ADVANCED CIVICS FOR U.S. HISTORY TEACHERS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODELS FOCUSING ON THE FOUNDING DOCUMENTS

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Preface by Paul Reid

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Pioneer Institute is an independent, non-partisan, privately funded research organization that seeks to improve the quality of life in Massachusetts through civic discourse and intellectually rigorous, data-driven public policy solutions based on free market principles, individual liberty and responsibility, and the ideal of effective, limited and accountable government.

This paper is a publication of the Center for School Reform, which seeks to increase the education options available to parents and students, drive system-wide reform, and ensure accountability in public education. The Center's work builds on Pioneer's legacy as a recognized leader in the charter public school movement, and as a champion of greater academic rigor in Massachusetts' elementary and secondary schools. Current initiatives promote choice and competition, school-based management, and enhanced academic performance in public schools.

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Preface

Winston Churchill — Why Study History?

by Paul Reid
Co-author with William Manchester,
The Last Lion: Defender of the Realm, Winston Spencer Churchill — 1940-1965

In 1953 Winston Churchill told an American student: "Young man, study history, study history. In history lie all the secrets of statecraft."

The young man in question, James Humes, took Churchill's advice to heart, and went on to become a presidential speechwriter and historian. Of course when an outsized historical figure such as Winston Churchill suggests a course of action, it likely pays to listen.

And yet. What, exactly, did Churchill mean by that advice? As usual with Churchill, there is more here than first meets the eye. Did Churchill mean that in history lie all the secrets of *practicing* statecraft? Was this a case of an old politician advising a young man with political ambitions to study history in order to perfect his craft? I think not. A perusal of Churchill's written and spoken words—and his actions—over seven decades on the subject of history reveals that he believed every citizen in a democracy, in order to *evaluate* practitioners of statecraft, must study history. Otherwise, the citizen can be sold a bill of goods by a clever or unscrupulous politician or, far worse, be enslaved by a tyrant who distorts and falsifies history with wicked intent. Think of Hitler. Churchill certainly did.

Churchill's advice was a warning: Ignorance of history on the part of the citizenry breeds consequences, and likely bad consequences, to civil liberties, even to personal safety. Churchill's advice was not a variation on George Santayana's maxim that those who forget history are doomed to repeat it. Churchill certainly agreed with Santayana, but he was saying something else to young Humes: Those who study history are less likely to become victims of history, are less likely to be gulled by those who seek—for good or ill—political power.

That sentiment is cited in one way or another by history teachers on the first day of a high school history or civics class: We're here in order to become better citizens, better informed citizens. To do so requires far more than memorizing a catalogue of names, dates, and events. It requires the ability to critically analyze and interpret those names, dates, and events. That is the essence of Churchill's advice.

To ponder and discuss Churchill's advice to young Humes requires at least a modest background in . . . history. To evaluate Churchill's advice requires at least a cursory understanding of Churchill and the role he played on the world stage for seven decades. That is, to even begin to discuss the first paragraph in this essay requires a sense of history. To complete the circuit—Churchill's advice, discussion of it, analysis, refutation or affirmation—requires the ability to apply reason and opinion informed by *history*. That is a tautology, to be sure, but therein is the essence of why Churchill believed the study of history to be so important: History, if properly taught, allows us to see, to ponder, to evaluate.

Churchill made his living as an author. What did he write? History. He wrote multi-volume histories of World War One, World War Two, a biography of his luminous ancestor, John Churchill, and a history of the English speaking peoples (which of course includes the United States; he was half American, after all). He was curious about everything—new technologies, political and economic trends, geography, language (well, the English language anyway), ancient history, modern history. He predicted genetic engineering of crops, and even humans, in the 1930s. He was the father of the battle tank, and was ridiculed by experts when he proposed it. Naysayers called the tank "Winston's folly", until it helped win World War One. He predicted throughout the 1930s that Adolf Hitler was intent on conquering Europe, from Moscow to the North Sea. For that, too, he

was ridiculed. He based that prediction, in large part, on a careful reading of Hitler's personal "history", *Mein Kampf*, wherein Hitler told the world exactly what he intended to do, and how he would do it. Hitler's book was his blueprint, right there for all to see. Few saw.

Churchill was self-taught. He never graduated from college. His appetite for the written word was astounding: *all* of Shakespeare, the historians Macaulay and Gibbon, Dr. Johnson, Karl Marx, Kipling, Mark Twain, Nietzsche, Abraham Lincoln's speeches, General Grant's memoirs, the Hornblower adventure novels, Dickens, and much more, along with at least six newspapers each day. He did so because he loved doing so. He also enjoyed Marx Brothers movies and Donald Duck cartoons. These were his stimulants; they got his intellectual juices flowing; they offered sensation and propelled him to action. History, for Churchill, was not dead, but alive, alive with possibilities.

He told friends and family that the corner-stone of his interest in history was his infatuation with the human condition. He believed that history is far more than a repository of dusty documents, dates, and artifacts. History is the unfolding of mankind's story, the sum of our actions. Churchill's advice to young Humes can be seen as a variation of *know thyself*. He believed that if we, as citizens, do not know our collective story, if we do not or cannot reference our collective memory, we cannot know ourselves as a nation, as a people. For both the individual and the nation, certain truths hold: If we do not understand our appetites, hopes, dreams, our weaknesses and strengths, moral and physical, we put ourselves at risk. Those character traits, and the ability to decipher those traits, are revealed not through mathematics or pure science or engineering, but through history.

Yet he once told an audience: "History, with its flickering lamp stumbles along the trail of the past, trying to reconstruct its scenes, to revive its echoes, and kindle with pale gleams the passion of former days." That is a cautionary phrase, perhaps one that should not be told to young history students on their first day of class, because Churchill meant that historical truths do not reveal themselves with the absolute clarity of mathematical or scientific truth. Note the words he used: "flickering", "stumbles", "pale gleams". Science and math march forward with near certainty (inductive science) and dead certainty (deductive mathematics). But history is shadowy, rife with hard-to-fathom motives and passions. History is messy, mysterious. It challenges us. That is why Churchill loved it. He loved a challenge above all else.

We all know who won the American Civil War, or World War Two, or the date John F. Kennedy was murdered. But the historian—and the young history student—asks in each case, why? That most basic of questions does not lend itself to the application of deductive or inductive logic; it demands imagination, interpretation, insight, even inspiration. Those are the tools the historian employs, Churchill believed. History demands critical thinking. To teach it by rote—by listing dates, winners and losers of battles, famous documents—is to not teach it at all. That is why history is so difficult to teach *well*. To teach history effectively the teacher must employ the novelist's tools of plot, narrative pace, character, tension, suspense. Churchill hated his history classes as a young boy at Harrow because, he later realized, his teachers reduced heroic people and events to mere names and dates. The heart of the story was lost. As was any wisdom or guidance the story might contain.

