assist you in the teaching of this important topic. We have determined that four major themes can guide schools and towns as they approach July 4, 2026:

- Tell Inclusive Stories
- The Power of Place
- Doing History
- For the Common Good

The statewide commission has also spent much time on how to approach this topic: should this be a “celebration” or a “commemoration” of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Revolutionary War. The answer is both! We should celebrate the founding of our nation and the ideas in our founding documents. At the same time, students and teachers should analyze how the concepts emerging from our founding documents have developed over time and how, in fact, during certain periods of our history these ideas have been challenged.

What can districts, schools, teachers and teachers do regarding the study of July 4, 2026:

- Study the events and the impact of these events in classrooms. What was the role of Connecticut and your own community in this revolutionary era? In all probability, your community was involved, in some way, in the American Revolution. We are developing a way that research that classes and students do can be published so that Connecticut residents can see the work that students have done.
- Reach out and have students work with local historical societies and local America250 commissions. Many of these organizations would love to collaborate with local students; many would welcome the input of students in planning community events.
- For teachers: we are planning a number of podcasts and webinars that are related to America250: these will be publicized in various ways. We will also be producing curriculum materials that will be distributed to all districts.
- For teachers and students: note that the new Ken Burns series on the Revolutionary War will be televised starting in mid-November. Get engaged in this series! We are greatly looking forward to having students and teachers involved in these important topics. If you want more information, contact Stephen.Armstrong@ct.gov





Capitol Chatter

As of September 2025, several active bills and legislative initiatives in Connecticut and at the federal level hold significant implications for social studies education and related civic themes. Here's an overview:

Connecticut: Active Laws / Bills & Implications

- ❖ **CT HB 7009 — “Connecticut State Seal of Civics Education and Engagement” (2025 session)**
 - What it does: directs the State Board of Education to create a Connecticut State Seal of Civics Education & Engagement that can be affixed to a high-school diploma for students demonstrating high proficiency. The bill is part of a larger package (HB7009) that also addresses multilingual-learner data transparency, school use of smart devices, availability of Islamic & Arab studies curriculum materials, and a working group on antisemitism in schools. [Connecticut General Assembly+1](#)
- ❖ **New curriculum requirements (effective 2025–26 school year): AAPI history & civics/media-literacy units**
 - Background/impact: Connecticut now requires two added social-studies units in public schools beginning in 2025–26: (1) Asian American & Pacific Islander history and (2) civics and media literacy. That creates immediate curriculum, resource and PD needs for districts. [CT Mirror+1](#)
- ❖ **Civics & Media Literacy Task Force / related statutory activity**
 - Context: Earlier bills (e.g., HB6762 and related activity from 2023–25) have established task forces and planning work around civics, media literacy, and civic engagement strategies — groundwork that informs the 2025 implementation and the Seal program. Expect guidance, rubrics, and proficiency frameworks to follow. [NCSL+1](#)
- ❖ **School library policy, curriculum availability, and working groups (HB7009 and 2025 session acts)**
 - Several 2025 acts and bill provisions addressed library policy, access to curriculum materials (including Islamic/Arab studies), and creating working groups to address antisemitism and related school climate issues — all of which will affect selection of historical texts, primary sources, and local adoption processes. [Pullcom+1](#)

Why this matters for CT social studies teachers/districts: districts must update scope & sequence to add the new units, prepare rubrics/assessments for any “Seal” proficiency, select vetted AAPI and civics/media-literacy instructional materials, and anticipate state guidance and funding timelines.

Report of the Connecticut General Assembly's Civic Education, Civic Engagement, and Media Literacy Task Force

PURPOSE

The Civic Education, Civic Engagement, and Media Literacy Task Force was established by PA 23-150, Sec. 6 to evaluate the effectiveness of existing civics and media literacy instruction in Connecticut schools. Additionally, the Task Force sought to identify needs and gaps in these areas to enhance students' preparedness as informed and engaged citizens. Input was gathered from experts representing a range of organizations and disciplines to inform this report.

Discussions during Task Force meetings all emphasized the absolute necessity of enhancing civic education in Connecticut. The lack of knowledge about government and its functions and the absence of civility in political discussions are acute problems at the state and national levels. According to the Council of Chief State School Officers' *The Marginalization of Social Studies*, "Preparation for civic life was the primary purpose for establishing public schools in the United States." Deeper civic understanding is necessary for both Connecticut's students and adults.

