

Report from Cynthia Basye, Oregon Council for the Social Studies

RE: 2009 NCSS Conference

The conference in Atlanta was great. It was an opportunity to see and hear what others in the profession are doing, researching and thinking about. I had a chance to talk with old colleagues and friends and to meet new folks from around the country. I looked at the new Carter Woodson and Social Studies Notable books for young people and bought a few. I also picked up some resources for my own work. My suitcase was definitely heavier on the trip home.

Andy, Gayle, Janelle, John and I had a wonderful evening at the Carter Presidential Library and Museum. The Atlanta setting was beautiful. I enjoyed the Museum and learned more about President Carter and his life's work.

Like Andy, I attended the NCSS Leaders Program and the evening reception. In addition to the legislative briefing and resolutions sharing, I attended a session on structuring finances. There were several points that were applicable to OCSS.

- Priorities and budgets should be in sync – be clear about your organization's priorities and then build your budget to support them
- Establish operational guidelines for budgets. Require that each new idea be attached to a way to finance it
- Be sure initiatives are sustainable
- Have a policy for leftover money from the budget
- Plan a long range budget and a short range budget. Some things that you can't afford this year may be possible down the road with some planning.



Clockwise from upper left: John Cox, Gayle Thieman, Andy Demko, Janelle Wren, and Cynthia Basye at the Reopening Reception of the Jimmy Carter Library and Museum

This was all very helpful to me as a new treasurer. In this session, at the evening dinner, and in talking with other state council members I heard about councils that had fallen apart due to finances and others that were surviving and growing in tough economic times.

I attended a session by Walter Parker in which he discussed the tension that exists in SS education between transmission and transformation of the social order. He also spoke of a goal of social studies – enlightened political engagement. He gave examples of how one could be enlightened but not engaged and engaged but not enlightened or knowledgeable about issues.

The lecture by Eric Foner was great. He presented a thoughtful overview of the evolution in Lincoln's thinking regarding slavery and the place of African Americans in the country. Sadly, it was only an hour presentation. I think most of us would have stayed all afternoon to hear him.

One of the themes I heard during research sessions, the Leadership Program, and a NCSS community meeting was the importance of bringing people into the organization and making a concerted effort to include voices that have previously not been heard. There is strength in an organization that has diversity.

I appreciate the support OCSS provided for attending this conference. Congratulations to OCSS for its Gold Star. It will be shared with the board at the December meeting.

NCSS in Atlanta—reported by Gail Vander Heide

As I sit down to write this report on NCSS in Atlanta I happily reminisce--sunshine, the delightful Georgia accents sprinkled liberally with “y’all”, huge glasses of ice cold Coca Cola, the magnificent Carter Center, a sparkling CNN billboard that rivals Times Square, and fried chicken on Miss Pittypat’s Porch. Happily, Atlanta is a sophisticated, modern city that retained its charm. John Cox and I met in baggage claim and easily navigated our way to Peachtree Street via the subway for just \$2.20! When we emerged from the escalator, there were Janelle and Cynthia to greet us and guide me to the women’s shared hotel room. Over the next four days our OCSS group met frequently and informally to compare experiences. Highlights for me included:



Cynthia Basye, Andy Demko, John Cox, and Gail Vander Heide

- A day-long Thursday clinic, “Civic Engagement in the Classroom” at the Carter Center, facilitated by presenters from the Eisenhower Library. How inspiring to take a break from class and walk by two Nobel Peace medals on the way to the drinking fountain! I received lots of useful materials (in PDF) to share with teachers and with Kate Brown, Oregon’s Secretary of State, for her civic engagement initiative. Email me requests!