Churchill once told an American audience, "As history unfolds itself, by strange and unpredictable paths, we have little control over the future and no control at all over the past." Does this imply a certain pessimism, a certain resignation, on Churchill's part? No. *Context* is critical here, just as it is in the study of history. Churchill stressed to friends, family, and countrymen, over long dinners and in speeches in the House of Commons, that, of course, we have no control over the past, but the past can inform our decisions in the present. Those decisions and

their consequences will beget the future. History is today.

Along with historical context and consequences, Churchill saw the beauty of—and the enigmatic irony of—contingency in history, in the dictionary sense of contingency being an event that may happen, and does, or may not happen, and does not. The role of contingency in history seduced Churchill. It seduces all lovers of history. What if Lincoln had not gone to Ford's theater? What if Hitler had been killed in World War One? No other academic discipline is so rife with contingency. On one level these "what if" scenarios are akin to parlor games, but they also stimulate thought. They make the study of history fun. Churchill often kept late hours with friends while pondering "what if" questions: What if Napoleon had reached Moscow, or Lee had won the battle at Gettysburg?

But "what if" questions can have real, practical, even mortal significance. In Britain, in 1940, it was no parlor game to ask: What if Hitler throws his armies across the English Channel to Britain? It was a matter of national life and death. Churchill, sustained by his vast historical knowledge, was prepared to ask the right questions, and arrive at the right answers. Many in Britain believed Hitler would send his armies, by sea. Churchill knew that the Royal Navy, vastly larger than the German navy, would destroy any such German armada; Germany was—historically—a land power, never a sea power. Churchill believed no German invasion would take place, and accordingly sent men and tanks to Egypt, to fight. Many in Britain were appalled, but Churchill was proven correct. No German invasion ever took place. Many in Parliament that summer sought to negotiate an "agreement" with Hitler, by then victorious in France. Churchill believed that Britain, behind its North Sea moat, would survive and in the end prevail. And so it did.

Churchill is best known, in some circles, as having saved Western Civilization during mankind's darkest hour, the assault by Adolf Hitler on every freedom and every moral value the West reveres. Few heeded Churchill when he warned Britain—for years—that Adolf Hitler would start a catastrophic war. When that war duly arrived, Churchill led and inspired Britain and all free nations of the world. And in the end, he led the West to victory against the criminal wickedness of Nazi Germany.

Churchill wrote millions of words and earned millions of dollars doing so. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. Had he never spent a single day in Parliament or led Britain in World War Two he would be known today as one of the premier historians of the 20th century. Had he never written a single book, he would be known as an intrepid war correspondent. Had he never been a journalist he would be known as a talented painter, who composed more than one-hundred impressionist oil paintings. He was, indeed, a Renaissance man. And he believed that each and every one of us can be one as well.

A cynic, with a modest knowledge of Churchill and 20th century history, might ask, why is Churchill's opinion on the value of studying history worth anything? We live in an age when everyone is entitled to his or her opinion (think of book reviews on Amazon, and much of the blogosphere). But not all opinions have value; some opinions are both baseless and dangerous. That, too, Churchill saw, as a reason to study history. Absent sound knowledge and critical thinking skills, baseless and dangerous ideas can take root in the public consciousness. Cynics—as opposed to skeptics—abound, and always have. Skeptics inquire, while cynics demean and deny. More hazardous to our collective intellectual health than a cynic who begrudges Churchill the validity of his opinion, is the person who reads this short essay and asks, who is Winston Churchill? More worrisome is an uninformed citizen who asks, who is Martin Luther King? Or, who is Susan B. Anthony? What is the Supreme Court? Where is the Pacific Ocean? Or asks a most unsettling question: Why bother to vote? What will it mean for democracy if the day arrives when no one asks any questions at all?

In 1929 Churchill told an audience: "How strange it is that the past is so little understood and so quickly forgotten. We live in the most thoughtless of ages. Every day, headlines and short views. I have tried to drag history up a little nearer to our own times in case it should be helpful as a guide in present difficulties."

Almost a century later Churchill's words ring true, for our times. Our print newspapers are dying. News reporters like to say that journalism is the first draft of history. Each month brings fewer first drafts. The internet resembles the gunfight at the OK Corral on a vast scale—everybody shooting, few taking aim. During one week in November, most network news broadcasts led with the story of Russia sending men and planes to Syria. There is a story that demands critical thinking from viewers, a story full of possible consequences and contingencies that need to be put into historical context by engaged citizens. Are we doing so? Time—and history—will tell.

Churchill often spoke of history in metaphorical terms, using Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi* as one of his sources. In his memoir Twain writes a marvelous chapter about learning to become a riverboat pilot under the tutelage of a curmudgeonly old pilot. The old pilot stressed to Twain that he had to learn every secret and nuance of the river—the snags, shifting sandbars, collapsing banks, low and high water sections, *everything*. And that was only going *upriver*. Twain had to relearn everything on a downriver cruise. And then, to Twain's amazement, he realized that the river changed daily—new snags, new sandbars, new water hazards appeared, every day, on every trip up and down the river. To make matters worse, half of each day was spent in darkness; how, Twain, asked could he learn the river at night when he couldn't even see it? The old pilot told him that you learn the river by feeling it. The spring thaw in Wisconsin could result in dangerous water at Memphis; an ice dam on the Ohio River could mean low water on the Mississippi. To know the river, a pilot had to know its history. That, Churchill liked to tell friends over brandy and cigars, was how human history worked. History swirls around us, carries us forward on its currents, steers us toward shoals that we best learn how to pass safely by. History is not mileposts that point the way; history is in flux, always, like the river. Diligent citizens—and their political leaders—must understand that.

Lifelong, Churchill did his bit for the cause of history. He made history; he wrote history; he loved to parse history. Today, our leaders must do their bit to insure that history is taught in all public schools, that students are tested and that today's young citizens are prepared for the challenges of tomorrow's world. The lamp of history, even with its pale gleams, can help them light their way. The alternative is to carry no lamp at all.

Introduction

American history is becoming a thing of the past. Knowledge of our history's foundational documents, seminal events, and pivotal leaders is in a state of full blown retreat. The problem, in a nation that has historically valued an informed and educated citizenry as the cornerstone of success, has reached – in the words of former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor – a state of crisis. "We cannot," O'Connor has argued, "afford to continue to neglect the preparation of future generations for active and informed citizenship."

