

250 Foundational Working Group Goals

In 2018, as early preparations for the Semiquincentennial began to take shape, the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) began working with a dedicated group of volunteers to generate several broad aspirations for what the 250th anniversary of the United States can accomplish for the field and for the public.

In addition to working directly with a group of volunteers, we also held listening sessions at several national conferences—including AASLH, National Council on Public History, Association of African American Museums, and the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums—to help ensure these goals spoke to the needs of our field.

These goals, outlined below, helped to guide early planning by the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission and other stakeholders, and several of the ideas generated in this project were included in the Commission's [Inspiring the American Spirit report](#) detailing their vision for the commemoration.

- Make history relevant to every American, every day (see the Relevance Working Group white paper, beginning on page 2)
- Tell inclusive stories about the American past
- Increase funding for history
- Enhance the public's engagement with history collections (see the Collections Working Group white paper, beginning on page 7)
- Emphasize the importance of history education (see the Education Working Group white paper, beginning on page 14)

As 250th planning shifts into a new, more public-facing phase, AASLH will continue to update our goals so they most appropriately speak to the needs of our field and the current moment.

AASLH 250th Anniversary Working Group – Relevance
White Paper
“Emphasize history’s relevance to every American, everyday”
Co – chairs: Noelle Trent & Tim Grove

BACKGROUND

The AASLH 250th Anniversary Relevance Working Group composed a committee of diverse backgrounds to discuss, debate, and create an aspirational field guide to stimulate, inspire, and provoke the greater history field as it prepares for the 250th anniversary of the United States of America.

The committee organized around several key assumptions, however, the most critical was the definition of American. The term American is defined here with a broad inclusive intent. American is a self-identifier, and is applied without regard to race, class, gender and sexual identity, immigration status, or other derivative exclusionary labels. Relevance is an inclusive topic, meant to reflect the diversity of the American demographic, with the purposes of all people seeing themselves reflected and connected to its history.

This guide offers suggestions and approaches to creating a more relevant historical space for the 250th anniversary. The guide offers clarity on its definition, and inspiration to the field.

2026, offers a unique opportunity for the field to address the public’s misunderstandings regarding the discipline of history as well as to better demonstrate history’s relevance to communities and individuals across the country.

RELEVANCE

History relevance is the meaningful and purposeful connection of history to current society and its citizens. It takes into account the diverse identities and communities which compose the American public; and seeks to address the seminal question “why should history matter to me?”

The field of history has evolved greatly since the bicentennial, 1976. However, the American public’s perception of history remains rather narrow. History is perceived as a “luxury” field rather than a necessity like STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). As James Baldwin stated in 1965,

History, as nearly no one seems to know, is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all

that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities, and our aspirations.

The challenge of relevance is to push forward Baldwin's concept by inextricably linking history to American education and the country's self-image. This may include linking history to significant current events like climate change, voting, and the economy.

In order to successfully meet this challenge, history organizations are encouraged to broaden their approach. One recommendation is for organizations to expand their definition of universal themes/ concepts like freedom, equality, and justice to include a multiplicity of perspectives. The inclusion of multiple perspectives acknowledges history's complexity. However in engaging with this approach, sites are encouraged to use alternative terms besides "difficult history." The term "difficult history" can appear dismissive of the legacy and culture of historically marginalized communities. Also, historically marginalized communities, view their histories as beautiful, heroic, and complicated in contrast to many who view that same history as difficult.

The founding of the United States of America was an experiment, there have been successes and challenges. Complicating the notion of American history compels organizations to engage in a deliberative approach that would expand the public's understanding as well as expand the conversation.

A challenge for the national commemoration will be balancing tone: telling truth but offering hope. There must be a change. The field should emphasize that the addition of new voices to the national narrative enhances not detracts from the overall story. Balance means acknowledging celebratory aspects, and encouraging critical thinking with the goal to foster deeper understanding of decisions and actions made in the past. Resilience and empathy become key concepts within both interpretation and community engagement.

