“Open-Minds, Open-Doors,” CCPS Newsletter

The Social Studies Issue!

Did you know that the Highest Voter turnout (in terms of eligible voter percentages) in modern times was in 1960 between candidates John F. Kennedy (Democrat) and Richard Nixon (Republican). Kennedy won by only 112,827 votes, but took a commanding lead in the electoral college count (303 to 219).

“History and experience tell us that moral progress comes not in comfortable and complacent times, but out of trial and confusion.”
- Gerald R. Ford

Social Studies Department Mission Statement

- We are becoming CCPS Social Scientists.
- We are becoming increasingly independent and responsible students.
- We are becoming competent readers who utilize strategies to build comprehension of a variety of sources.
- We are becoming analytical researchers who gather, sort, evaluate, and utilize evidence.
- We are becoming principled and balanced collaborators.
- We are becoming clear communicators in multiple formats.
- We are becoming social scientists who understand and evaluate the human experience.
- We are becoming empowered and engaged internationally.

In This Issue

- Meet our Social Studies Teachers!
- National History Day
- We The People Competition
- Make-A-Wish
- Social Studies Dream Team
- Teaching Again by Sam Obenshain
- Google Form Testing
National History Day

National History Day is made possible due to the vision of department chair David Kline. With assistance from Stephanie Jones and Greg Butz, David synthesized each step into easily manageable chunks, and wrote the rubrics to assess the learning. This project is also incredibly well attended by parents, and represents Paideia learning at its finest. It is held in the first semester to prepare 6th and 7th grade students for the rigors and expectations at Cottonwood Classical, and enables them to understand necessity of following due dates and rubrics. Two articles, one from a 6th grader and a 7th grader exemplify this learning experiences.

My Crazy Fun Experience! by Chloe Campos (grade 6)

The National History Day was a fun and crazy experience, because I have never done such a huge project where you bring food and dress up. I liked putting the poster board together with pictures, paragraphs, and decorating the poster board however I liked, because I could a style or theme that I thought fit well. The most challenging thing about the national history day project was typing all of the paragraphs, because you have to have very detailed sentences. I learned how to write long, advanced, thorough paragraphs. I also learned how to research a lot better with different techniques than I used to know. This project prepares me for other CCPS projects because I have a different expectations for big projects. I will know that I will be expected to do certain more challenging things in the future.

I am working on my third career. In 2005, I received my M. Ed from UNM. After a few years of elementary education, I found a job here at Cottonwood. I’ve worn a few hats here waiting for a middle school history position to open. I have taught math, science, P.E., and now finally Ancient Civ and Early US to 7th and 8th graders. Outside of school I enjoy being outdoors, hiking, camping, and backpacking. I also enjoy coaching my little league football team, and of course, spending as much time with my sons as possible.
Stephanie Jones

Stephanie Jones is on her 22nd year of teaching and has degrees in Archaeology and History, and a Masters in Education. She lived overseas in Chile for 16 years, where she and her Chilean husband raised 3 children. She worked for 10 years at The American International IB, School Nido de Aguilas, in Santiago. Upon returning to New Mexico in 2006, she worked at Bellehaven Elementary School and now is on her 9th year at Cottonwood Classical Preparatory School.

This Time Was Different! by Venezia Sinclair (grade 7)

Last year in the “National History Day Project”, I didn’t put in any effort. I didn’t really think about the project until the day it was due. Also, I didn’t do most of my project (one of my family members did the project). I did everything last minute, with minimum effort. I didn’t consider the suggestions of my teacher or classmates.

This year, I put in effort. I didn’t want the same problem like last year, so as soon as I picked my historical person, I got to work. I did everything, and I was determined to do the project myself. This time I considered the feedback from my teacher, and other students, and also considered doing my poster differently while preparing myself for the presentation.

I put in effort into my poster to make it stand out. I wanted it to be so good that future 6th and 7th graders could have something to look at for an idea. What I learned during this time was that you can’t let someone else do your project. Also you shouldn’t do the project last minute. I also learned to do things when the are assigned. The experience this year was different from last year.

I think that this will help prepare me for other projects in the future, because some of the things we do while putting together this project, we might do for another project. As you move higher in classes you present projects and need to explain how or what you did. Even though people are only in middle school, it helps to learn early. But the fact that the project was broken down it helped making it understandable and simple. This also helped me with presenting to other people.

Why I Chose to Make A Wish
by Lilly Moon (grade 6).

I am a student at Cottonwood Classical, and for the holidays we do a program called Make-A-Wish to raise money to support a child’s wish. One way to Make-A-Wish is to buy a paper star for $1, and write your name on it, and put it in your advisory classroom’s window. Whichever window has the most stars will get a pizza party, because their class raised the most money for the child’s wish. On the last day to buy stars for the window (and possibly win) we were asked if we wanted to put your money to stars (of which we had already collected $200), or put our money aside. That way, even if we did not win, we could have a pizza party, no matter what. I had brought money, and I decided to put my money toward the child’s wish (stars), instead of my own pizza party.

