

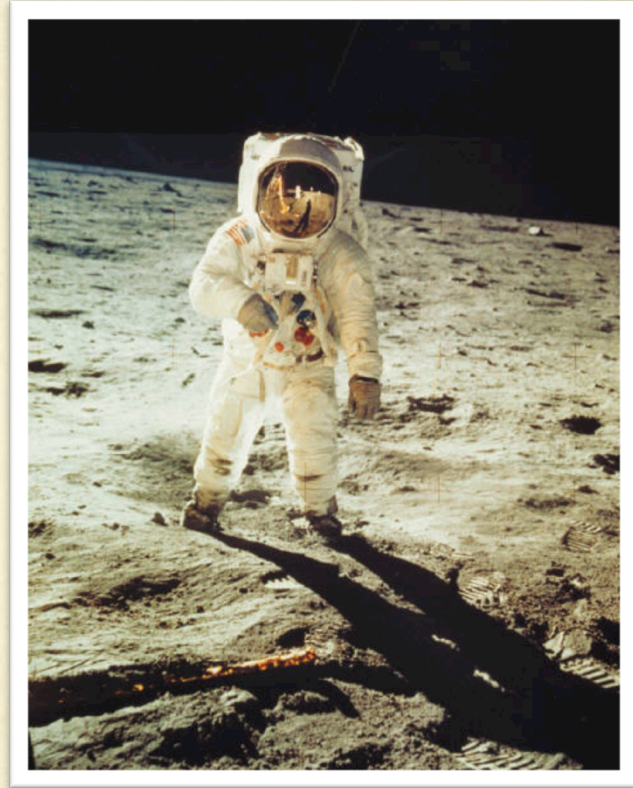
Build Skills by Doing History

Based from an article by Chauncey Monte-Sano

There's a way for students to achieve the thinking, reading, writing and history expectations laid out in the common core.

No Child Left Behind has profoundly limited the teaching of history over the past 10 years.

Now, the Common Core State Standards offers an opportunity to reverse this decline by giving history a more prominent place in the school curriculum alongside literacy goals.



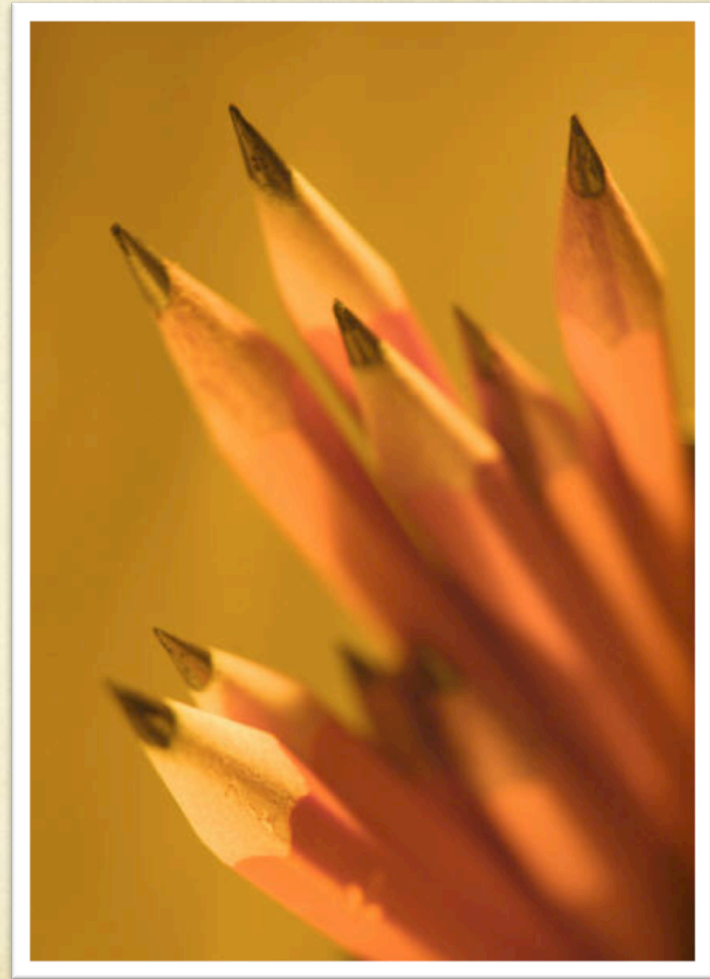


Common Core standards state that students in grades 6-12 “have to become adept at gathering information, evaluating sources, and citing material accurately, reporting findings from their research and analysis of sources in a clear and cogent manner”

NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) found that

88% of 12th graders could not “communicate reasoned interpretations of past events, using historical evidence effectively to support their positions”

83% of 8th graders did not meet a similar expectation in history.