GOALS

Taking into consideration the definition of relevance, the goals for 2026 are for the public to:

- Recognize history's complexity – there are multiple perspectives on events and people from the past. Expand the public's narrow view of history.
- Understand that historical interpretation changes with new evidence – understand the process of historical thinking.
- Become more comfortable with uncomfortable topics from the past; more openness to engage in dialogue about them. "Real talk"
- Feel that their story is important and part of history; feel comfortable engaging with history.

IMPLEMENTATION

Suggested National projects & programming

- Sites of Revolution
 - 250 sites of revolution, either per state or whole country that tell America's complex story from different perspectives. A broad definition of revolution could be used, and states could nominate their own sites. (An estimated 4 sites per state and the District of Columbia)
- Objects of Revolution –
 - 250 objects from collections around the nation that are similarly identified and organized like the sites of revolution.
- National databases on historical context
 - Databases would provide historical context on major themes and offer suggestions for programming ideas. Suggested themes could include: immigration, freedom and equality. This would be by professionals for professionals.
- National billboard campaign promoting historical thinking
 - Campaign would challenge the public's assumptions regarding historical topics and provide historical evidence from collections around the country.
- National History Matters Campaign
 - Massive media campaign with diverse voices stating why history is important to them. Similar to the "Got Milk?" Campaign.
- Historical Thinking Education effort
 - A concentrated national effort for a year where history organizations focus on teaching historical thinking to all ages. This could include, but not limited to monthly curator talks, behind-the-scenes tours, teacher workshops.
- National symposia
 - A series of symposia hosted at sites around the country featuring a well respected and diverse group of historians who focus on the major themes of American history. This could be hosted by the state history museums.
- History documentaries
 - The production of history documentaries by major filmmakers covering major themes in American history.
- Media launch of 2026 commemoration
 - Create a media "moment" around the launch of the 2026 commemoration that takes over the national conversation in the vein of the 1619 Project by the *New York Times*.
- Revolutionary community sign

- National campaign to have communities post signs where revolutionary moments in the nation's history occurred. For instance, Oakland California where the Black Panthers were founded, or the creation of settlement houses in Chicago by Jane Addams.
- National Network of liberty trees
 - This could be a national network of interactive art installations where people answer the question "what does liberty mean to you?" and hang it on a liberty tree
 - The alternative is that people are encouraged to plant liberty trees (elms or other indigenous trees) throughout the country.
- Digital Gaming
 - The creation of digital video games and/or augmented, virtual reality related to the anniversary.
- Comic Book series
 - Drawing inspiration from classic comics, this would use historic icons to create compelling graphic retellings of known and unknown stories like Dolores Huerta, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. etc.
- Pacing guide
 - A suggested pacing guide for professionals that would address trends in nomenclature and scholarship which frequently changes over time. IE enslaved vs. slave.
- Database
 - A program for our peers
- Citizen debates
 - National series of citizen debates on certain rights, so people can articulate what rights are relevant to today. People would deliberate on whether they would be willing to stake everything on fighting for these particular rights.

Best Practice

- Broaden the definitions of history to create a more inclusive definition relevant to a wide group from Native Americans to recent immigrants.
- Cultivate and sustain relationships with local community organizations and community leaders
- Seek to define community in a variety of ways within the digital space, at the grassroots level, etc.
- Find
- Create outreach to your community beyond the traditional methods.
 - Employ social media,
 - Seek to connect current events relevant to site's history in variety of ways.
- Examine intersectionality of community to create unique programming
 - Sites are encouraged to define the unique attributes of their community and its demographic by bringing various groups of people together to celebrate the community through bake sale or community potluck.

- Examine how tourism can be a relevant and viable economic means to engage a larger audience with communities and small museums.
- Use the digital space in creative ways to link collections and interpretation to relevant issues.