The crisis that O'Connor is troubled by has been ongoing and shows no signs of lessening. Year after year fewer American students – and adults – are able to thoughtfully discuss the reasons for and the impact of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. A recent survey of 1,000 citizens conducted by *Newsweek* magazine found that almost 50 percent of respondents failed to define the purpose of the Bill of Rights. Americans struggle to explain our founding documents as well as our basic government structures and the impact of numerous legal landmarks. A survey conducted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center found that more than one-third of the respondents could not identify one branch of the federal government. Similarly, few students and adults can coherently discuss, let alone define, such seminal Supreme Court cases as *Marbury v. Madison*, *Dred Scott v. Sanford*, or *Brown v. Board of Education*. Results from recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests revealed that 98 percent of our nation's graduating seniors could not explain Brown v. Board of Education – a decision that, as Diane Ravitch has argued, is "very likely the most important decision" in the history of the Supreme Court.

The dearth of knowledge of our government, essential legal decisions, and founding documents extends to American foreign policy. At a time when concerns over terrorism, the war in Syria, Russian goals, and the growth of China are gaining more and more attention, knowledge of the history of U.S. foreign policy is imperative. But, as with other aspects of American history, most students and adults are not able to draw upon a wealth of knowledge to assist them in analyzing world politics and America's evolving role in the world. Few, for example, can offer an explanation for how America, a mostly isolationist nation through the 19th century, became a world power in the 20th century, leading two world wars and playing the pivotal role in the Cold War. Newsweek's survey demonstrated that almost 75 percent of respondents failed to explain why America fought the Cold War.

Our past, to paraphrase General Douglas MacArthur, is fading away – and the consequences of this are truly disturbing. Absent knowledge, the past is prey for distortion and fabrication from both the left and the right. Conservatives mine our history to portray it as a unique tale of freedom loving and God fearing pioneers who spread prosperity and constitutional freedoms. Liberals, in turn, often distort American history by portraying it as a tale of little else but brutal racism, unrivaled greed, and destructive imperialism. Absent a strong and robust knowledge of American history, who we were and how we became what we are becomes little more than a political and social game, not a field of empirical or objective inquiry.

What has brought about this state of affairs? There are many explanations – the distractions provided by modern technology; the lack of consistent state and federal support for history standards and assessments; and the dominance of amorphous social studies programs in many school districts.

All of these explanations offer at least partial answers for the dismal state of historical knowledge. Equally important are the ideas consistently, almost monolithically, proposed by the education establishment – professors in school of education, scores of professional development

organizations, and a host of education writers and commentators. Two of the trendiest examples are the twin ideas of "21st century skills" and "authentic learning." Authentic learning takes place, the theory holds, when students see how their life is connected to a subject. Absent this real-world connection, students become bored and disengaged. Disengagement then leads to an absence of critical thinking skills. Education writer Suzie Boss posits that, "If your students are prone to asking, 'When will we ever need to know this?', then maybe it's time for a dose of reality." Critical thinking, we are told, is not possible unless students see how the issue they are studying either reflects or will impact the life they live now. "By sparking students' interest in real issues that affect them and their peers around the world," Boss continued, "you will give them cause to think more critically about what they are learning. Better yet, you may give them a head start on becoming tomorrow's problem-solvers."

The idea that the purpose of education, let alone history education, is to remove a student from the here and now and to get them to understand ideas and worlds beyond their immediate interests is anathema to proponents of today's trendy reform ideas. The idea, as well, that the stories of the past – be it about the rise and fall of Napoleon, the march of Alexander the Great across Asia, or the rise and ideas of businessmen such as John D. Rockefeller – are intrinsically fascinating in and of themselves (let alone for what lessons their stories can offer us today) – also appears to be beyond the realm of today's pedagogical standard setters. And lastly, the idea that students are capable and desirous of rich academic content – that, perhaps, they do not wish to be treated like the infantile adolescents that so much education theory implies that they are – is also scarcely to be found among most proponents of "21st century" skills.

The near-universal acceptance of fashionable trends such as "authentic learning" can be professionally discouraging to young teachers who may wish to teach substantive academic content. Year after year, educators march off to professional development institutes to be told how they must make their lessons relevant. This past summer, one of the authors of this paper attended a week-long professional development seminar on global learning. A leader of one of the seminar workshops proudly stated how she had eliminated time spent in class on the French Revolution. "I used to spend three-to-four weeks on the French Revolution," she stated. "But this year, I have it down to one day!" She proceeded to inform audience members that she now spends her time on contemporary French issues – issues that have meaning to her students such as music, fashion, and cuisine. "My students," she declared, "just did not care about Napoleon and I can't blame them!"

In 1996 E.D. Hirsch wrote that "American educational theory has held that the child needs to be given the all-purpose tools that are needed for him or her to continue learning and adopting." What is either de-emphasized, glazed over, or absent, Hirsch argued, is content knowledge – the intellectual capital that students need in order to be successful citizens in our democratic nation. Almost 20 years after Hirsch wrote these words the same can be said today. The terms and catchy buzz words may change but the underlying ideas of most education theorists have not. The fact remains, and test scores clearly indicate, that deep, substantive intellectual growth is hardly possible when one avoids instruction in rigorous academic content. To think critically in historical terms requires a tremendous amount of historical knowledge. Absent knowledge, critical thinking is not possible. Absent knowledge, 21st century "higher order" thinking skills are meaningless.

Fortunately, many educators are growing tired of recent trends and realize that change is needed. The purpose of this paper is to highlight several programs that buck the trends and afford teachers and students the possibilities of teaching and learning history in a rich, engaging, and rigorous manner.

Profiles

Pioneer Institute reached out to four professional development programs with nationally known reputations to learn more about their offerings. The Center for the Study of the Constitution, We the People, the Robert H. Smith Center for the Constitution and the Ashbrook Center at Ashland University.

Center for the Study of the Constitution

Listen to any newscast, read a major newspaper, open up most news web sites and you'll likely come across a controversy over the role of government today. Can a federal health insurance program be imposed on the states? Are judges writing law and not interpreting it? Is the 14th Amendment assisting illegal immigration? The Founding Fathers created a government but what did they have in mind?

The Center for the Study of the American Constitution (CSAC), a part of the history department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is a non-partisan center whose concentration is the ratification of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

It was founded in 1981 as an "outgrowth"[1] of the Ratification Project, a federally-funded documentary editing effort that is trying to determine "as completely as possible what the people ratifying the Constitution 'understood it to mean, why they ratified it, and what forces and issues were involved in the struggle over it.'"[2] The CSAC is focused on the 1780s, according to Timothy Moore, deputy director of the CSAC,[3] and does not drift into post-ratification issues or debate.

Since the Ratification Project began in 1936 it has collected more than 60,000 documents telling the history of the ratification of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.[4]

The professional development program at CSAC, which started in 2009, provides teachers with the content to help them better understand this narrow but important period in U.S. history. In the *Federalist Papers* of 1788, James Madison wrote that the proposed Constitution was "neither wholly national, nor wholly federal."[5] As Moore points out, it was during this time that the enduring debate over federalism began in our country.

