



2024-2025 Impact Report

Transforming social studies education for the future of democracy

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Historical thinking matters. Our constitutional democracy not only demands that citizens know how government works, but also demands that citizens embody dispositions and virtues that can sustain it. At **Thinking Nation**, we ensure that educators can empower students with such dispositions by centering social studies classrooms on historical thinking skills. In this way, we cultivate engaged and critical thinkers equipped to contribute to a flourishing democracy.

This past year, our 5th as an organization, we witnessed exponential growth in our mission to transform social studies education for the future of democracy. Students around the country are leaving Thinking Nation partner classrooms with more than mere knowledge of the past. They are walking out of classrooms stronger, with a robust tool belt of skills and dispositions to analyze information effectively, discuss complex topics, and convey nuanced arguments.

Together, we are building up a stronger generation of citizens, equipped to preserve and protect our constitutional democracy. We invite your partnership in this critical mission.

16

States

35,000

Students

200+

hours of facilitated teachercentered professional learning 1

OUR MISSION & VISION

Thinking Nation's mission is to

Empower

students as engaged and critical thinkers

Support

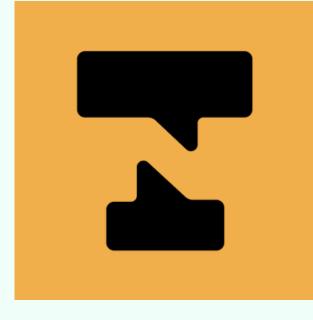
teachers with meaningful curricula, training and technology

Transform social

studies education for the future of democracy

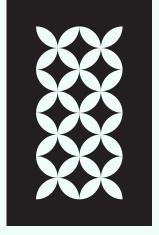
Our Vision

Our vision is that every student is empowered with the skills and dispositions necessary to contribute to a flourishing democracy and thrive in an ever-changing world.





YEAR IN REVIEW





A Refined Mission

We reevaluated our mission statement to better reflect our organization's priorities.



Teacher Support

Our team dedicated hundreds of hours toward direct teacher support through coaching, trainings, and technology.



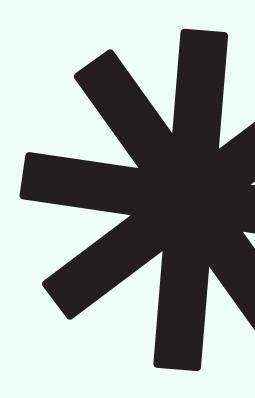
Place-Based Civics

Multiple initiatives centered place as a civic focus to empower students as community members and foster a sense of belonging.



Sustainable Partnerships

We built lasting partnerships with schools, civics organizations, and local institutions to better realize our mission.





SPREADING OUR MISSION

Thinking Nation attended and presented at regional and national conferences all year, sharing with teachers and leaders how we can **empower** students, **support** teachers, and **transform** social studies education.



National Conferences

We presented at the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS), National Social Studies Leaders Association (NSSLA) National Council for History Education (NCHE), and Civics of Technology annual conferences.

Regional Conferences

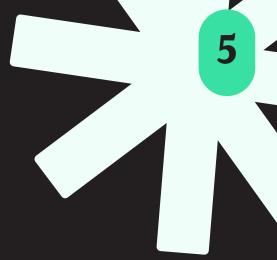
The Thinking Nation team presented at regional conferences in Texas, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, California, and Michigan.



Future Proton CIVIC CIV

Civics Summits

Thinking Nation was an invited guest to Civics summits hosted by iCivics, The Hoover Institution at Stanford, The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation, and Citizen University.



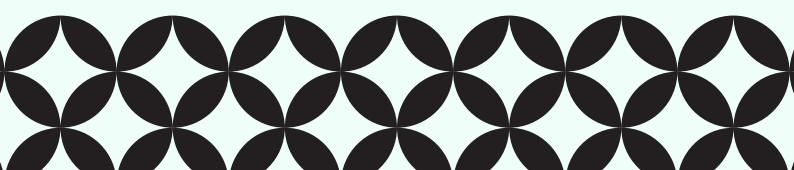
Our platform saw immense growth in supporting schools with more robust alignment, stronger data, and empowered students.

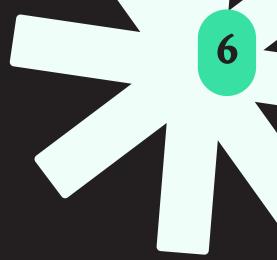


Thousands of students at Thinking Nation partner schools experienced a classroom where their success was no longer measured by their ability to remember, but rather their ability to engage with the past.