Aspiration Field Guide
AASLH 250th Anniversary Task Force
Collections Working Group White Paper

Executive Summary

As the nation's semi-quincennial approaches, America's collecting institutions are faced not only with the question of how to commemorate the country's 250th anniversary, but more importantly, how to engage the public with history collections while moving the field forward. Understandably, the landscape around how these repositories approach their work will look vastly different in 2026 than it did in 1976, 1876, or 1776. The tools with which to complete our work have changed extraordinarily in recent decades, and the need for public access has grown as society and technology have changed. No longer is preservation for its own sake sufficient. Rather, repositories must find more ways to facilitate meaningful interaction between the public and their collections. In order to deliver on our promises to act in the public trust, the nation's museums, archives, and historic sites must also move the needle forward on how and what we are collecting. A more collaborative approach in terms of cataloging, best practices, and language standards must be promoted across the wide spectrum of collecting institutions if we hope to substantially improve access to the general public. The work cannot end there, however. Our collections not only need to be accessible, but also need to reflect the nation they document and serve. The United States has always been a place of diversity; something that has not always been readily apparent in the collections we have saved. Moving forward, our nation's museums, archives, and historic sites – both large and small – must work to capture the country's past, present, and future in all of its forms.

Narrative

America's semi-quincennial occurs at a time of dynamic transformation across our societal spectrum.

Attempts to define, assimilate, and contextualize the changes place demands upon historians, curators, and collecting institutions to provide perspective and comprehension, and assure authenticity, at an ever-increasing speed.

The quest for definition at a time of dizzying complexity redounds to our collecting institutions in that the public need for the services they provide is in greater demand, and the collections they preserve, and to which they provide access, are ever more vital to understanding the forces that influence our lives.

The challenges exist within the traditional framework of the collecting community – our museums, libraries, and historical societies.

In the last 50 years, we have experienced a paradigm shift pertaining to our records, our artistic expressions, and our ability to capture and present them to our target audiences large and small.

"We have statements in an object language about subject descriptions of data and token codes for the data. We also have statements in a meta language describing the data relationships and transformations, and ought/is relations between norm and data."

~~ David Griffel, Stuart McIntosh
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Center for International Studies, 1967

When the United States observed the nation's bicentennial in 1976, the term "meta data" was 8 years old, but hardly in wide circulation.

Most people were more familiar with the idea, expressed a year later at the Moderna Museet, in Stockholm, Sweden, and attributed to the artist Andy Warhol:

"In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes."

The two quotes, coming from different directions, comprise, albeit in an inchoate manner, an off-shoot of the 1964 observation by social theorist Marshall McLuhan in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, that:

"The medium is the message."

Each individual statement is, in essence, an attempt to define or understand the incipient changes occurring in society and in technology.

Our known universe presents challenges with which there is familiarity. Across our cultural disciplines, the unearthed artifact, the discovered manuscript, the found artwork, or the undisclosed document are tangible pieces of evidence that help us define, understand, and appreciate our world. They could be collected, housed, preserved, and studied in time-honored manners.

But, as the three quotes augur, times are changing. As the pace of change quickened, our society struggled to maintain perspective, find context, and foster appreciation for the expressions of human endeavor that held lasting value – even if that immediate lasting value was consumed in 15 minutes.

The perceived but not fully understood challenges emerging 50 years ago are now raging around us, demanding judgments in our world of known collections, yes, but also increasingly in the realm of the unknown.

In our unending efforts to identify, appreciate, preserve and share the products of human endeavor, we can admit to challenges worthy of our attention and energy for America's 250th anniversary.

Two such challenges are related. Each has subsets that can comprise a worthy mesh.

In the pre-digital world, especially pertaining to the known disciplines, techniques exist to preserve our individual and societal expressions. For our purposes, however, preservation is insufficient. If we lack the means – and perhaps the motivation – to provide appropriate access to that which we preserve, then we risk hampering the appreciation and education that can come from considering the works in the full panoply.

Access can be assisted in the adoption of common language and definitions, where possible, such that comprehension is assisted in areas such as cataloging, curating, and presenting.

In that the Internet has become a dominant means by which information can be shared nearly instantaneously worldwide, defining and adopting a common language will facilitate communication, which should lead to comprehension and appreciation.