"There's really only one issue in American history and that's federalism, the division of power between national and state," he says. "Every one of the tremendous fights that we've had in our history has a federalism overlay to it. If that's true then the federalist, anti-federalist debates are extremely relevant because we're talking about national power vs. local power."

The CSAC typically runs between four to seven professional development events each year, though Moore says there could be as many as nine in the 2015-2016 school year. The events are presented in one of three types of professional development programs for teachers.

- A "fellows" program is offered annually to a maximum of eight teachers who have been selected from a pool of applicants. The group meets for two-day events held in the fall and spring on the Madison campus. The fall session usually focuses on the Constitutional Convention, while the spring emphasizes the ratification. In the fellows program participants listen to formal scholarly presentations in the morning and pedagogy discussion in the afternoon. They are also required to do curriculum writing and then post their lesson plans on line, based on primary source material.
- "Thematic" programs are offered usually twice each year for 15 to 18 people. In the spring of 2015 CSAC ran a two-day conference on the First Federal Congress and Moore said a conference would be held on the urban judiciary this fall.
- The "summer institute" is a weeklong conference for 25 people who spend the entire time focusing on 1763 to 1800. That would include the end of the French and

Indian War up to 1790s usually ending on the First Federal Congress.

In November of 2015, for example, the CSAC will host a fall conference on "Judicial Independence: Historical Context and Contemporary Challenges." The conference features four scholarly presentations, two document discussion sessions, and two pedagogy sessions. Fifteen resident participants will attend, selected on a first come, first serve basis. They'll receive travel and meal stipends and stay on the campus of the University of Wisconsin.

Topics for past conferences and seminars have included: "Political Humor and the Ratification Debates;" "The Challenges of Interpreting the Constitution;" "Limiting and Regulating the First Amendment;" and "Colonial Constitutionalism: A Study of Contested Sovereignty."

The CSAC uses a standard format for all its seminars. Mornings feature a "sage on the stage," a scholar who makes a presentation, sometimes in a roundtable Q&A arrangement. Afternoons include a document discussion. By example, a morning presentation could be about James Madison, the Bill of Rights and the first Congress. In the afternoon the teachers would read a speech that Madison made to Congress and use that as the centerpiece for a 90-minute discussion. Another presentation was on the Federalism/Anti-Federalist debate on executive power in the morning, followed by original essays supporting both sides for the afternoon discussion.

Moore says that the fellows program is the only professional development limited exclusively to Wisconsin teachers. Otherwise the CSAC has hosted teachers from Connecticut to Texas to California and elsewhere within the U.S.

"We tend to focus on experienced teachers," says Moore. "It's not a hard and fast rule, but our experience has been that if you see an application from someone who has been in the classroom for five or ten years, you have a career teacher. We're interested in working with experienced teachers because we know the chances are they'll be in the classroom.

"That's not to say we don't take younger teachers," he adds, "because frankly they are the ones who need us the most."[6]

The professional development seminars for teachers at CSAC began for two reasons, says Moore. The first is a shift that has occurred away from teaching government classes that emphasize the process of the legislature and how a bill becomes law. Rather there has been greater interest in teaching government from a constitutional basis.

"There are a lot of teachers who like that and they need some help in understanding the creation and ratification of the Constitution and constitutional history," says Moore.

But Moore also said that organizations such as the CSAC, with help from donors and state funds, have stepped forward to fill the financing gap that occurred the federal government backed out in 2011. The CSAC did not want to see the national network that it was developing of educators teaching the Constitution fall apart. In October the U.S. Department of Education announced $50 million in grants for the next three years to support evidence-based training and professional development.[7]

That network of teachers who have attended CSAC seminars tend to skew older and have more experience than average teacher profiles, says Moore.

"We get a pretty bright set of people coming to our seminars," he says. "Because we're so heavily emphasizing the founding period, we tend to get AP U.S. history teachers. They're the only ones teaching the founding period in school. Generally U.S. history is post-Civil War. We're noticing that people who show up to our seminars tend to be AP so they're more knowledgeable."

Moore has noticed that a "growing number" of universities are not teaching the founding period in U.S. history. That leaves young teachers with a "huge knowledge gap" as they begin their careers. Yet many of those younger teachers are uninterested in attending professional development programs that are "all process or pedagogy" and include seminars on using an iPad or learning a particular app.

"We're very committed to content and less so to pedagogy," he says. "We're heavily driven by primary sources and content. I think that makes us uniquely different from most professional development done in school districts and in the school themselves."

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We the People

Imagine a football team whose coach has a deep understanding of the game and the skills to teach the sport. When his players take the field they're knowledgeable, well-prepared and effective.

High school students who participate in the We the People curriculum program compete as well. Their sport is debating the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Their forum is a simulated congressional hearing and a national competition that could take them to Washington, D.C. And they're led by teachers who can instill an understanding of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights and make them convincing witnesses.

Many of those teachers have attended seminars or workshops with the We the People professional development program. There they receive a heavy dose of constitutional content and the knowledge to prepare their students to participate in American self-governance.

We the People is administered by the Center for Civic Education (CCE), a California non-profit, non-partisan organization, in partnership with a network of 50 state civics, government and law programs in the U.S.[8] These state programs impact thousands of teachers annually, according to the CCE.[9] Funding is provided by state bar associations and foundations, universities and other organizations committed to promoting teaching and education about the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Prior to 2011, the Center for Civic Education received about $10 million annually in funding from the U.S. Department of Education for the national We the People program.[10] Three quarters went to state We the People administrators, who supplemented their allotment with money raised locally. But federal funding ended in 2011. Though most state programs continued without the federal money, they did so with varying degrees of success.

Fortunately in October the Department of Education awarded 12 new SEED grants

(Supporting Effective Educator Development) totaling more than $50 million to support teachers and principals with evidence-based training and professional development.[11] The Center for Civic Education received a three-year, $17 million award for the We the People program. The SEED grant program "creates learning and career growth opportunities for aspiring and current educators serving students in high-need schools."[12]

The We the People grant will enable three groups of 675 teachers across the country to participate in professional development during the three-year period. The first group will begin this fall and conclude in the spring of 2016. The second cohort will attend programs running from the summer of 2016 to the spring of 2017. The third will run from the summer of 2017 into the spring of 2018.

We the People programs in Indiana, Wyoming, California and Virginia are well regarded. In Indiana, the state legislature began providing $300,000 per year to fund We the People in local schools when the federal money stopped in 2011. The state funds are administered by the Indiana Bar Foundation.

