

## Editor's Notebook

I am delighted to present the January/February issue of *Social Education* which includes a special section on political polarization, guest edited by Jeremy Stoddard and Diana E. Hess.

This issue begins with Allan J. Lichtman's early assessment of the 2024 U.S. presidential election using his historically accurate Keys to the White House model. The prediction model is refreshing in that it relies solidly on the effectiveness of the governing party rather than image making and campaigning. Professor Lichtman will write an update article in October's issue, much closer to the election, so stay tuned.

In our special section, Jeremy Stoddard and Diana E. Hess provide an introduction to political polarization and social studies education. The lack of trust polarization causes has led to harmful effects in the classroom, and the authors in this issue present innovative techniques to alleviate these concerns. In their article, Joseph Kahne and John Rogers argue that social studies teachers must commit to educating towards a diverse democracy and to front these aims in their classrooms while seeking to ally themselves with principals and parents. Their strategies of framing and communicating, supporting professional learning, and expanding opportunities for student participation prepare teachers to lead thoughtful and respectful conversations centered on students' own voices and experiences.

These approaches are all the more valuable because Rachel Hutchins, in her article, "The Political Polarization of Pre-Adolescents: Affective Polarization of America's Youth" provides evidence that children in fifth through ninth grade are as politically polarized as adults. This means that the challenges of teaching in a politically polarized classroom can begin even before the middle school years. The following article by Paula McAvoy, Gregory E. McAvoy, Victoria Newton, Rachel Waltz, and Emily Grace provides concrete strategies for holding political discussions in polarized classrooms including structured deliberation, structured academic controversy, and group debate. In the subsequent article, Candace Moore and Jane C. Lo stress that classroom teachers

need to create an environment "that supports the move from mistrust to trust." They argue that giving students ample opportunities to talk to one another is the best way to create this environment. Daniel G. Krutka continues this discussion by arguing that slower contemplation and dialogue can help cure some of the ills from surface level engagement with social media.

Cathy Ruffing examines gerrymandering and its effect on political polarization. Gerrymandering is a long-standing problem and the gains largely offset each other on the national scale. Its effects, however, are all the more insidious as it can exaggerate the influence of the most extreme members of both parties, and these effects are amplified as Americans increasingly "self-sort" by living in communities that share their political leanings. Our political polarization section concludes with an article by Derek Behnke, Jeremy Stoddard, and Nathan T. Smith on the role of funding and special interests in campaigns. They examine how a series of legislation and key court rulings have drastically increased the amount of money being poured into campaigns at all levels and they provide a thoughtful lesson plan on evaluating campaign messages. These discussions can serve as a springboard for students to address political polarization in their own communities.

This issue also features rich columns. Our Teaching with Documents column, "The Legislative Process: Teaching Civics and Civil Discourse with Primary Sources," by Charles M. Flanagan, addresses using primary sources including petitions and political cartoons to teach civic engagement. Our Sources and Strategies column, "Helping Students Reflect on the Era of Yellow Journalism through Historical Cartoons and Newspapers," by Michael Apfeldorf examines the era of yellow journalism in the early twentieth century whose sensational stories feel all too current. The Library of Congress has many resources on this topic, and if you try these suggestions in your classroom, please tell them about your experience. During the last week of February, Teaching with the Library of Congress Blog at [blogs.loc.gov/teachers](https://blogs.loc.gov/teachers) will feature a post tied

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to this article. The Lessons on the Law column, "Eminent Domain, the Fifth Amendment Takings Clause, and the Rule of Law," by Stephen S. Davis, addresses the Takings Clause and limitations on the power of eminent domain and civil asset forfeiture. There are several relevant cases before the Supreme Court, and this column provides a thoughtful framework to engage students with these crucial topics.

Lastly, in our new member spotlight feature, this issue features longtime NCSS member Linda Black. These spotlights will be highlights in all

three NCSS journals as we strive to recognize and elevate the innovative work of our members.

As always, the editors of *Social Education* welcome the comments of readers on any of the contributions to this issue at [socialed@ncss.org](mailto:socialed@ncss.org). 📌



**Nancy Driver** is the Editor in Chief of Social Education.

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