The standards that lie within reach are deployable in what we regard as the known world of collections – those organizations and institutions, such as major museums and libraries, whose missions and holdings are broadly known and appreciated.

The acceptance and use of a common language and methodologies can make it possible to draw forth the unknown, the hidden collections of traditional works, whether from historical societies, families, churches, corporations, or social organizations, that can provide further context to our appreciation of our past and present forces.

The new and unknown universes present a challenge that this Working Group also acknowledges.

The digital world that has inundated us with meta-data, is also swamping us with challenges to process, describe, preserve, catalog, and provide access to human expression that never becomes tangible.

And where the traditional works make physical demands for storage and presentation space, the digital works challenge us as creators and curators to process and preserve them appropriately. At the same time, curation becomes a daunting task.

The traditional hidden collections are largely not in view. They await discovery and appreciation.

The modern hidden collection exists many times in plain sight, as close as the nearest keyboard and computer mouse. But, here, too, they await discovery and appreciation.

Efforts are under way to address what can be considered an emergent need. Tools are in development, and the commercial and non-profit forces seem poised for collaboration. Success in this area would transcend providing history organizations, regardless of their sizes and budgets, the tools to collect to their missions, including modern and digital materials. Success would include the development and deployment of the means to preserve and to provide access in perpetuity.

As a nuts-and-bolts consideration, a key component would begin with cross-disciplinary agreements on a standard vocabulary and a field-wide subject heading system.

The work cannot be accomplished in a vacuum. We can begin at any time by convening the respective stakeholders to foster cooperation and collaboration for the greater good of smoother communication and collections access. During the commemoration of the semi-quincentennial, the Commission can showcase the progress achieved – knowing that the work has barely begun.

Desired Outcomes

America's semi-quincentennial provides a unique opportunity to reengage visitors with the rich trove of objects and archival materials preserved in our nation's museums, libraries, and historic sites. While these materials can and will certainly be used to interpret the history of America's founding, this is a time when we need to look beyond that singular use and expand the narrative around collections to achieve a series of desired outcomes.

Outcome – America's museums, archives, and historic sites steward what they have

This desired outcome would involve the following steps and solutions:

- Attention to and funding for the cataloguing and digitization of collections held by museums, archives, and historic sites.
- Best practices generated, shared and modeled around collections storage, cataloguing, deaccessioning and other topics.
- Focus on collaborative collecting initiatives to facilitate loans and increased access to underutilized collections.
- Development of models focused on organizational sustainability regarding collections and collections care, including repatriation efforts.
- Encouraging, facilitating, and supporting inventive and collaborative digital projects to engage audiences, encourage discovery, and facilitate new ways of interacting with collections within and across institutions.

Outcome – America's museums, archives, and historic sites collect for the future

This desired outcome would involve the following steps and solutions:

- Launch of a “History is Still Happening” initiative that focuses on collecting around recent history and making resources available for collecting and recording future events.
- Best practices generated, shared and modeled around saving born-digital material and recovering material saved on obsolete technology.
- Initiatives to help the public know how to save their own objects/family history and educate around why and how museums collect.

Outcome – America’s museums, archives, and historic sites use objects to tell new stories in new ways

This desired outcome would involve the following steps and solutions:

- Best practices generated, shared and modeled around material culture-centered interpretation.
- Programs developed that use objects and archives to facilitate civic discourse about American identity, empathy, and other topics.
- Attention to and funding for addressing collections imbalances and aiding museums, archives, and historic sites in creating more representative, fuller and diverse collections.

Moonshot

History is Still Happening Initiative

History is happening now, all around us. It is not just something that happened 100 years or more ago. The Collections Working Group encourages the public to interact with history and collections, and urges collecting institutions to focus on “collecting modern.” By collecting now, we can ensure a future. Doing so will also provide a means to connect contemporary life and challenges and foster an interest in the past.

This initiative encourages museums and historical organizations to build collections that reflect the local communities, past and present, spanning the community’s entire history, to the present day, where appropriate. The organizations must connect with local communities in deciding collecting goals, for instance including the importance of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act or NAGPRA for local historical societies.