NAEP exam asked 12th graders to read two primary sources and “explain how events of the Second World War inspired many African-Americans to argue for civil rights at home.”



Only 22% of 12th graders made a connection between the war and civil rights for African- Americans at home while referencing the sources.

NAEP writing exam presents comparable, if equally disheartening, results.



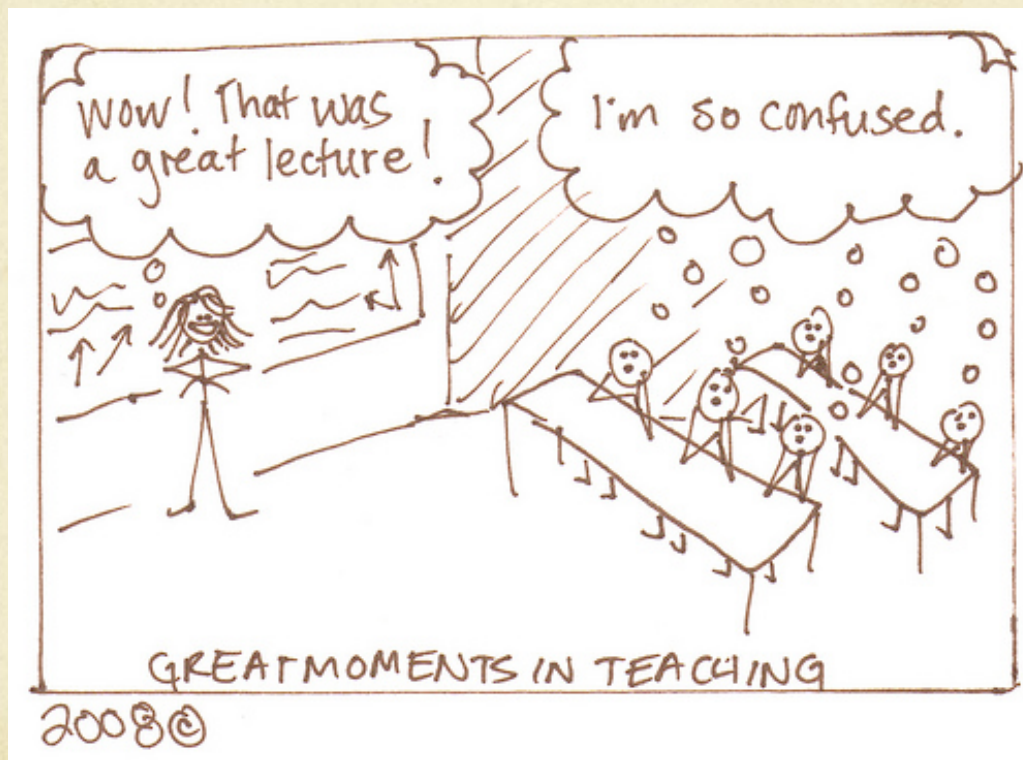
Only 24% of 12th graders and 33% of 8th graders are “competent” writers

Given the Common Core's emphasis on thinking and literacy in history, this is a good time to think strategically about what we can do to support students' development as thinkers and writers.

These two challenges don't have to be addressed piecemeal or added to the long list of demands facing schools.



One thing is clear: Students don't improve when they practice writing without feedback or explicit instruction, or if they only experience lecture and textbook exercises.



<http://www.wornthrough.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/2008-09-29-teaching.jpg>

Instead, when students are explicitly taught argumentative writing at the same time that they're involved in **doing** history, they improve.



http://199407300.r.worldcdn.net/library/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2014/05/silent_study_01.jpg

What does this mean
and what does it look like in classrooms?

Doing history means letting students experience the interpretive nature of history by giving them opportunities:

- to read historical sources
- consider multiple perspectives
- evaluate the reliability of sources
- construct their own interpretations or arguments about the past based on this evidence.