"(The legislature's) response was that if the feds aren't going to do it, we need to step up and do it as a state," says Robert Leming, the Indiana state coordinator and national director of We the People. "I believe states ought to be doing this. If the feds aren't going to pay for a national program then the states need to do what Indiana did and put money out there."[13]

That's crucial, according to Leming, because most young graduates with a degree in education or history are lacking the necessary content to teach the complexities of government effectively. Most of what they need to learn will occur beyond their undergraduate years, he says. To ensure that they receive a good education in civics, Leming says state officials should step forward to finance professional development programs.

"Good teachers spend their entire career getting professional development just like any other profession," says Leming. "We require lawyers to do it and doctors to do it. You can't come out of undergraduate and think you know everything. You can't even get a master's degree and think you know everything in terms of the content. You have to continue that until you retire."[14]

Deep content is the focus of the professional development seminars of We the People. The Indiana program offers several two-hour workshops each spring and fall. Less frequent weekend seminars lasting two or three days also take place during the school year. Weeklong summer institute programs are held while students are off for summer vacation.

Leming says the model for a summer institute has three components:

- Content. Civics and government.
- Pedagogy. "How do you take these big ideas and teach them and how do kids in upper elementary, middle and high school learn them? That's done by master teachers."
- Evaluation. "What separates We the People from most everything else is that there is an assessment, the congressional hearing. That's a performance-based assessment. At the summer institute teachers themselves have to conduct hearings and write and prepare for them."

"So they get an understanding of the content, the pedagogy and the assessment," he adds.[15]

The summer institutes are held on university campuses, treating the week as if the teachers were attending a graduate level course. Attendees reside in dorms, which Leming says are deliberately made Spartan to encourage teachers to leave their rooms and interact with other participants. Conversation is typically about material from that day's session about the Constitution.

Content is taught by scholars of political science, law and history, while the pedagogy is presented

by master teachers in the program who have considerable experience teaching the We the People program, says Leming.

Unlike some programs the topics selected for We the People workshops and seminars are frequently related to current events. Leming says discussion is often about "enduring issues" such as term limits, which is a popular topic around elections.

"Jefferson said you shouldn't hold the new generation hostage with our ideas from the past," says Leming. "The Framers knew they were writing a constitution that could be amended for new generations to come. Obviously they didn't know anything about drones and the NSA (National Security Agency), but we do."

Where do drones or the NSA fit in terms of privacy and the Fourth Amendment? Do they at all? Leming says that those are enduring issues that students are exposed to through the We the People program and that teachers debate in professional development sessions.

The Competition

The simulated Congressional hearing competition is a unique twist in the We the People program.[16] Schools and classes are encouraged to participate first in a state simulated congressional hearing contest. Winning teams from each state go on to a national final. Roger Desrosiers, coordinator of the Massachusetts We the People program, says the competition is called a congressional hearing because in government Congress will typically call a hearing and people will testify on a bill, pro or con. Once they give their presentation the members of Congress will ask questions pertaining to the particular position.[17]

"Students attend the competition and they will have studied, researched, and written a response to two or three questions," says Desrosiers. "When they get to the hearing they'll be asked one of those questions and give a four minute response. Then a panel of judges asks them six minutes of follow-up questions."[18]

"I'm not a huge proponent of the competition for the sake of competition," he adds. "I'm a huge proponent of the hearing process. The hearing process really distinguishes whether students have really grasped and understood what it is they've learned."[19]

While the new SEED money will fund more professional development programs, Leming says the national competition will not share in the grant.[20] Competitions in the states and the national competition in Washington, D.C. have felt the pinch of tighter funds. Desrosiers says that teams from 45 states went to Washington, D.C. last spring for the finals. In earlier years all 50 states and the District of Columbia were represented.[21]

Massachusetts is one of the states where We the People struggled to recover from the loss of federal funds. Through 2011 Desrosiers ran four to six seminars each year. Since then he's held two per year at most. However, through the recent SEED grant Desrosiers says programs in the six New England states will share about $360,000 over three years.

Leming says the loss of federal funding had a "huge" impact on the national professional development programs. Before the cuts he would frequently hold seminars or summer institute sessions at a site appropriate for the conference topic. He held 13 different seminars on the civil rights movement in Birmingham, Alabama. For five years he brought teachers to Arizona for seminars on the Navaho nation. He hosted seminars in Montpelier, VA to learn about James Madison and Richmond at the home of Chief Justice John Marshall.[22]

The SEED grant for civics and history education is a major departure from past awards. In the past winning approval has been difficult because such grants have been given to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) subjects and not to teaching about the Constitution, says Leming. That preference speaks to the place that civics education holds in today's schools behind STEM

education. But winning approval will be difficult because such grants have been given to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) subjects in the past and not to civic education or teaching about the Constitution, says Leming. That preference speaks to the place that civics education holds in today's schools behind STEM education.

"Sputnik did a number on the U.S.," says Leming. "When it went up, all of a sudden math and science became incredibly important and other subjects were put in a secondary position. Then you had the civil rights movement and the Viet Nam War."[23]

Leming says that by the time he enrolled in college in 1972, teaching about the Constitution was not in vogue. Karl Marx was as likely to be the focus as James Madison because of the mood of the country. He thinks that changed somewhat in 1987 when the nation celebrated the bicentennial of the Constitution and Warren Burger, chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, resigned to lead the campaign marking the anniversary. From the increased interest in the Constitution the We the People program was born.

Leming sees renewed interest in the Constitution today from the debate over immigration reform in the presidential campaign.

"All of a sudden you're hearing discussions on the 14th Amendment and whether anchor babies are really citizens," he says. "When was the last time you heard of the 14th Amendment on the news? People are interested in the Constitution at the grassroots level. It's never gone away in our minds as Americans, but things pop up to force us to think about it more often."[24]

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Robert H. Smith Center for the Constitution

In the professional development program at the Robert H. Smith Center for the Constitution at James Madison's Montpelier, there is a large emphasis on place. And for good reason. Located in the rolling hills of Orange, VA, about 25 minutes north of Charlottesville and two hours south of Washington, D.C., Montpelier is where James Madison drafted the Virginia Plan, the framework that led to the Constitution.

Madison's mansion, the furnishings, the grounds, the historic buildings, the views of the Blue Ridge Mountains and the slave cemetery all contribute to a sense of an earlier time. For teachers of history Montpelier *is* history, as they plunge into the origins of U.S. government.

