History Today for Tomorrow

Overview of History Education in Rhode Island

2015
The Rhode Island Historical Society

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MUSEUM OF WORK & CULTURE
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The Rhode Island Historical Society’s Mission:
Honoring, interpreting and sharing Rhode Island’s past to enrich the present and inspire the future.

Theater Curtain from the Providence Theater, c. 1812
Rhode Island Historical Society Collections
OVERVIEW OF HISTORY EDUCATION IN RHODE ISLAND
HISTORY EDUCATION IS AT A CRITICAL JUNCTURE IN 2015.

Due to cuts in federal funding, professional development opportunities for history teachers have been eliminated, which means that they are not as prepared as they might be to face challenging terrain for 21st century education and accountability. Additionally, teachers find it difficult to devote adequate time to history because, unlike English Language Arts (ELA)/literacy or math, social studies, which includes history, geography, economics, and civics & government, is not tested at the state level.

But, when students study history, their performance improves across all subjects, including ELA and mathematics. When they engage with primary sources, students become equipped with 21st-century skills, like the ability to think critically and communicate effectively, that are crucial to their successful performance in school.

Moreover, when we provide our students with effective history education, we prepare them to excel as college students, as members of the workforce, and as citizens engaged in their communities.
Primary sources and the “informational texts” required by Common Core standards (defined as argument or persuasion, expository, literary nonfiction, and procedural texts) are the history museum’s bread-and-butter, but funding cuts have made it difficult for students to gain access to these materials through traditional field trips. Further, teachers have little time to locate and evaluate resources, particularly those pertaining to local history. As a result, students miss out on the opportunity to learn about the history of where they live and develop strong ties to their community.

At the same time, organizations in the history and heritage sector in Rhode Island - which house the very materials that teachers are looking for - are struggling to strengthen their connection to younger audiences.

We know that history and heritage organizations are valuable economic assets that hold the potential to unify communities and instill civic pride and engagement. By reinforcing and building new connections between schools and their local historic sites, we can grow the sector while simultaneously offering solutions to the crisis in history education.
Over the past decade, the RIHS has:

- given **tours to 41,000+ students** at the John Brown House Museum in Providence and the Museum of Work & Culture in Woonsocket

- offered **38,000 hours of professional development** to teachers

- served **150 K-12 teachers** through TAH, who in turn served **12,000 students**

- offered **2 NEH Summer Institutes for K-12 teachers** across the U.S. on the role of slavery in New England commerce

- provided, for free, **fifty lesson plans and hundreds of digitized primary sources** on the RIHS website

At the Rhode Island Historical Society, we hold that effective history education, taught by well-trained teachers using rich historical materials, helps students to build 21st-century skills, encourages them to feel empathy for others, and instills in them a sense of pride in Rhode Island.
At the Rhode Island Historical Society, we are committed to strengthening history education in Rhode Island in the following ways:

- Continue to develop RI history and civics curriculum with the Rhode Island Department of Education and local school districts;

- Expand online resources through the continued digitization of primary sources and explore the potential of an online RI history textbook;

- Grow the All-Ability Inclusive Program at the Museum of Work & Culture to include the John Brown House Museum, as well as implementing programming for those with visual and hearing impairment; and

- Create an Anchor Schools Program in which a new district is chosen each year to be the RIHS School District—with an accompanying suite of resources for students, teachers, and local historic sites.
To fully and sustainably support our teachers and provide enriching experiences for students, we need the help of local and state officials, funders, donors, parents, and community members.

**Will you help Rhode Island teachers make a meaningful difference in the lives of our students -- our future voters, policy-makers, neighbors, and community leaders?**

**How you can help:**

- **Support the RIHS’s endowment**, the draw from which can provides funds for professional development for teachers, delivers successful, hands-on programming for students, and offers rich materials for effective history instruction;

- **Donate to the RIHS Annual Fund**, which allows our staff to continue their work developing materials and programs that benefit our state’s students and teachers;

- **Volunteer in our** to help run our school programs in our museums or in the classroom; or even

- **Ask the teachers at your local school** how you can help support history education in their classroom.

**Never before has it been so clear that our future depends on our past.**

For more information about how you can help, please contact:
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