- As Membership Chair of the International Assembly, I helped facilitate a record number of roundtable paper presentations on the opening day of the conference. IA membership includes scholars from 34 countries and many were in attendance. The featured speaker was Dr. Nasim Ashraf, a minister in the Pakistani government, who spoke on the UN Millennium goals and how achievement of the goals leads to better lives for women and the containment of extremism in South and Central Asia.
- At closing of the first session of the House of Delegates NCSS Executive Director Susan Griffith announced that the Oregon Council for the Social Studies was one of only nine councils who achieved Gold Star status. Thanks to ALL who contributed to the effort! The second HOD session was spent debating and voting on resolutions—a report from NCSS will follow.
- Lunch at the CNN Center with Andy, John, Cynthia, and Janelle—a lively exchange of good ideas from Leadership to implement back home!
- The sessions I attended when not on official business were outstanding—Dr. Sarah Bednarz from Texas A & M on the latest research in spatial thinking, strategies for civic engagement offered by the Center for Civic Education, and using the social studies to enhance literacy.
- Finally, and poignantly, I had the honor of accepting, on behalf the family of our colleague Tracy Faulconer, the NCSS Defense of Academic Freedom Award. It was inspiring to hear reminiscences of Tracy’s courage in supporting teachers whose rights to teach truthfully were challenged.

Atlanta was fabulous! Please consider representing OCSS at next year’s event -Denver, Colorado—in mid-November!

Report from Andy Demko, President-Elect, Oregon Council for the Social Studies

RE: 2009 National Council for the Social Studies Conference



Andy Demko at the Carter Center
Oval Office

From the time of November 12 – 15, 2009, I had the opportunity to attend the 2009 National Council for the Social Studies Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. Through this experience and opportunity, I was able to attend a wide variety of workshops, meet exhibitors all of which will aide in my understanding and teaching of Social Studies, locally and nationally. At the same time, I was allowed the chance to build on resources including colleagues and curriculum, each of which will benefit my classroom, students, school, teaching and OCSS.

During the conference, some of the amazing workshops, seminars and lectures, I was able to attended included the NCSS Affiliate Council, Associated Group and Community Leaders Program, where I went to the Accessing Funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), to Legislative Briefing, and finally to Resolutions Sharing. I was also privileged to attend the NCSS Affiliate, Community and Association Reception sponsored by Farmers Insurance, where I was able to meet many affiliate leaders from around the country and share insight, concerns and solutions to better social studies curriculum for students.

I was also fortunate enough to attend a Re-Opening Reception at the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum. I found this to be a very interesting and amazing experience not only because it was the first presidential library I had been in, but also because I was once again allowed the opportunity to interact and respond to other members of the OCSS delegation as well as members of organizations from around the country. It is a unique experience when people from around the country are able to come together for a common purpose and work to build unity and collaboration.

Beyond these two experiences, I had the chance to attend a presentation by Professor Eric Foner. Professor Foner has long been an author I have admired and being able to hear him speak not only solidified my respect of him, but also the details and depth he puts into his writings, subject matters and professionalism. Through his presentation, he discussed the presidency of Abraham Lincoln and the hour long session flew by. Professor Foner also gave great insight which can be used to help teach the importance of Abraham Lincoln and his presidency. Foner is an amazing speaker, author and historian, and one that I would recommend to anyone to attend.

One of the workshops I was able to attend was A More Perfect Union: Engaging Middle-Level Students in Constitution Study. The presenters of this workshop gave helpful insight into how to make the study of the Constitution more tangible and important to the middle-level student and also gifted the teachers with a curriculum supplement which can bolster state approved textbooks and teacher curriculum.

Examples of other workshops I attended included Anything But Boring! presented by a representative from National Geographic; Battle for the Continent: The Conquest's 250th Anniversary, related to the topic of the French and Indian War; The Sandra Day O'Connor "Our Courts" 21st Century Skills Program; and Diversity and the Indigenous Inheritance of Mexico and Peru which looked at topics including the Aztecs, Maya, and Incas.

Overall, this was an amazing conference where I felt I was able to improve my understanding of social studies curriculum and build important contacts with colleagues and NCSS leaders. It is my hope to be able to attend another conference in upcoming years and to continue to support and work with the Oregon Council for the Social Studies and the National Council for the Social Studies.