Present history as an inquiry- oriented subject by posing central questions that can be answered in multiple ways



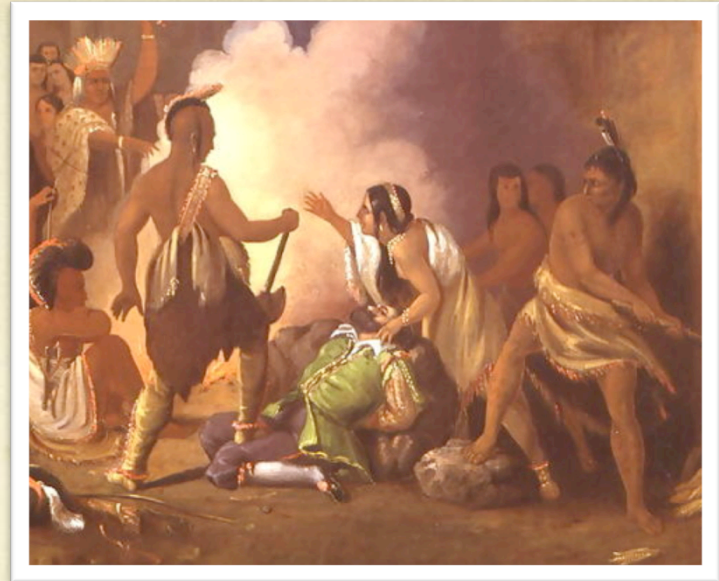
http://lazerbrody.typepad.com/photos/uncategorized/trail_of_tears.jpg

Central questions can guide a single lesson or a series of lessons. One successful teacher used central questions to guide individual lessons such as “Who is the savage?”

Questions can range from the concrete,

“Did Pocahontas rescue John Smith?”

— to the more abstract —



<http://www.1st-art-gallery.com/thumbnail/131900/1/Pocahontas-Saving-The-Life-Of-Captain-John-Smith-C-1836-40.jpg>



“Electricity and women’s work: Who really benefited, and when?”

<http://catapult.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/lesbian-feminist-choir.jpg>

Another successful teacher, Mr. Lyle, focused an entire semester on one question:

Why did the Civil War happen?



<http://www.marketplace.co.uk/images/us-civil-war.jpg>

After exploring the realities of the Civil War, Lyle used three units

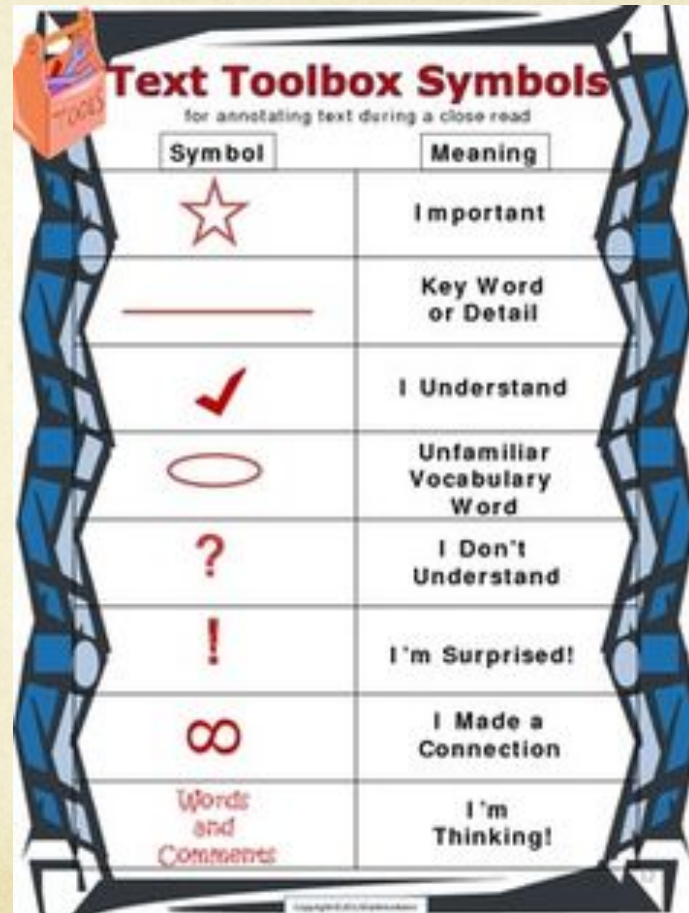
- the American Revolution
- the opponents and defenders of slavery
- Westward expansion and sectionalism

to investigate why the Civil War happened.