The effort should build upon the Mellon-funded AASLH project “Framing History with the American Public” and the Stanford University project “Lighting the Way National Forum on Discovery and Delivery.” The tools and resources that result from an AASLH effort would help collecting institutions build their holdings to meet the expectations and needs of future audiences. The initiative should also work with the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) and other interested parties to uncover truly hidden collections held by

private associations, religious, family, or corporate repositories, not just those that reside in institutional backlogs.

Integrated Public Access Catalog & Digital Toolkit based upon a New Cataloging Model

Now is the time for a new model of cataloging. Single item cataloging is insufficient in enabling the public to understand the connections between objects and documents. It is also time and cost prohibitive. Examining applications of descriptions of artifacts based on archival finding aids will be more appropriate and cost effective. This “finding aid” could include traditional archival material, three dimensional items, and artwork. Current archival finding aid software tools enable staff to enter location information separately from the intellectual system, which allows for safe storage and context retention.

Preservation is meaningless without access. In addition to using a new model of cataloging to make all acquisitions accessible as soon as possible, we propose a national database system. It will provide a single interface for artifacts, archives, and libraries across institutions and regions of the United States. It will facilitate cross-institutional connections between collections to facilitate improved public access. Such a system would allow the field to assess more accurately the state of collections and to effectively share objects, information, exhibitions, and resources between institutions. The system must be cross-platform and designed for accessibility including information such as alt text for images.

Institutions that identify and share their collections can more readily make them accessible to the public in exhibitions, education, research, and other settings. Gathering national data about collections will also reveal opportunities to build collections that better reflect the nation’s diversity. Areas of overlap between collections will enable institutions to better focus collecting goals on the things that make their holdings unique.

Creating the tool requires using standard nomenclature and subject genre terms like Getty or Library of Congress, as well as name authority files. Work continues to be accomplished by the library and archives disciplines. Collaborating with museum colleagues will enable the use of common language and unified standards across three-dimensional cataloging and archival processing. This will benefit the respective staffs, and help the public who interact with history collections.

Integrated union catalogs will foster digital reunification of materials that have been separated between multiple institutions, both in the user search results, and through purposeful projects that may result.

The library and archives fields have provided union catalogs and standardized vocabulary. The museum field can, and should, use the same tools to promote improved access and better understanding of collections.

DRAFT: JULY 2020

Understandably, these initiatives will result in an increase in collecting born-digital artifacts. Museums and historical organizations must have a toolkit for the preservation and maintenance tasks that digital artifacts require. They must also have the means to store and to back up the data. The Internet Archive and the Digital Public Library of America already function well. AASLH can build upon and augment those programs to assist small institutions to manage workflows and assure that efforts into collecting digital resources are less threatened by obsolescence.

AASLH 250th Task Force
White Paper for History Education
October 21, 2019

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness...

The words of the Declaration of Independence will take center stage in 2026 during America's 250th anniversary. We can use this moment to promote stronger history education to foster a better understanding of what this nation has achieved, and propel it toward the fulfillment of the founder's ideals. While the country has changed, the ideals of the revolutionary era have remained powerful and relevant.

Our mission is to help every young person see themselves in this history, no matter when or where their families joined the American story. Effective history education provides context and nuance through an active and inclusive examination of our shared past in all its beauty, tragedy, and complexity.

Historical organizations, government, the education community, and the public must play an integral role in discussing, developing and implementing a range of initiatives to lift the country's awareness of its history. We must have bold moves in measured steps.

OUR REVOLUTIONARY GOALS

1. Raise History's Profile

The 250th presents an unmatched opportunity to reverse recent trends in education that deemphasize history and the humanities. Through legislative and fiscal measures, school boards and legislatures must re-commit to the teaching of history -- broadly understood -- at all levels. Community and citizen-led organizations who advocate for history education must organize and lobby policy makers and Congressional delegations to invigorate public commitment to history education generally. These efforts must include a drive to reinstitute a new version of the *Teaching American History* grant program by 2026.