However, as the Sandra Day O'Connor Institute for American Democracy stated in its 2024 *When and Why Did America Stop Teaching Civics?* Report, "The time devoted to civic education in American public schools began to significantly decline in the 1960s. Civic education has not for many decades been prioritized by federal or state government; time devoted to civics has also declined due to unintended consequences of other educational focuses."

Determining the reliability of sources, especially those that can be found online, is another critical problem facing students, educators, and other adults. Many students and citizens base their "knowledge" of government and political leaders on resources that may have no factual basis.

The Task Force firmly believes that urgent steps must be taken to address these issues. Some Task Force members have expressed concern that the existence of civil society is at risk. For years, state and national leaders have stated that civic education, civic engagement, and media/information literacy are critical factors in enabling people to understand and participate in American democracy. The national CivxNow coalition states that "The best way to strengthen our democracy is to teach it."

This report is organized by the three topics the Task Force was charged with studying: civic education, civic engagement, and media/information literacy. Each section includes a summary of the Task Force's findings and recommendations for k-12 students/educators and adult audiences. A conclusion, summary of key recommendations, and additional resources section are on the final pages of this report.

Federal: Active bills, Executive Actions & National Initiatives

- ❖ **S.2841 / related Congressional civics bills — strengthen American History & Civics Education grants**
 - What it does: S.2841 (119th Congress) would amend the American History & Civics Education program under the Elementary & Secondary Education Act to emphasize hands-on civic engagement activities and teaching about the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Multiple related bipartisan proposals (e.g., Constitution/CIVICS-focused bills) were introduced in Sept. 2025. If enacted, this will steer federal discretionary grant priorities toward experiential civics programming. [Congress](#)
- ❖ **U.S. Department of Education — “America 250” / civics coordination and reallocation of grant priorities (Sept. 2025 developments)**
 - Recent DOE activity: the Department announced a high-profile civics initiative (the “America 250 Civics Education Coalition”) to coordinate civics programming tied to the country’s 250th anniversary and has signaled a substantial reallocation of grant emphasis toward civics & patriotic education (reported Sept. 2025). That includes increased civics funding in discretionary priorities and partnerships with external organizations. Watch how grant language and allowable activities are shaped. [The Washington Post+1](#)
- ❖ **Executive order (March 20, 2025) directing DOE actions to “return authority to states” / potential dismantling & grant re-prioritization**
 - What to watch: President’s March 20, 2025 Executive Order instructs the Secretary to “facilitate the closure of the Department of Education and return authority over education to the States,” and ties conditions on federal funds to the Administration’s policy priorities (including conditions about DEI programs). Even if full closure requires Congressional action, the EO has already produced guidance and re-prioritizations that affect federal oversight, grant programs, and program continuity (and has generated litigation and policy pushback). This is a major structural factor shaping federal support for social-studies programs and professional development. The [White House+1](#)
- ❖ **Federal action & legislation on AI, student data privacy, and educational guidance**
 - Bills / activity to watch: multiple 2025 federal proposals and executive actions touch AI in education (e.g., AI Education initiatives, S.1699 on public AI awareness, H.R.5351/NSF AI education support), and larger student-data and transparency bills (e.g., College Transparency Act provisions, ongoing debates about FERPA enforcement and student data access). These affect classroom use of AI tools, procurement of ed-tech, privacy practice, and district policy for social-studies digital projects. [USA gov factsheet](#)

❖ **Funding shifts & program cancellations — implications for professional development & curricular support**

- Recent reported reallocation of federal education dollars (favoring charter, civics/patriotic programming, HBCU/tribal funding in some actions) may reduce available federal grants for teacher training, some federal content initiatives, or minority-serving programs — increasing pressure on states/districts to fill gaps or realign priorities. [AP News+1](#)

These legislative efforts reflect ongoing debates and priorities in education policy, particularly concerning curriculum content, educational equity, and the role of government at various levels.



Civic Engagement Opportunities Around Connecticut

Human Rights Close to Home Fellowship (UConn)

High school students can apply for a year-long, stipend-supported program focused on civic action and human rights education.

