

# Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission

Workgroup 3: EDUCATION  
The Honorable Algie T. Howell, Jr., *Chairman*

## WORKGROUP 3: EDUCATION

### Summary of Members' Comments

The message to students about and during the commemoration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Civil War should:

1. Help students understand that the American Civil War was not an isolated event.
2. Help students understand the long-lasting impact of the war on Virginia.
3. Ensure that each 5<sup>th</sup> grader has the opportunity to visit a Civil War site each year during the commemorative period.
4. Introduce students to recent interpretive trends concerning the war.
5. Direct educators to primary documents, including those on the Internet, and in archival documents and publications.
6. Introduce students to the American Civil War through the words of the participants.
7. Emphasize the importance of multiple perspectives concerning the war.
8. Facilitate an understanding and appreciation of the war's meaning and outcome relative to political persuasion, regional affiliation, gender, and race.
9. Provide age appropriate instruction and activities that promote an appreciation for the ways in which the debates led to the war and how the war was a continuation of longer trends, such as the history of slavery and federalism.
10. Enable students to examine camp life, battlefield experiences, politics, and their relationship to the home front through the lens and voices of the soldiers.
11. Permit students to examine the complexities of slavery and race as a cause of secession and their role in the evolution of the War in order that they may place the American Civil War in a broader historical context that connects with Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement, and contemporary dialogues about race.
12. Clarify that the period of Reconstruction was one of the most misunderstood periods in American history though the political debates and racial challenges faced were directly connected to the War. Old stories of carpetbeggars and corrupt African American politicians must be supplanted by more recent interpretations.

13. Advance as a top priority the development of age-appropriate instructional materials, and encourage curricula developers to collaborate closely with museums, historical societies, and the National Park Service.
14. Introduce students to the study of history and the American Civil War by exposing them to the places where the war was fought and lived.
15. Focus on positive outcomes of the war, such as the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement, the founding of the Virginia Education Association, the creation of public schools for white and black children after the war, and the creation of the Virginia Teachers Association to help promote the professional development of teachers for black children, and academies and colleges to educate teachers for the public schools.
16. Emphasize that civil strife is not peculiar to our country by providing modern examples for examination.
17. Provide factual information and not lead to a celebration of confederate or union figures.
18. Expose elementary school children to Virginia's role in the American Civil War.
19. Provide middle and high school students with instruction on:
  - the advantages and disadvantages of each side's military
  - financing of the war for both sides
  - war aims of both sides
  - roles played by Abe Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, U.S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Frederick Douglass
  - the significance of the Emancipation Proclamation, Gettysburg Address, and 13th Amendment
  - the political, economic, social, and constitutional impact of the war
  - the significance of the major battles, such as:
    - 1st battle of Bull Run
    - Antietam
    - Gettysburg
    - Vicksburg
    - Sherman's March to the Sea
    - Richmond
    - Appomattox Court House (surrender)
20. Provide a complete account of the war lest students receive a partial or misleading message concerning the war.
21. Signify that the American Civil War cannot be taught in isolation of the historical context and events leading to the war from the Colonial period, and its aftermath in Reconstruction.
22. Provide a more critical examination of the shibboleths that have become commonly accepted.
23. Emphasize that Virginia was sharply divided over secession and was not staunchly Confederate as often depicted.
24. Emphasize the role of African Americans in the war effort on both sides and the outcome of the war.
25. Include the continuing role played by Emancipation/Reconstruction-founded institutions of higher education, historically Black colleges and universities, and Black churches.

26. Clarify Lincoln's commitment to Emancipation and the errors he may have perpetrated that extended far beyond the end of the war.
27. Promote and stimulate a proactive, concerted liaison between the schools, colleges, and entities such as Pamplin Park, Tredegar, the Black History Museum, the Slavery Museum, Museum of the Confederacy, the Virginia Historical Society, the National Park Service, etc. for the purpose of collaborating to disseminate information and to facilitate the use of school field trips and educator seminars.
28. Illuminate that:
  - Lynchburg and Danville were sites for prisoner of war camps
  - A number of citizens remained loyal to the Union
  - Several citizens who hid their gold and silver were able to establish two new banks in Lynchburg after the war
  - Lynchburg was the only major Virginia city that was not physically damaged by the war
  - Slavery was Virginia's curse, and students should take a hard look at how slavery affected both black and white Virginians
  - A free black population existed before the war, Lynchburg had the largest proportion of free blacks before the war than any other city in Virginia, and after the war free blacks assumed leadership in the black community
29. Examine public education and the refusal of the General Assembly to support public education before 1870 as a means of keeping poor whites and blacks in a state of perpetual inferiority.
30. Identify Virginians who were Union soldiers, such as General George Henry Thomas.
31. Identify scholars in blue and gray who served the cause of higher education after the war, such as Dr. Josephus Hopwood.
32. Allow high school seniors and college students to explore the dismemberment of the state, the differences between western Virginia and the central and eastern areas, including slavery.
33. Give attention to the role of free and slave African Americans, including those who served in the northern and southern armies, those who remained within the civilian population, and those who actively resisted, including joining the military.
34. Identify the colleges and female seminaries in existence at the beginning of the war, and how similar or dissimilar were the actions taken by these educational facilities.
35. Examine the roles of women during the war.
36. Explore the role of religion in the war, how the war was "packaged" or presented by various denominations, and the affects of the war on denominations, e.g. denominational splits, and implications for the contemporary religious community.
37. Investigate the role and loyalties of Virginia's Indian tribes during the war.
38. Emphasize that war means "change."
39. Emphasize that the American Civil War brought significant change to the American landscape, and that Virginia was key to these changes.