AASLH must capitalize on national and local attention on the anniversary to advocate for the advancement of history education. Institutions nationwide will also benefit from the heightened publicity surrounding the 250th to promote events and activities such as museum exhibits, school fairs, public programs, and community commemorations.

The entertainment industry provides an important vehicle to actively engage popular culture with events of the American Revolution. With the planned revival of the musical "1776" and the continued success of "Hamilton," theater and the arts can draw attention to the myriad historical activities that the 250th will bring. Additionally, broadcast companies such as TCM, PBS, and Sundance can promote films about U.S. history writ large and explore the impact of

revolutionary ideas. These developments will offer new opportunities for collaboration with arts education efforts in local schools.

2. Ensure Inclusivity

It is imperative that education efforts across the nation open the narrative of 1776 to multiple voices, from our complex past to the continuing challenges of the present.

The meaning of Revolutionary Era ideals such as liberty and equality transcend 1776 as the American experiment continues to evolve. The 250th provides an opportunity to create a sense of belonging in the American story and elevate the voices of all to build an inclusive culture in which those voices are encouraged, respected, and supported. Enlarging the concept of history to encompass the past “from time immemorial” will help ensure the inclusion of many perspectives, including Native American and African American histories.

Local historical and heritage organizations have a responsibility to highlight the connections of their diverse communities to the themes of the 250th. These organizations should look for opportunities to collaborate and develop programming with local communities, schools, and educators.

3. Promote Historical Thinking and Civic Education in Classrooms

Fostering historical thinking helps students move from understanding history as a set of memorized facts about the past, to historical inquiry as a foundation for informed action in the present.

The greatest assurance for the long-term success of the American Revolution will occur in the classroom. Social studies, which includes history and civic education, must be valued and mandated at every level of education, from elementary school through college. The skills developed through critical thinking, reading, and writing in history classes are essential foundations of civic engagement and cultural literacy. Students learn to examine the country’s past in real, not imagined, terms and recognize that history is written from many viewpoints and perspectives. Students can apply what they discover through history to their work in other disciplines and to the challenges they will encounter in their own lives.

4. Elevate Teacher Training

Teachers must be trained to present history as a humanistic study that is relevant and vibrant. Teachers must move history instruction beyond dates and names detached from their contexts to share rich and complex stories that recognize a full range of voices and experiences. Teachers serve as guides, creating opportunities for their students to investigate the past and make their own discoveries. Using inquiry based programs like National History Day, teachers

empower students to follow their passions and research their interests, making history come alive through active learning.

Teachers must be equipped with the skills and the facts needed to teach difficult histories and to forthrightly address conflict and controversy both in the past and in historical understandings of the past. For example, teachers should be guided to resources like the Southern Poverty Law Center's curriculum for teaching American slavery, which uses historical evidence as a foundation for understanding slavery's place in the American story.

5. Strengthen Partnerships Among Museums, Historic Sites, and Schools

Central to their mission, museums and historic sites develop robust education programs. Yet these resources often go underutilized by schools. The 250th provides an opportunity to make the resources of museums and historic sites a vital component of social studies teaching in schools throughout the country.

Collaboration among museums, historic sites, and schools will help communities discover the history that surrounds them. Beneficial partnerships can highlight local connections to the 250th not only through place and time, but also through Revolutionary Era ideals such as freedom and equality.

6. Establish Foundations for Teaching and Learning the Revolutionary Era

Education efforts at schools and historical organizations across the country must rest on three broad pillars:

- I. Sharing a broader history of the Revolutionary Era by welcoming the full diversity of people living in the colonies and early Republic into the traditional narrative of the nation's founding, including Native Americans, African Americans, women, and non-elite colonists.
- II. Building local histories of 1776 through place-based explorations of the peoples and communities of the eighteenth century in the locations that would become part of the United States and its territories. Encourage a global perspective by placing the Thirteen Colonies in the context of the larger Atlantic world, and by exploring the intertwining histories of European colonialism in the Americas.
- III. Identifying connections between the founding era and the variety of 21st Century communities that exist today in each historical organization's town, city, state, and region. Local institutions must explore how the multifaceted history and ideals of 1776 can resonate with every community that they serve.