I put my money towards the child’s wish, instead of a pizza party for many reasons. Skylar’s wish was to go to Disneyland, and that would be a memory for her forever, and I have had many pizza parties in my life. And it was the unselfish thing to do, especially with the holidays coming up, this time of year is all about caring and giving to others. My final reason I did this is because, Skylar has a sickness, where she does not live for long, and it was her dream to meet Minnie Mouse. To grant that wish for her would be the best day of her life and would save a memory for her parents and her, through her sickness and sad parts of life. That is why I chose to make someone else’s wish, rather than a pizza party.
As the master schedule process was underway last school year, a few challenges presented themselves to the team that included asking teachers new to CCPS and new to IB to teach the Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course. In order to try and support this decision, I volunteered to “team-teach” the TOK class for both Year 1 (juniors) and Year 2 (seniors) this year. Although I had attended a number of TOK classes and presentations over the years and knew about the requirements and IB expectations for TOK, I did not have a real clue as to the overall framework of the course. I thought to myself, “I can handle this, it will support some new teachers and spread out some of the responsibilities for taking over a class for the first time. Well, that was the idea anyway.

I was very intrigued and excited to get back into the classroom as it is what still motivates me to be an educator! I was eager to ‘put my money where my mouth was’ and try to implement the things that I had been giving to others in my observational feedback. Ha, was I in for a “rookie” awakening!

Thankfully, I was not going at this alone! I had two other TOK rookies to pull me along (Marshall and John) and, of course, had two esteemed TOK veterans to lead the way (Kai and Peter)! At the beginning of the year, I was pumped to get my teach on!

Now, one would think, from my years observing teachers in a variety of environments, content areas, grade levels, and activities, I would have been able to glean the “best of the best” practices over time and implement them with alacrity when called to do so. Well, I must say, I have re-learned a thing or two about teaching in my first semester back in the saddle!

**Thing one: Planning matters**

If there is anything that I have reflected most significantly about since working with my colleagues is that good teaching is about preparation! I have not been consistent in my support of the planning process for TOK and have left the heavy lifting to my colleagues (I’ll talk about them in a second…). Balancing my other responsibilities and juggling some impromptu situations, I have been remiss in my responsibilities to contribute effectively to the planning portion of the teaching job. I have come to rely on Peter Lukes, Kai Frick, John Tennison, and Marshall Hastings to do most of the ‘work behind the work’ and am grateful for their thoughtfulness and organization. The big growth area for me has been clearly apparent as I am a much better teacher when I have made the time to prepare fully for the TOK curriculum delivery. With this commitment to planning, I will be able to focus more deliberately on the engagement of students with the content and on managing classroom processes that lead to productive and intellectually-stimulating discussions and outcomes.

(Continued on Page 8).
Bill Torres is in his 19th year in education and 6th here at CCPS. This year he is teaching We the People, an in depth, rigorous, study of the US Constitution and advanced New Mexico history. He also coaches speech and debate and mock trial. The CCPS We the People team just won their second consecutive state championship and will once again represent New Mexico at the We the People National Finals in Washington, DC in April. Bill also enjoys being the public address announcer in his "spare time" for the Albuquerque Isotopes, the University of New Mexico, and at various NMAA events. He is happily married to his wonderful wife Jennifer and has one son, Billy. He is also proud to be a part of the best department here at CCPS.

We the People
Opened My Eyes
By Cambria Barnes

We the People was offered for the first time at Cottonwood Classical Preparatory school last year and I wasn't sure what to expect when I selected it as my elective. My classmates and I quickly discovered how much information there was to take in, studying the creation of the Constitution and its implementation. The class was challenging yet engaging and despite the workload, it never felt like a chore to go to class. It was such a dynamic learning environment. Winning at the state competition our very first year was a tremendous accomplishment for our team, and being able to go to Washington DC to compete nationally was eye-opening and was such a great opportunity to meet like-minded students. Being able to participate in the We the People class was an exceptional experience for me. I feel as though I can be a more active participant in our democracy and I definitely feel more knowledgeable about issues that affect everyone in this country. Taking this class really opened my eyes to the need for civic education in schools and I think that it should be a requirement for every high school student in the country.
Google Forms for Testing?
By Greg Butz, Julie Lira, and Darian Kapelianis-Donado

I’ve been experimenting (huge shock), with Google Forms for testing. I love the immediate feedback and breakdown of the data (questions that students struggled with, so I can re-teach that item). It also eliminates the messiness of manually sifting through scantrons.

However, there are some notable drawbacks. It is dependent upon technology working (as we know, this is the day that it fails). During my 1st period finals, when 25 students simultaneously logged onto the google classroom page, the system locked me out. We worked around it, but not without a little administrator test anxiety. Another issue checking the right boxes. If you allow students to see charts of responses, then they will have all the questions.

