



**America 250 | CT Commission  
Education Subcommittee Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, August 22, 2023**

**Chair:** Stephen Armstrong

**Attendees:** All Virtual

Commission Members:

- Stephen Armstrong, Committee Chair
- Denise Merrill, Commission Chair
- Deborah Schander
- Sally Whipple
- Allison Norrie
- Nichole Pitruzello
- Tony Roy
- Bilal Sekou
- Rebecca Taber
- Robert Townes
- Fiona Vernal
- Matthew Warshauer
- Tracey Wilson

Subcommittee members:

- Daisha Brabham
- Ingrid Canady
- Matthew Farley
- Richard Hersh
- Danielle Johnson
- Nicole Jones

CTH Staff:

- Gregg Mangan
- Cyndi Tolosa

**The meeting began at 4:00 PM**

**Minutes:**

Subcommittee members introduced themselves and Stephen Armstrong invited Dr. Matthew Warshauer to provide an overview of a three-day, live-streamed conference proposed for March 2024 at Central Connecticut State University for an onsite audience of 250 students.

- Day One
  - Audience: Middle and high school students and teachers
  - Goals: Plant seeds of interest to germinate over the years leading up to and beyond 2026; engage students in researching topics for CT History Day.
  - Topics: How we have wrestled with the ideas and ideals of the Declaration of Independence; focus on Connecticut sites and resources
- Day Two
  - Audience: Middle and high school students and teachers
  - Goals: Raise awareness of ethnic and global connections to the US Declaration of Independence
  - Topics: International uses of the US Declaration of Independence
- Day Three

- o Audience: History partners, corporate foundations, educators
- o Goals: Build interest and excitement around the students' discussions and ideas to motivate history groups, funders, and educators to provide support for programs and activities that continue to address student needs and interests
- o Topics: Review of first two conference days and ideas for subsequent years

Committee members responded with ideas:

- Connect the Declaration to the genealogy of human rights.
- Create a rubric/guideline for ideas.
- Encourage students to practice civic engagement by bringing their conference experiences back to their own town commissions.
- Consider deepening the students' experiences with activities that build on the conference, including complex conversations about the Declaration, rights, and enslavement.
- Some towns have asked their Councils to recommit to the Declaration, sparking conversations. Students at the conference may be inspired to do the same.
- Consider amplifying the students' conference experience. Are there conference components that can be used in towns across the state.
- The Declaration was a petition – learning about petitioning is a transferable skill for students.
- Pair younger students with high school students to expand their thinking.
- Encourage students to explore and share their own declarations – what does it mean to me? Is it relevant to my life? What actions can I take to build my agency?

Dr. Warshauer will send the proposal to the subcommittee with notes. In his opinion, a positive outcome would be having subcommittees form smaller groups to assist with the conference.

Steve Armstrong suggested that the conference could support the subcommittee's mission and posed the question: Should the subcommittee create resources or support others in resource creation? Members shared ideas:

- We should point people to resources, stimulate conversations, and provide people and groups with ideas for meaningful activities.
- We can connect people to content resources and encourage lifelong learning.
- We can support student choice and voice and champion events such as the Declaration of Independence Conference.
- Providing ways for people to look beyond the traditional documentation for the revolutionary period will generate a more inclusive narrative and spark discussions about how the issues and ideals of the 18th century spark discussion today.
- Ensure that we have something for everyone so that everyone feels part of the commemoration.
- Model productive and civil discussions.

Cyndi Tolosa shared a form for submitting resources to the Commission and said that the Subcommittee could have space on the website for resources.

Steve Armstrong shared a proposed mission statement drafted by Tony Roy and said that he will talk to each Subcommittee member about their organization's perspectives on the group's work.

**The meeting ended at 5:15 PM**

**Next Meeting: TBD**

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