Asking questions is a start, but we must also give students a chance to investigate by structuring opportunities to read historical sources that present multiple perspectives.

To support students' reading, Lyle taught them to write. He pushed students to be active readers and to interact with text by requiring them to annotate every reading. This included:

- making margin notes
- underlining
- circling
- adding question marks in and around each text.



Symbol	Meaning
☆	Important
—	Key Word or Detail
✓	I Understand
○	Unfamiliar Vocabulary Word
?	I Don't Understand
!	I'm Surprised!
∞	I Made a Connection
Words and Comments	I'm Thinking!

<https://s-media-cache-a0.pinimg.com/236x/5a/03/80/5a03801bab0be267e781069740c9f086.jpg>

In other readings, the teacher used SOAPS questions (i.e., questions that ask about the subject, occasion, audience, purpose and speaker) with many document sets to help students recognize authors' intentions, and to consider who might have heard or read the text originally.

Analyzing Primary Sources using SOAPS!

Directions: Using the supplied primary document, answer the following questions in the graphic organizer below.

Subject	Occasion	Audience	Purpose	Speaker
<ul style="list-style-type: none">What is the topic or idea being addressed in this source?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">What is the time and place that this source comes from?What historical events occurred during this time period?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Who is the document being written for?Who does the writer or artist want to read, see, or hear this document?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Why would the author write this piece?What did they hope to accomplish in this letter/speech /cartoon?What kind of argument is the speaker making – are they supporting something, trying to change something, or explaining something?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Who is the author or creator of the document?What is his or her occupation?What is his or her historical significance?

One easily accessible resource, “Historical Thinking Matters”, offers ways to structure students’ reading of historical sources so they can comprehend and analyze.



The header features a large, stylized 'HMT' logo in a dark green, serif font. To the right of the logo is a black and white photograph of a city street with tall buildings. The buildings have vertical signs that read 'STATE', 'VICTOR', 'AMERICA', 'EMPIRES', and 'COLONIAL'. Below the logo and photo, the text 'historical thinking matters' is written in a smaller, dark green, serif font.

Welcome to **Historical Thinking Matters**, a website focused on key topics in U.S. history, that is designed to teach students how to critically read primary sources and how to critique and construct historical narratives. Read **how to use** this site.

student investigations

Four investigations of central topics from post-civil war U.S. history, with activities that foster historical thinking and encourage students to form reasoned conclusions about the past

spanish american war

scopes trial

social security

rosa parks

why historical thinking matters

An introduction to the site's approach using documents to explore conflicting accounts of the 1775 Lexington Green skirmish

teacher materials & strategies

Resources for instructors, pre-service teachers and teacher-educators offering classroom materials and strategies, examples of student and teacher work, and supplementary sources

Stanford University's [“Reading Like a Historian”](#) curriculum engages students in historical inquiry. Each lesson revolves around a central historical question and features sets of primary documents designed for groups of students with diverse reading skills and abilities.

The screenshot displays the Stanford History Education Group website. The header features the group's logo, social media icons, and a navigation menu with links to Home, Curriculum, Assessment, Projects, Publications, and About. The main content area is titled 'CURRICULUM' and includes a testimonial from Matthew McDonald, a teacher in Woodbridge, VA, who praises the lessons for his 6th and 7th-grade U.S. History classes. Below this, the 'Reading Like A Historian' section is highlighted, featuring a video of students working in a classroom and a 'VIEW LESSON PLANS' button. The text describes the curriculum's focus on historical inquiry, primary documents, and reading strategies like sourcing, contextualizing, corroborating, and close reading.