Support Articles supporting and opposed to Google Testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support by Darian Kapelianis-Donado</th>
<th>Opposed by Julie Lira</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I truly think Google Forms is the best way for us to take tests. I personally dislike tests in general. I do not like scantrons because I feel they are messy and all over the place. I have gotten countless questions wrong because of copy errors. Google Forms is clean, well formatted and very fast. We get our grades back in an hour or two, and I think that reduces how much you and we are stressing. It is not confusing, on the contrary it is easier then taking a test on paper. Because you write it, I feel like it is super easy because this is what we have been doing all year. Please for your sake and for ours keep using Google Forms!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the original on a paper because you have it right in front of you. It is easier because google classroom seems longer when you have to scroll all the way down. Your test also can be lost on a computer. One other thing technology is not good with your eyes. Today we are already programed with our screens. Such as phones and computers. At school we sit around all day and are always tired because of the amount of energy we waste sitting. Visually looking at a screen makes it worse for our body and makes it harder to do test on.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jennifer Nevdahl

This is her 21st year of teaching and her second year at Cottonwood. She has a BA in English Literature with a history minor from Whitworth University in beautiful Spokane, Washington. She has an MA in Education also from Whitworth. Her first teaching job brought her to New Mexico to teach at The Menaul School. She then moved to Colorado Springs where she taught middle school language arts for 10 years. She returned to New Mexico just over five years ago and began teaching English and history at an IB school in Santa Fe. When not teaching, she can be found hanging out with her daughter and watching Parks and Rec reruns. Making the move to Cottonwood has been one of her best decisions followed closely by switching to teach history over English. She is thankful to be part of an amazing staff, department, and half of the greatest teaching partnership known to human-kind with Mr. Lukes.

Rick Redington

Rick Redington is in his 14th year of teaching, and his 9th year at Cottonwood. He has a B.A. from St. John’s College, Santa Fe, and an M.A. from St. John’s College, Santa Fe in Eastern Classics. A member of both the English and Social Studies departments, he teaches English 10 and IB Philosophy Year 1 and Year 2, and has also taught English 9 and Theory of Knowledge at CCPS.
Dream Team: A Rewarding Experience by Greg Butz

The Social Studies Dream Team was by far the most rewarding, tangible work that I did for PED last year. This process involved creating four capstone lessons (each with 3 primary source modules), aligned to New Mexico and Common Core Standards, researching through the Library of Congress and the Department of War Records, and procuring releases forms from artists and writers to use publish their work for educational purposes.


Highlights of this experience:

1. Discovering a painting of Col. Scurry leading the charge on Pigeon’s Ranch. Then I contacted the painter Wayne Justus and gained his permission to use the painting. It was a fantastic experience learning that he had intentionally included as many historical elements into his painting as possible.

2. Researching through the Library of Congress and the Department of War Records was tedious, but my real breakthrough occurred when an professor/author pointed me in the direction of a brilliant primary source!

3. Teaching the lessons! Students then evaluated whether or not the Battle at Glorieta Pass should be considered of similar importance to the Battle at Gettysburg, using the primary and secondary sources.
My Life Back in the Classroom (continued)

Thing two: Collaboration is AWESOME!

What I have enjoyed the most about my return to the classroom is getting to collaborate with such passionate and thoughtful teachers! I have been excited about engaging in academic conversations at the classroom level. It has affirmed my belief in the idea that “two heads are better than one.” Getting to throw ideas around and bounce concepts off of one another has been the bright spot of my year! I can most assuredly say that if I was the only one trying to pull of a TOK class, the students would revolt! Not only have Kai and Peter opened up their curricula and resources, but have been open to new ways of looking at things and have energized me beyond belief with their common-sense approach to the IB processes while keeping the intellectual engagement of the students as the guiding principle! I feel extremely lucky to not only get to do what I love to do, but also do it with such amazing professionals. Marshall and John have renewed my faith in risk-taking and have impressed me with their willingness to take on this challenge of TOK and not blink an eye!

I am excited about what the second semester will bring and hope to use my learning curve in first semester to improve upon my teaching practices for the second. I am thankful to have been able to give this a shot, as I know that my time away from the office during 7th period has added an additional burden to Chris Eisenberg, but she has been gracious in her allowance and I appreciate it!

Spotlight Editorial by Greg Butz

“Why are you doing this?” Is a question that is often asked with each edition of Spotlight. “Is this for a leadership class?” The short answer is, “no.” Spotlight began by accident. Early in August this year, I walked past Mr. Hastings and Ms. Hawley’s room, and by happenstance saw an incredible joint high-school/middle school art lesson. Believing that every teacher should be recognized for their work and effort, I emailed administration with the subject line, “Spotlight on Staff Collaboration.” Administration asked me to resend this out to the school believing it demonstrated the PD focus of “Open Doors, Open Minds,” and the rest is history.

But the long answer is a bit more complicated. Things that shouldn’t be overlooked, often are due to the busyness of the year. The premise of the Spotlight Newspaper is to be staff and student driven, celebrating the efforts that make Cottonwood Classical one of the most amazing schools in New Mexico. This concept was shared in the Teacher Leader Networks and several others in my leadership cohort are now running their own newspapers. One even used this idea as his capstone project in Executive Leadership, creating a digital newspaper to increase better student and parent engagement in order to raise the school-grade.

What’s next? We could explore on online based magazine. One student club, dedicated to writing, has expressed interest in working on school newspapers. The future is indeed bright for our school, and thank you everyone who has participated in the Spotlight Newsletter!