40. Analyze the broader political, economic, social, demographic, and cultural changes that occurred during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.
41. Frame lesson plans for students in grades K-12 around the concept of change.
42. Provide college and university professors greater flexibility to focus on particular aspects of the war where students are challenged to look beyond the “grand charges” and idiosyncrasies of military leaders to expose college students to aspects of the war that they never considered and give them insight concerning contemporary views.
43. Provide the hook to get students to look at the broader changes in American society.
44. Highlight the need to understand “change” as a means of promoting a more inclusive Sesquicentennial Anniversary.
45. Correct and highlight how the Civil War is interpreted and displayed in the Valley.
46. Guard against a one-sided interpretation such that visitors to historic sites only learn about the war in terms of battlefields, soldiers, and tactical missions, as well as one-sided instruction in public school and college classrooms.
47. Make the war relevant through contemporary comparisons of the experiences, sacrifices, and suffering of Civil War soldiers and their families to the experiences of children and their families today whose loved ones are in the military or who are fighting in today’s war.
48. Help students connect the present with the past.
49. Encourage schools to enlist the assistance of organizations that aid the families of soldiers who are left behind in order to help students understand the toll on their peers.
50. Facilitate an understanding among students that scholarly interpretations change over time as new sources of information become available.
51. Use sound scholarship that examines the American Civil War from all perspectives.
52. Present the ancestry, life, and presidency of Abraham Lincoln.
53. Examine the role of religion during the American Civil War.
54. Emphasize the importance of the American Civil War in shaping the modern United States as a political and cultural entity.
55. Connect the events associated with 9/11 to the American Civil War, relative to the immortalization of leaders of a losing rebellion in the iconography of the winning side.
56. Show how the nation faced some of its most political and demographic differences and remained one nation, and how the American ideal that makes the nation great also causes tremendous hardship in foreign policy and global relations.
57. Reveal that the American Civil War touched some of the most sensitive issues in the American sub-conscience, e.g., race, founding freedoms, the role of government in the daily lives of citizens (“big government”), and social otherness.

58. Increase students' awareness of the need to wrestle with the truly important issues the American Civil War raises for American citizens today.
59. Appeal to persons who are disinterested in the American Civil War and to communities, especially the African American community, which are hostile toward the Civil War and the notion of commemorating it, with information to which they can relate.
60. Offer opportunities for field trips to sites associated with the American Civil War.
61. Encourage map studies associated with various campaigns of the war to make the study of the war come alive for students.
62. Encourage school libraries and public libraries to purchase and display books of fact and historical fiction about the American Civil War in preparation for the Sesquicentennial.
63. Encourage patrons to loan period relics and memorabilia to libraries for display.
64. Encourage school and historical societies to utilize Civil War re-enactors to share information about the Civil War to students and the public.
65. Stir colleges to sponsor symposia on American Civil War topics coordinated by their History departments.
66. Encourage the public to allow the Library of Virginia and the Virginia Historical Society to copy original documents related to the Civil War in their possession.
67. Use resource materials on the Internet in conjunction with the formulation of educational objectives for studying the American Civil War.
68. Engage an extensive publicity campaign to make schools, teachers, librarians, and the public aware of the Sesquicentennial.
69. Highlight "Lessons Learned," the impact of the Civil War on future Human Rights efforts worldwide, and why **ALL** benefited that the Union was preserved—politically, socially, and economically.
70. Examine the Civil War as more than the fight over slavery and states' rights, but as the culmination of debates over federalism, property rights, and constitutional, legal, and ideological issues that had lingered unresolved since the American Revolution and Constitutional Conventions.
71. Examine the home front—roles and toll on soldiers, slaves, Southern Unionists, and women and families.
72. Examine the war's effect on the states, the land, and environment.
73. Examine the war's legacy in shaping Virginia and America as we know and understand them today.
74. Provide college students a clear idea of the significance of the Civil War in American history. Our students should understand that:

"The war was a violent contest between two conflicting visions of America, both believed to be consistent with the ideals of the American Revolution. Both sides believed they were right and bravely fought for their beliefs. Both sides paid a heavy price, and no state had more at stake, or suffered more, than Virginia. In the end, the nation was reunited with a new birth of freedom for all Americans."

75. Enable elementary school students to demonstrate knowledge of the issues that divided our nation and led to the Civil War by:
- Identifying the events and differences between northern and southern states that divided Virginians and led to secession, war, and the creation of West Virginia
  - Describing Virginia's role in the war, including identifying major battles that took place in Virginia
  - Describing the roles played by whites, slaves and free blacks, and American Indians.
76. Enable middle school students to demonstrate knowledge of the causes, major events, and effects of the Civil War by:
- Describing the constitutional and slavery issues that increased tensions
  - Identifying on a map the states that seceded from the Union and those that remained in the Union
  - Describing the roles of Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, Thomas (Stonewall) Jackson, and Frederick Douglass in events leading to and during the war
  - Using maps to explain critical developments in the war, including major battles
  - Describing the effects of war from the perspectives of Union and Confederate soldiers (including black soldiers), women, and slaves
  - Describing the legacy of selected leaders from the Civil War era.
77. Enable high school students to demonstrate knowledge of the Civil War and Reconstruction Era and its importance as a major turning point in American history by:
- Evaluating the multiple causes of the Civil War and the importance of the institution of slavery as the principal cause of the conflict
  - Identifying the major events and the roles of key leaders of the Civil War Era, with emphasis on Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, and Frederick Douglass
  - Analyzing the significance of the Emancipation Proclamation and the principles outlined in Lincoln's Gettysburg Address
  - Examining the political and economic impact of the war and Reconstruction, including the adoption of the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the Constitution of the United States
  - Examining the social impact of the war on African Americans, the common soldier, and the home front with emphasis on Virginia.