"Montpelier can be a pretty powerful place," says Jennifer Patja Howell, deputy director of the Center for the Constitution. "There's a lot you can say in a classroom, but when you are in the room where Madison crafted the Virginia Plan and looking at the view he had and surrounded by the books he would have been surrounded by, it becomes a very real and powerful moment."[25]

James Madison's Montpelier is an authentic architectural restoration of the lifelong home of the nation's fourth president. The Center for the Constitution was established by the Montpelier Foundation in 2002. "The center's goal is to inspire participation in civic dialogue, improve the public's understanding of the founding principles of the United States, and enable citizens to deepen their understanding of and participation in our democracy."[26]

The professional development program includes six three-day seminars offered each year and numerous online courses. The Center for the Constitution also sponsors a We the People Summer Institute, in which teachers participate in a simulated congressional hearing. Additionally the center organizes all of the We the People regional and state high school competitions in Virginia and the District of Columbia.

In the seminars participants engage in interactive lectures and discussions led by scholars on the Constitution or the Bill of Rights. Seminar topics have included "the Creation of the Constitution;" "The Bill of Rights in Historical Perspective;" and the "Evolution of American Citizenship."

There are topics that the center is compelled to include by virtue of being at Montpelier. A seminar is planned on the political thought of James Madison for the spring, for example. But there are others that are not so obvious such as a seminar on native peoples and the Constitution, also scheduled for next spring; and another on religious freedom next summer. Howell says they are also trying to time topics to correspond with bigger events in the country. Next fall there will be a seminar on elections and the Constitution to coincide with the 2016 presidential election.

Prior to arriving at Montpelier, participants receive a collection of primary documents specific to the content of each program. Those documents serve as the basis of most discussions and might include writings by Madison, sections of The Federalist Papers, selections from antifederalist writers, and other fundamental documents. Two classroom discussion groups are held daily, in the morning and afternoon.

Sandwiched between those sessions each day is a two-hour tour of the Montpelier grounds. Through the tours the Montpelier setting helps to inspire teachers and stimulate discussion. It's in the "Old Library" of Madison's mansion that teachers see where he spent months preparing for the Constitutional Convention. In the Drawing Room they find period art and conversation pieces. A discussion on slavery becomes more meaningful shortly after they've viewed an old slave quarters or the slave cemetery.

"It gets their gears turning and they come back with more questions," says Emily Voss, outreach and education manager at James Madison's Montpelier. "They come back with a lot of fabulous questions."[27]

Teachers of grades K-12 can attend the seminars but they are taught the same way to the entire group, as a graduate level course.

"We use primary documents," says Voss. "The high school teachers find most direct use of that material in the classroom because we often will get AP level teachers. The middle and elementary teachers are looking for big ideas. But it's largely on the teacher to figure out how they want to transfer those big ideas to their fourth or fifth graders."[28]

Just as Montpelier is used to stimulate deep thoughts and creativity about the creation of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, so too is the work of James Madison. There is an appreciation for the months upon months of thought and writing he put into drafting the Virginia Plan prior to his attending the constitutional convention in Philadelphia in 1787.

Additionally Madison's leadership style, in which he put aside self-interest for the public good at the convention, is something that teachers can discuss in their classrooms. The lesson: people willing to have a reasoned, informed conversation are encouraged to speak their mind.

"Madison didn't get everything he wanted in the Constitution," says Howell. "But instead of saying he wouldn't sign it if they wouldn't do it his way, he worked through it and they deliberated and they had an intellectual conversation. The Framers decided to do what they could for the good of the country."[29]

That sort of attitude is often lost in the partisan approach to governing in Congress today. Though using content through primary sources is the focus of the center's seminars, at times the discussion includes pedagogy. With some of the topics, scholars leading the session will talk about how teachers can raise controversial issues with students.

"The way we structure conversation around constitutional issues should be a model for how teachers can approach them in the classroom,"

says Howell. "But the additional discussion is that this is a topic that will ignite some passions. That's okay, but how do you as a teacher maintain the stance as moderator and not tell students how they should think about it?"

She added that the content and the pedagogy go "hand-in-hand" in understanding how to remain neutral.

The Center for the Constitution's professional development program began in 2002. The founding board for the Montpelier Foundation, an independent non-profit organization established by the National Trust for Historic Preservation for the purpose of managing Montpelier, believed the estate should be a scholarly resource. Because James Madison's legacy is the Constitution, providing education on the Constitution was obvious.

Teachers were the primary audience from the beginning. The maximum number of teachers for each seminar is 30. Usually they are middle and high school educators, drawn from all states. Seminars cost approximately $1,500 per teacher. However there are scholarships available to teachers from some particular states through an assortment of donors and sponsors. The states include Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Nevada, California and the District of Columbia.

Scholarships cover the cost of accommodations, meals, reading materials, teaching resources, and documentation for recertification credits. The available scholarships vary per state. Participants stay in renovated houses in the Constitutional Village on the grounds of James Madison's Montpelier.

In 2011 the Center for the Constitution began offering online courses. Two courses were introduced at first. A third one began this past summer and six additional courses will be launched by June of 2016. As much as the "power of place" is important to the professional development program, says Howell, they also recognize that they are located in rural Virginia. Additionally, the center has a maximum capacity of six seminars per year. The online courses enable them to meet the needs of a broader audience.

The online courses include videos and images, along with a forum for discussion. They are written by topic scholars and then peer-reviewed by three other scholars.[30] They vary in length from eight hours to 15. Teachers access the courses on their own time and can earn credits for continuing education upon completion. During the past year the course topics were:

- Constitutional Amendment: the Bill of Rights. A 15-hour course that studied one of the most revered parts of the Constitution and which, ironically, Madison initially opposed.
- Constitutional Foundations. An eight-hour course examining the theoretical underpinnings of the Constitution, its creation at the Philadelphia convention and the three branches of government.
- Creation of the Constitution. A 15-hour course that looks at how, after three months of debate, 55 delegates created a document that has lasted more than 200 years yet amended only 27 times.

Another online tool created by the Center for the Constitution is ConText, a crowdsourcing project in which historians, political scientists, lawyers and educators, among others, contribute thoughts and analysis on the Constitution, Bill of Rights and other important documents related to their creation. Participants who sign up can browse the selected documents, read the annotations offered by scholars and add their own observations or research.

We the People Summer Institute at James Madison's Montpelier

The Montpelier Foundation's sponsorship of the We the People Summer Institute, as well as the regional and high school competitions in Virginia and the District of Columbia began before the

founding of the Center for the Constitution. That experience was a stimulus for more involvement in constitutional education and professional development.[31]

Participants of the four-day We the People Summer Institute include upper elementary, middle, and high school teachers. Through lectures, breakout sessions and classroom simulations they learn about the historical events and philosophical arguments that preceded the writing of the Constitution and its relation to democratic principles. They also participate in a simulated congressional hearing, demonstrating to them the skills needed to conduct similar hearings with their own students.