STANFORD
HISTORY
EDUCATION GROUP

CHARTING THE FUTURE
OF TEACHING THE PAST

HOME CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT PROJECTS PUBLICATIONS ABOUT

CURRICULUM

READING LIKE A HISTORIAN

Intro Materials

U.S. History Lessons

World History Lessons

Testimonials

HISTORICAL THINKING MATTERS

Matthew McDonald - Woodbridge, VA
I love using your lessons in my classroom! I teach both 6th and 7th-grade U.S. History in... [read more »](#)

Home > Curriculum > Reading Like A Historian

Reading Like A Historian

VIEW LESSON PLANS

The Reading Like a Historian curriculum engages students in historical inquiry. Each lesson revolves around a central historical question and features sets of primary documents designed for groups of students with diverse reading skills and abilities.

This curriculum teaches students how to investigate historical questions by employing reading strategies such as sourcing, contextualizing, corroborating, and close reading. Instead of memorizing historical facts, students evaluate the trustworthiness of multiple perspectives on historical issues. They learn to make historical claims backed by documentary evidence.

“SAS Curriculum Pathways” is a free resource for teachers and their students. Allowing teachers to bring high quality educational technology into their lessons.

The screenshot shows the SAS Curriculum Pathways website. At the top, the header includes the site name, navigation links for 'Professional Development', 'Standards', 'Favorites', and 'Community', and user options for 'Sign Up', 'Log In', a 'QL #' field, and a 'Go' button. A search bar is located on the left. Below it, a 'Browse Resources' section lists categories: English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Spanish, and More Cool Tools. A central banner features a group of four diverse students and the text 'Interactive, standards-based resources in the core disciplines', with a 'Sign Up' button and 'FREE for Students and Educators' text. To the right of the banner is a list of links: Sign Up, View A Demo, System Requirements, Professional Development, and Individual Student Accounts: FAQ, followed by social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, RSS, YouTube, and Pinterest. Below the banner, there is a section for 'SAS Writing Navigator' which describes it as a free suite of tools for the writing process, available on the App Store and Google Chrome Store. A 'Questions about mobile?' link with a smartphone icon is also present. On the bottom right, a 'Pathfinders Blog' section shows recent posts about mobile learning and the benefits of Chromebooks and iPads in classrooms.

SAS Curriculum Pathways Sign Up Log In QL # Go

Professional Development Standards Favorites Community

Search for Resources

Browse Resources

- English Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- Spanish
- More Cool Tools

Questions about mobile?

Interactive, standards-based resources in the core disciplines

Sign Up
FREE for Students and Educators

- Sign Up
- View A Demo
- System Requirements
- Professional Development
- Individual Student Accounts: FAQ

Facebook Twitter RSS YouTube Pinterest

SAS Writing Navigator

Available for free, the SAS Writing Navigator is a suite of tools that provides guidance and support throughout the writing process: planning, drafting, revising, and publishing.

Available in the **App Store** and **Google Chrome Store**.

To see what else we've been working on, check out the **News** section of our web site.

Pathfinders Blog

Recent Posts

Mobile, Mobile Everywhere: Learning Anytime

Mobile devices are arriving in classrooms around the world in soaring numbers. Chromebooks and iPads are everywhere -- from 1:1 ...

A natural next step is to discuss inquiry questions and relevant historical sources in small groups or as a whole class.

Another free resource for teachers to start a group discussion is Poll Everywhere. Let's try it!

The screenshot shows the Poll Everywhere website with a dark background and a crowd of people. The navigation bar at the top includes the Poll Everywhere logo, links for Plans & Pricing, Take a tour, Help & FAQ, Log in, and a Sign up button. The main heading is "Live Audience Participation" in large white text. Below it, a subtitle reads "Poll Everywhere lets you engage your audience or class anywhere in real time". Two primary call-to-action buttons are present: a red "Create your first poll" button with the subtext "Takes 30 seconds. No sign up required." and a "Watch our 1 min video" button. On the right, text says "Use your phone to text a vote now!" with an arrow pointing to a smartphone. The smartphone screen displays a "New Message" interface with "To: 22333" and a "Cancel" button. In the foreground, a tablet displays a poll question: "Did you know Poll Everywhere offers a PowerPoint add-in? Seamless, baby." with two response options: "Respond at PollEv.com/ballot" and "Text **BALLOT** to 22333 once to join, then **A, B, C, or D**". Below the options, a partial response is visible: "Duh. I use it all the time." with a progress bar showing 26%.

Teach argumentative writing

Giving students opportunities to **do** history can expand their view of history and prime them for learning how to communicate arguments in writing.