OUR MOONSHOT GOALS

Engage Students in Doing History

DRAFT: JULY 2020

Challenge historic and cultural institutions to create programming that engages local students in hands-on historical learning. Students can help develop community-based public history projects with local cultural institutions that will make a lasting contribution to the community's understanding of its past, and will inspire students to become history-makers in their own lifetimes.

Develop a national ***Discoveries in History Medal*** program to foster youth engagement in historical inquiry. Students might draw on existing programs, such as North Carolina Tar Heels Junior Historians, National History Day, and EduHam, or create their own inquiry-based projects.

Create a ***Revolutionary Ideals in Action*** program to encourage local community service and civic engagement. Issue young people this challenge: "What can *you* build today that will foster your own community's life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness?"

Recognize student participants at a culminating event at each State Capitol with press and social media coverage.

Restore History Education

Set an ambitious target for dedicated instructional time in social studies education in the elementary and secondary grades in each state/territory.

Schools must strive to dedicate **45 minutes** of daily classroom time to history and civics instruction by 2026. AASLH will partner with national education advocacy groups to promote this effort.

Integrate Teacher Education

Use the 250th as a vehicle to forge teacher education programming that integrates collegiate training with public history and cultural institutions, nationwide.

Create a micro-credentialing program for teachers to earn a credential in historical specialization. AASLH should work with a university partner to offer a co-branded certificate in history education where members of our community serve as faculty. AASLH should develop the online coursework to complete the certification program.

250 by the 250th

In order for these goals to be met successfully, AASLH must lead a strong grassroots movement of museums, historic sites, communities, membership, and allied organizations to endorse this document and advocate for its outcomes. AASLH must strive to build broad recognition across the historical community that the opportunities presented by the 250th must not be squandered.

As it was with the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence, we believe it will send a strong message of support to have 250 signatories affixed to our document for America's 250th birthday in 2026.

OUTCOMES, PRODUCTS, INITIATIVES

1. Develop inclusive, age-appropriate curriculum and primary source sets for teaching the American Revolution, designed for the full range of K-12 learners.
2. Develop and publicize histories written from Native American, African American, and non-elite perspectives.
3. Encourage place-based histories of 1776 for every part of what would become the United States. Develop *Teaching with Historic Places* curriculum and grant programs.
4. Ensure resources are accessible for ELA/ELL students:
 - a. Translate curriculum into Spanish and other key languages
 - b. Empower students to look for their own community in this story
5. Maximize connections with civic education.
6. Establish a centralized concierge for curriculum resources.
7. Task students with researching and writing the history of their school/their community.
 - a. Where can you find liberty in your community (or its absence)?
 - b. Was there a turning point in your community's history?
 - c. Identify examples of revolutionary thinking in your community.
 - d. Develop intergenerational learning guides.
 - e. Publish and share.
8. Create a model for community history programs to preserve local history (History Harvests).
 - a. Partner with local libraries/archives.
 - b. Oral history booths.
 - c. Develop a tool kit to help people preserve family artifacts and histories.
9. Prompt schools and colleges to recognize the 250th with themed commencement tassels and commemorative diplomas for students who graduate during 2026.
10. Birth certificates can also honor the 250th during 2026.

CONCLUSION

This historic commemoration will provide an opportunity to prioritize those basic tenets of history education and historical thinking that are the lifeblood of a republic. These proposals are designed to implement the changes necessary for success. Once begun, these efforts will require vigilance and commitment to see them through.

The American war is over; but this is far from being the case with the American Revolution. On the contrary, nothing but the first act of drama is closed. It remains yet to establish and perfect our new forms of government, and to prepare the principles, morals, and manners of our citizens for these forms of government after they are established and brought to perfection.

Dr. Benjamin Rush, 1783