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Ashbrook Center at Ashland University

There is a scene in the 1979 movie "Starting Over" in which Burt Reynolds, playing a college professor on his first day of school, works through all of his prepared material for the class only to be horrified when he looks at the clock and sees a mere five minutes have passed. What would he do for the rest of the hour?

Officials at the Ashbrook Center believe that's a panic point that many high school history teachers reach today. Understanding the arguments and principles that led to the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights requires far more preparation than they receive in their undergraduate education. In short order they realize there is much more background to know.

"The education that our history, civics, government teachers get is almost always woefully inadequate," says Jason Ross, senior director of the Ashbrook Center. "In many, if not most, education degree programs, there is very little in the way of content knowledge for American history, civics or government. In some programs in some states it's possible to graduate with an undergraduate degree in social studies education with as little as 12 credits of content knowledge.

"What happens is they will get in front of a classroom and realize very quickly that they don't have the depth of content knowledge to make it through 180 days," he adds.[32]

The Ashbrook Center, established and named in honor of the late Congressman John M. Ashbrook of Ohio,[33] has been providing content and training for teachers of American history and government since 1989. Though the center was first opened in 1984 to host the Ashbrook Scholar Program, an academic program for undergraduate students majoring or minoring in political science or history at Ashland University, outreach to teachers began because of the perceived need for additional education in content.

Ashbrook provides professional development through a variety of resources and course work.

- Seminars and Forums. One-day seminars for social studies teachers provide an opportunity to explore themes in American history and self-government through the study of original historical documents. Participants receive a set of readings in advance of the session, along with guiding questions and ideas related to the documents and ideas addressed in each program. The seminars are limited to 30 teachers. Forums are half-day programs in which a scholar leads a group in an intense look at a more limited collection of papers about a single topic. These programs are offered at no cost to the participant and are open to K-12 teachers in public, independent, parochial, and charter schools.[34]
- Weekend colloquia: Similar in focus and format to one-day programs, but longer and more in-depth. These symposiums are typically held at historic sites such as Mount Vernon and limited to 15-20 participants. All expenses related to food and lodging are covered by Ashbrook, and participants are provided with a travel stipend to offset those costs.[35]
- Master's program. Ashland University offers a Master of Arts in American History and Government degree program, designed specifically for middle and high school teachers of history, civics, and government. The program focuses on the use of original historical documents in the classroom. It is offered in two formats: as weeklong seminars during the summer and as interactive live online video conferences presented during the academic year.[36]
- TeachingAmericanHistory.org: Ashbrook's web site offers an online document library consisting of more than 2,200 primary sources from the roots of American government to the present.[37]
- Saturday webinars: One Saturday each month during the school year Ashbrook hosts a free webinar panel discussion between scholars for teachers. Documents are provided online in advance and participants pose questions online which a moderator then asks of the two scholar panelists.[38]

Ross says Ashbrook typically does not run "lecture-style" programs. Rather they are focused on building content knowledge by introducing teachers to primary source documents. They prefer to have teachers read documents then discuss their meanings, significance and implications with colleagues and the center's faculty. Using primary source documents is "critically important" to Ashbrook, he says, because it prompts teachers to think beyond a textbook.

"Focusing on primary documents and engaging in a conversation about them, allows us to challenge the textbook view," says Ross. "There are a lot of bad textbooks that teach a lot of mistaken things about America. We want teachers to have the knowledge and the confidence to be able to look at a textbook and say 'This is what they concluded about this issue or this person, but based on my own readings, I don't agree with this conclusion.'"[39]

But could that put some teachers at odds with their school districts? A district will select a textbook it expects teachers to use in its classroom because they approve of its content. But if a teacher studies a primary source document, later finds fault with the textbook and presents a different interpretation to the class, they could be acting contrary to what their school system is requiring. Ross says that's not what Ashbrook is advocating.

"We aren't trying to get teachers to dispute facts and figures," he says. "We want teachers to have a broader view of the nature of our republic. We're very critical of ourselves today and we're trying to encourage teachers to look at the documents and use the documents as ways to engage their

students rather than the textbooks which are typically going to a conclusion."

Teaching from primary documents and away from a textbook requires teachers to have a deep understanding of their topics. Ross says that in education there has been a greater focus on doing assessments through "document-based" questions, rather than asking true-false or multiple choice questions that "students of history and civics in particular find so mind-numbing."[40] He says there is an increasing emphasis on giving students passages to read, then asking them to pull out facts and draw inferences and conclusions.

"Increasingly teachers are being asked to focus on primary documents," says Ross. "We often hear that they want to teach these documents, but they don't understand them themselves. In order for teachers to accomplish their task, they need to have more than the minimum foundation they get in their education. That's why organizations like Ashbrook exist."[41]

He added that there is a "grave demand" from teachers for additional content knowledge because after three or four years into their career "they hit a wall. They realize they aren't going to make it in their profession unless they get some more advanced knowledge."

One of the goals of the center is to put an "Ashbrook teacher," someone who has gone through its program, in "every one of the nation's 35,000 secondary schools."[42] The school reports that during the past 16 years nearly 8,000 teachers from every state in the country have participated in Ashbrook's residential and online courses, webinars, professional development programs, and seminars at historic sites. Additionally, the school reports that during the past year 30,000 teachers per month have used educational material on the center's TeachingAmericanHistory.org website.[43]

An Ashbrook teacher would be someone who has the depth of content knowledge they need and the confidence in their ability to read and interpret these documents so they can see themselves as scholars historians in their own classrooms, says Ross. Additionally, by focusing on conversation about primary documents rather than lectures, Ashbrook-trained teachers can promote discussion and communication skills with their students – essential to self-governing.

"Our legislative branch has a less than 10 percent approval rating," says Ross. "That indicates something is wrong with our system of government. Most Americans see that people in Congress have a hard time talking to each other. We have a hard time getting past ideology and getting past disputes with one another. We have a hard time coming up with serious solutions to serious problems."

By organizing programs on conversation, Ashbrook aims to help teachers understand that though conversation about important issues can be hard, they can still happen, says Ross. Opposing sides can discuss difficult issues and find areas of common ground.

"If they can experience that in one of our programs then students in their classrooms can learn that it's possible for people to overcome those disagreements and find areas of common ground," says Ross. "That's a skill but we can't do it without the content. It would be meaningless without the content."

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Conclusion

Critical thinking is impossible without knowledge. This is true of all issues debated in our society. The way to stop mass shootings at our schools can be shouted out in simple terms such as "tighter gun regulations" or "arm our teachers." But true solutions require a deeper understanding of the law, mental health, individual liberties and more. The same can be said for immigration reform, climate change and health care.