With a 238% increase in CRP submissions on the platform in the past year, teachers are clearly finding value not only in the assessment itself but also in the tools that support them in evaluating student work.





Centering classes around disciplinary thinking ensures students have the tools to contribute to a flourishing democracy.



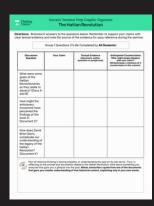
Source Analysis

Thinking Nation teachers embed source analysis protocols into their classrooms in order to give students a common language for what it means to think historically.



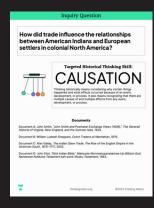
Formative Assessments

We ensure a common language for success through source-based assessments on historical thinking. Al grading and feedback enables teachers to have the necessary data to drive learning forward.



Socratic Seminars

Rich civil discourse is critical to democracy. Thinking Nation students are provided ample opportunities to engage in rigorous discussion about complex topics.



Curated Research Papers (CRPs)

Our CRPs link literacy to historical thinking, enabling crossdisciplinary collaboration. Al grading and feedback means teachers can spend more time focused on meeting student needs.





THINKING NATION AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

In January 2025, Thinking Nation hosted teachers from around Washington, D.C. at the National Archives to kick off our **ThinkingDC** curriculum. These are placebased courses aligned to the District's new social studies standards.



PLACE-BASED CIVICS: COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM



Thinking DC + Thinking LA

Thinking Nation is partnering with districts in Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles to create custom standards-aligned social studies courses that empower students and support better alignment among teachers. In 2024-2025, we built a middle school U.S. History and high school World History II course for our partners in D.C. At the end of the fiscal year, we renewed our partnership for a high school World History I and middle school Geography course. We also began our ThinkingLA partnership, developing a full year Ethnic Studies course, rooted in Los Angeles experiences.

"Together, we're creating academically excellent learning experiences that deepen students' understanding of history and foster independent thought, preparing them to become active, informed participants in our democracy."



Liz Striebel, Deputy Chief
 Academic Officer - Literacy &
 Humanities, KIPP DC Public Schools





THINKING HISTORICALLY ABOUT... OUR PODCAST



Our podcasts provides place-based perspectives and scholarly reflections for students engaging in Thinking Nation materials. These interviews with experts are designed so that students can hear how a scholar engages with the same questions and topics they wrestle with in our curriculum. Find our podcast here.

Some exciting episodes from our 2024-2025 season are Thinking Historically About:

- The Citizen's Role in a Democracy with Dr. Benjamin Gross
- The Concept of American Freedom with Dr. Adam Seagrave
- The Relationship between American Indians and Europeans Dr. James Merrell
- The Civil Rights Movement with Dr. Curtis Austin
- Women in the American Revolution with Dr. Carol Berkin
- Japanese American Incarceration during World War II with Dr. Lily Anne Welty Tamai

COLLABORATION FULFILLS THE MISSION

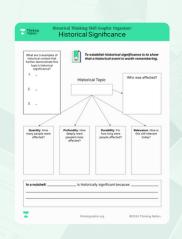


In January 2025, Thinking Nation collaborated with WETA Productions to provide historical thinking resources for the new PBS docuseries Great Migrations: A People On The Move. "We are delighted to collaborate with Thinking Nation on engaging educators and students with the themes of this series. Our organizations have a shared goal of empowering deep engagement with history and civics, and this project allows us to serve communities across the nation with quality materials."



Amy Labenski,
 Senior Director,
 National Impact &
 Engagement, WETA
 National Productions.