Connecticut Forest & Park Association Opportunities:

- Flexible opportunities: Becoming an Advocacy Team Member, Trails Volunteer, or Environmental Education Volunteer are options with flexible schedules.

Ongoing and Flexible Civic Engagement:

- Connecticut Democracy Center: Offers volunteer opportunities and civics education programs.
- United Way of Greater New Haven: Offers various volunteer opportunities.
- United Way of Southeastern Connecticut: Offers warehouse volunteering and Mobile Food Pantry programs.

Below are links to help **educate and empower your engagement with your government.**

- [Register to Vote](#)
- [Find Your Polling Place, Upcoming Elections, Voter Registration Deadlines, Ballot Drop Box Locations, and more](#)
- [Absentee Ballot Information](#)
- [Guide to Voter Rights](#)
- [Disability Voting Rights Information](#)
- [Military and Overseas Citizen Voting Guidelines](#)
- [CT General Assembly Citizen's Guide](#)
- [How to Find Your Representatives](#)
- [CT General Assembly Bulletin](#): Informs you of legislative events including public hearings and committee meetings
- [CT Network](#): Broadcasts meetings and events happening at the State Capitol
- [Be A Poll Worker](#)
- [Information on how to get on the ballot to run for office in Connecticut](#)
- [Links to Major and Minor Political Parties in Connecticut](#)

[NCSS: Advocacy at the State/Local Level](#)

- **Date:** online any time
- Location: online through NCSS website

The National Council for the Social Studies offers opportunities for people to become advocates for Civic Education at both the State and Local levels through their online resources and ongoing opportunities for learning.

[Civics in the Community](#)

- [Civics 101: Educational Resources and Materials](#)
- [Civically Engaged Organization \(CEO\) Pledge](#)
- [The Power of Civics](#)
- [Next Gen Elections](#)
- [Connecticut Civic Health Index](#)
- [League of Women Voters Connecticut](#)
- [Everyday Democracy](#)

[Civics in the Classroom](#)

- [Red, White, and Blue Schools](#)
- [Connecticut's Kid Governor®](#)
- [Voting Rights Unit \(High School\)](#)
- [Internship Opportunities](#)
- [My Election My Vote](#) (formally known as the Connecticut Election Project)





Scholarships for Civic Engagement by Young People

VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) Youth Scholarship Programs

The VFW is dedicated to promoting patriotism and investing in our future generation. If you are a democracy-loving high school student interested in a \$35,000 college scholarship or a patriotic middle school student interested in winning \$5,000, these scholarships may be for you.

Voice of Democracy

Established in 1947, the **Voice of Democracy**® audio-essay program provides high school students with the unique opportunity to express themselves in regards to a democratic and patriotic-themed recorded essay. Each year, more than 26,400 ninth through 12th grade students from across the country enter to win their share of more than \$1.4 million in educational scholarships and incentives awarded through the program.

The national first place winner receives a \$35,000 scholarship paid directly to the recipient's American university, college or vocational/technical school. A complete list of other national scholarships range from \$1,000-\$21,000, and the first place winner from each VFW Department (state) wins at least a scholarship of \$1,000. Students interested in participating must submit their audio essay prepared on this year's theme, with a [completed 2025-2026 entry form](#), to their local participating VFW Post. Read the Voice of Democracy rules [here](#). Find your sponsoring [local VFW Post](#) as essays must be turned in by **midnight, Oct. 31**.

The 2025-26 theme is: "How Are You Showing Patriotism and Support for Our Country?"

Patriot's Pen

Each year, more than 60,600 students in sixth through eighth grades enter the VFW's **Patriot's Pen**® annual youth essay contest for a chance to win their share of nearly \$1 million in state and national awards. Each first place state winner receives a minimum of \$500 at the national level, and the national first place winner wins \$5,000!

The essay contest encourages young minds to examine America's history, along with their own experiences in modern American society, by drafting a 300- to 400-word essay, expressing their views based on a patriotic theme chosen by the VFW Commander-in-Chief. Students interested in participating must submit their essay prepared on this year's theme, with a [completed 2025-2026 entry form](#), to their local participating VFW Post. Read the Patriot's Pen rules [here](#). Find your sponsoring [local VFW Post](#) as applications must be turned in by **midnight, Oct. 31**.

For those of you who are looking for resources and information you can use in your classrooms, check out the [CCSS Website!](#)