There is a genuine concern today that critical thinking about how we govern ourselves is suffering because of a lack of knowledge of how our country began. Study upon study shows a disappointing percentage of the public able to discuss the Constitution or the Bill of Rights. Yet these documents contain the principles at the foundation of our government. Without an understanding of the intentions of the Founding Fathers those principles are at risk of misinterpretation and distortion.

Politicians and business leaders speak about the need for more funding of science, technology, engineering and math in our schools. The STEM disciplines are hot while civics and history have much less sizzle. Many educators point to the late 1950s, when Russia's surprise success with the Sputnik satellite escalated the Cold War and America's focus turned to technology, as the moment when civics became less of a priority in schools.

A resurgence of interest in civic virtue and a new emphasis on teaching civics in our schools is needed in our country. But there are challenges. Students graduating from college lack the deep knowledge of our government to teach it effectively; and there are too few opportunities for them to expand their knowledge once in the workplace. Neither challenge is insurmountable.

The first problem exists almost by design. Liberal arts students take other courses besides history. The knowledge they have upon graduation is only a start. They know dates, key figures and important documents. But they've not had time to understand the arguments that took place at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, for example, or the philosophies behind the arguments that filled the hall. Before James Madison went to the convention he wrote to Thomas Jefferson in France and asked him to send every book he could find on government. He read them and arrived at the convention very prepared. The Founders knew about Locke and Montesquieu and their ideas on government and politics. From their knowledge they created a new government.

Seasoned history teachers will acknowledge that most of their learning occurred well beyond their college years. Unfortunately teachers who want to learn more about that early founding period are often frustrated by available professional development opportunities. The focus of seminars is often on pedagogy and not content. "How to use an iPad" or "Smartboard Strategies." Teachers need opportunities beyond college to learn the intricacies of government and how to teach it.

Such programs are emerging, despite funding challenges. We the People coordinators operate in nearly all states, raising funds from state government, foundations, associations and private donors. The Center for the Study of the American Constitution is based at the University of Wisconsin. The Ashbrook Center is connected to Ashland University in Ohio; and the Robert H. Smith Center for the Constitution is at James Madison's Montpelier in Virginia. All offer a deep dive into content using primary source materials such as The Federalist Papers or the Bill of Rights. Their formats include one-day workshops of a couple of hours; more intense weekend seminars; and weeklong summer sessions that often equate to graduate level courses held at historic locations. Online courses, webinars and virtual libraries supplement the in-person programs.

Directors of these programs believe their formats help educators become more knowledgeable of our nation's founding years and provide an

example of how to teach history to students. The discussions central to every seminar encourage teachers to interpret the source material and share their views in an open and respectful way. At a time when gridlock is the norm in Congress, students can learn that in effective self-government communication is a requirement and not an elective.

Recommendations

In a recent interview, former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor declared that "the only reason we have public school education in America is because in the early days of the country, our leaders thought we had to teach our young generation about citizenship." The obligation to do so, she continued, never ends. "If we don't take every generation of young people and make sure they understand that they are an essential part of government," O'Connor argued, "we won't survive."[44] The crisis in the teaching and learning of history that O'Connor forcefully calls attention to can be solved but will require sustained intellectual argument and political engagement. Change will not be easy nor will it come overnight. But with persistence and unity, history and civics advocates can restore the teaching and learning of history to its rightful place as a treasured academic discipline and fundamental educational priority. Parents, students, government officials, and business leaders need to be made aware of the dire straits of history and the consequences of continuing along the path we now are on. Once people are made aware, pressure can then be applied at state and local levels to create and maintain the necessary academic goals and obtain the necessary resources to reverse course.

Listed below are four recommendations to help accomplish this goal. The first two recommendations are focused on state level reforms. The third is focused on what school administrators can do to address the crisis. The fourth is intended to focus the efforts of concerned citizens.

Recommendation 1: States, such as Massachusetts, should mandate a statewide assessment in U.S. history with a strong focus on the founding documents. To start, the assessment should be given to high school students (11th or 12th grade) and be a graduation requirement. Absent state support and mandated assessments it will be difficult to reverse the trends we have noted. Absent meaningful statewide assessments, district leaders will not – as many of the educators in this article noted – make history or civics a priority.

Recommendation 2: To coincide with the establishment of statewide assessments in U.S. history, states (with the assistance of the federal government) should create strong funding streams for professional development programs (such as the ones described in this paper as well as other programs such as the summer seminars run by the National Endowment for the Humanities)) centered on the teaching of rigorous academic content. At the local level, administrators and teachers should carefully review all potential professional development programs to make sure they include readings (or, if possible, lessons) from established, reputable scholars such as Gordon Wood, Joseph Ellis, James McPherson, and John Lewis Gaddis.

Recommendation 3: School administrators should focus their hiring on teachers with strong content knowledge. Often, administrators hire teachers versed in the latest pedagogical techniques but lacking in strong content knowledge. This puts the cart before the horse. Absent strong content knowledge students might be entertained but they will not learn much of value.

Recommendation 4: Concerned parents and teachers should lobby school boards and legislatures – bringing to their attention the crisis that exists and proposing local solutions. Two key questions that parents and teachers should ask include:

- Is the local district's history curriculum academically rigorous and do school

administrators provide enough class time for it?

- Do local administrators provide adequate professional development time and funding for teachers to enable them to enhance their content knowledge?

About the Authors

Anders Lewis was born and raised in New York. He earned a BA in history from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He earned a Masters and a Ph.D. in American history from the University of Florida. From 2000-2004 he worked at the Massachusetts Department of Education, helping to write the History and Social Science Curriculum Framework and create the History and Social Science MCAS. From 2005 to today, he has served as a history teacher and Art and History Department Chair at the Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter School (AMSA) in Marlborough. He currently lives in Amherst, New Hampshire with his wife and two kids – Lincoln and Churchill.

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Paul Reid is the co-author, with William Manchester, of the biography of *Winston Churchill, The Last Lion: Defender of the Realm*, 1940-1965. In 2004, Manchester requested his friend Reid complete the third volume of his Churchill trilogy. The book was a *New York Times* bestseller and named one of the best books of 2012 by *The Wall Street Journal*. Reid has appeared on C-SPAN, the Churchill Chat, and was a Mason Distinguished Lecturer. In 2013, Reid was made a Churchill Fellow at Westminster College, where Churchill gave his Iron Curtain speech. Previously, Mr. Reid was a feature writer for *The Palm Beach Post* and a regular op-ed writer for *The Boston Globe*. He worked in manufacturing before earning a bachelor's degree from the Harvard University Extension School and beginning a career in journalism. A native of Massachusetts, Mr. Reid lives in North Carolina.

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Pioneer Institute is an independent, non-partisan, privately funded research organization that seeks to change the intellectual climate in the Commonwealth by supporting scholarship that challenges the "conventional wisdom" on Massachusetts public policy issues.

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