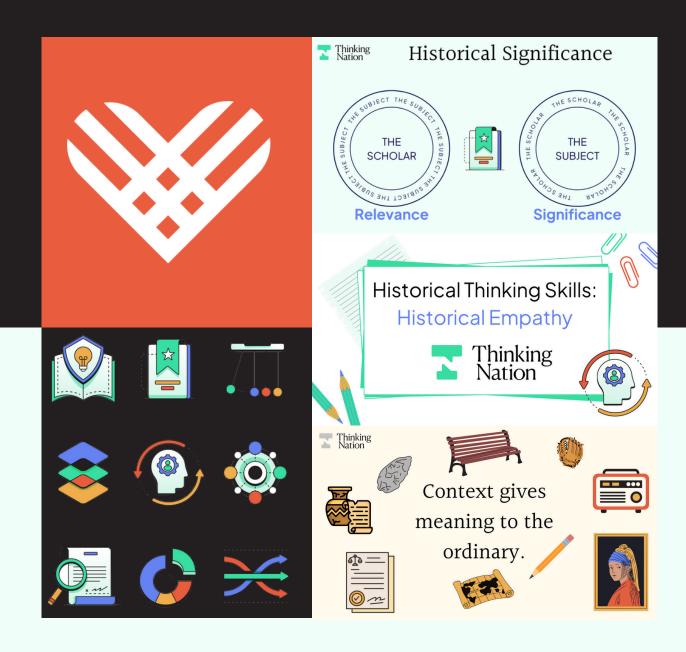






GIVING TUESDAY: SUPPORTING TEACHERS

In December 2024, we launched our first ever Giving Tuesday campaign, raising almost \$7,000 toward free resources for teachers. This funding supported the creation of 10 historical thinking skill videos to support teachers in empowering their students to think historically. View the series here.





LAUNCHING OUR AP PRACTICE EXAMS

In March 2025, we launched our AP Practice Exams. These exams simulate the official AP exam environment, including the writing component, from section timing to question difficulty, to prepare students for exactly what to expect.



These exams enable Thinking Nation to make high quality test prep more equitable and accessible for all students.

"Thinking Nation's AP Practice Exams are an amazing resource to help students feel more prepared and confident for the AP exams – one I plan to use with my students every year."

— Dan Lewer, 2020 Hawaii History **Teacher of the Year**





A TRANSFORMED HISTORY DEPARTMENT

Birmingham Community Charter High School

P Los Angeles, CA

Birmingham's exponential growth in using Thinking Nation's platform has transformed the history department's culture, fueling more collaboration, building deeper alignment, and maintaining high student expectations.

Platform Adoption: Changing the Narrative in Classrooms

281

977

1,388

3,799

2024

1,252% growth in student usage from 2021 to 2024 at Birmingham Community Charter High School demonstrates unprecedented local adoption and validates Thinking Nation's mission to transform social studies education for the future of democracy.

"Thinking Nation helped my students become informed decision-makers by teaching them how to process a diversity of information and then using that information to generate college-ready essays."

Christopher McCormack,
World History Teacher

Parallel Growth: Thinking Nation & Birmingham ELA Improvement (2022–2023)

Both Thinking Nation scores and district ELA proficiency increased over the same period, showing positive correlation between students engaging with Thinking Nation lessons and student outcomes on state assessments.



Thinking Nation Growth +10% Score increase: 6.67 → 7.34 +5.4 pts
Proficiency: 64.62% → 70.02%

OUR EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR!

As a two-year Thinking Nation partner, Becca has led the dedicated team at **Highland High School in Highland Arkansas**. Under her leadership, Highland educators have embraced strategic collaboration with a clear focus on advancing student growth. Their commitment is commendable. Both the Thinking Nation team and Highland students are fortunate to engage with teachers who embody a growth mindset.

Rebecca Schaeffer-Dombkowski



"We engage with history to learn about ourselves. Textbooks and rote memorization can't help with that, so it's time to change the way we do things."

Rebecca Schaeffer-Dombkowski
 Thinking Nation 2024-25 Educator of the Year

Partners

We feel such gratitude to be able to collaborate with so many organizations working to strengthen both our education system and our constitutional democracy. Below are a few of the the organizations we were able to collaborate with in 2024-25.











National Council for

the Social Studies









Press

Thinking Nation was featured in news outlets across the country over the last year. Click the icon to read an article.





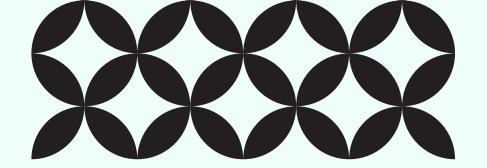












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THANK YOU

We are humbled and encouraged by all that was accomplished in 2024-2025. We stand by our commitment to transform social studies education for the future of democracy. To this end, our three funding priorities for 2025-2026 are to:



- 1. Expand teacher support through professional learning opportunities
- Create an open source version of our platform, enabling access to core formative assessments to teachers everywhere for free.
- 3. Provide opportunities for elementary teachers to engage with our curriculum through our Cubles partnership.

To support our mission, visit www.thinkingnation.org/donate