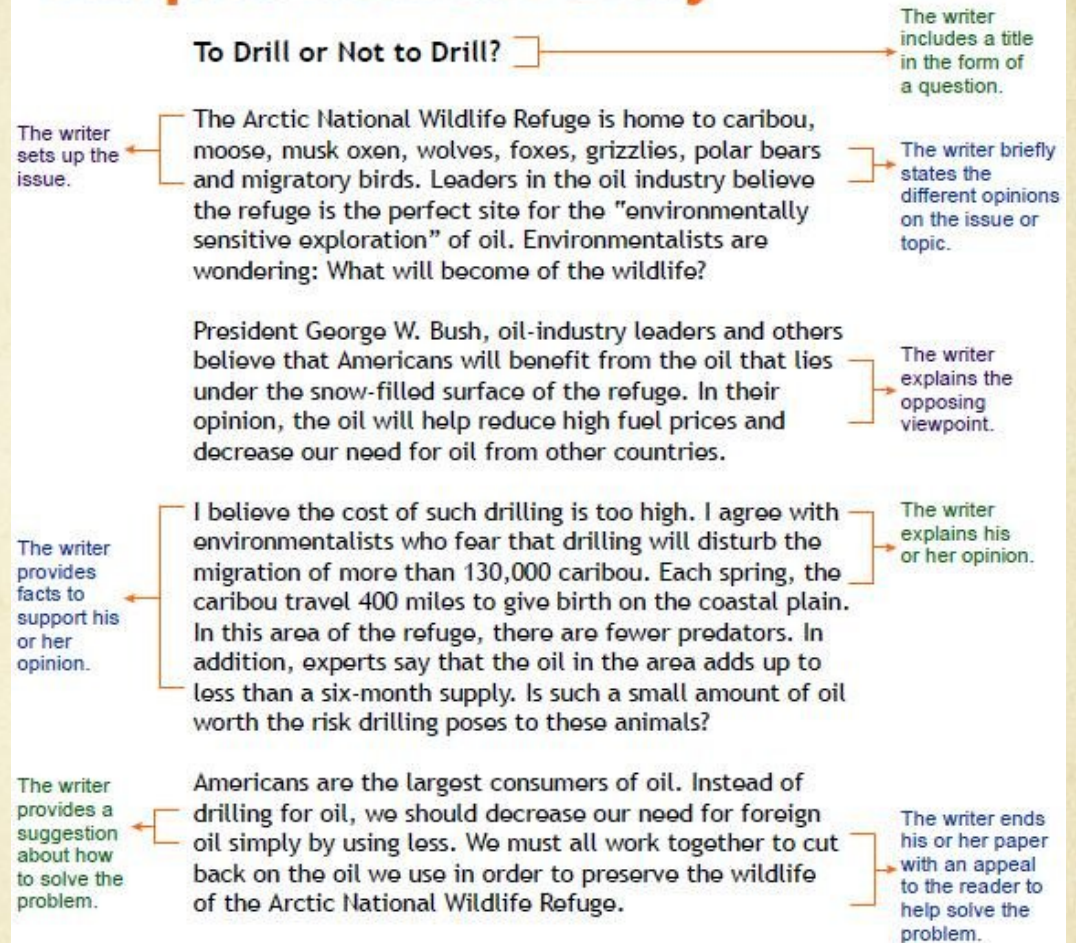
http://www.21stcenturyschools.com/excited_students.jpg

Explain to students what an argumentative essay should include.

In other words, make your expectations explicit. This can be done with a visual display (e.g., an outline) that follows a specific format, or a representation of what makes an ideal essay.

Provide explicit instruction in particular aspects of writing and show them what good writing looks like.

Sample Persuasive Essay



Learning history and argumentative writing is key to developing analytical ways of thinking that prepare students for college, career, and democratic life.

The good news is that schools can achieve both of these goals with the same effort. Learning history can lead to literacy gains if students learn by “**doing**” history.



Helpful Links

- “Historical Thinking Matters”
- <http://historicalthinkingmatters.org>
- “Reading Like a Historian”
- <https://sheg.stanford.edu/rlh>
- “SAS Curriculum Pathways”
- <https://www.sascurriculumpathways.com/portal/>
- “Poll Everywhere”
- <http://www.polleverywhere.com/>