



Thinking
Nation

Impact
Report

2023 - 2024

A note from our Executive Director



What if the history classroom actually empowered students?

Despite the discipline of history being uniquely set up to empower students with the ability to think deeply about the world they live in, the classroom is too often relegated to “stories of dead people.” **Thinking Nation** continues to reorient our educational compass to overturn that all-too-common reality of the secondary social studies classroom.

The 2023-2024 fiscal year marked our fourth as a nonprofit organization. Throughout this year, we’ve remained steadfast in our mission to empower students by transforming social studies education. Within this steadfast pursuit, however, we’ve experienced exciting changes and tremendous growth. We’ve cemented our organization as an authority in the history education field, reshaped how history is taught and assessed for thousands of students, and supported hundreds of teachers across the country in their own aims to revitalize history education in order to sustain democracy.

2024, an election year, provides us a unique opportunity to reflect on the state of our democracy and the tools we need to strengthen and sustain it.

At **Thinking Nation**, we have a clear vision for how to do this work through classrooms across the country. We also know the importance of partnerships to do this work well. In that spirit, we invite you to learn more about how we’re realizing our vision and to support our critical work to empower students with the skills and dispositions necessary for civic and economic success.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zach Cote'.

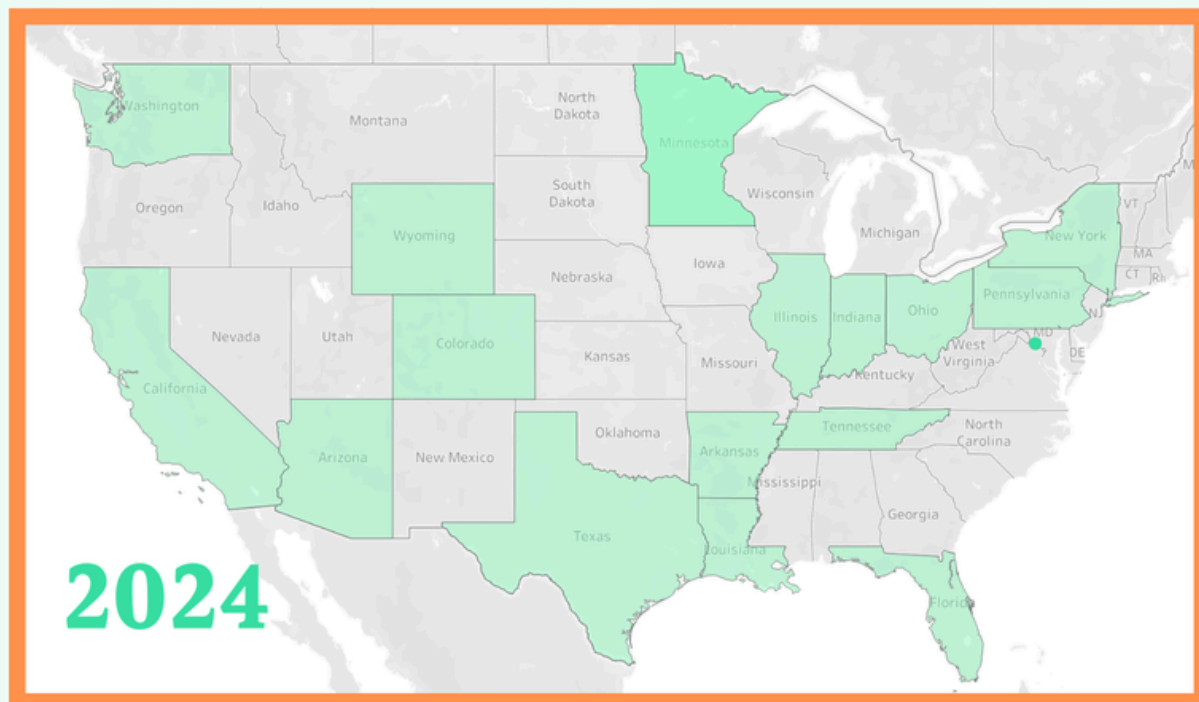
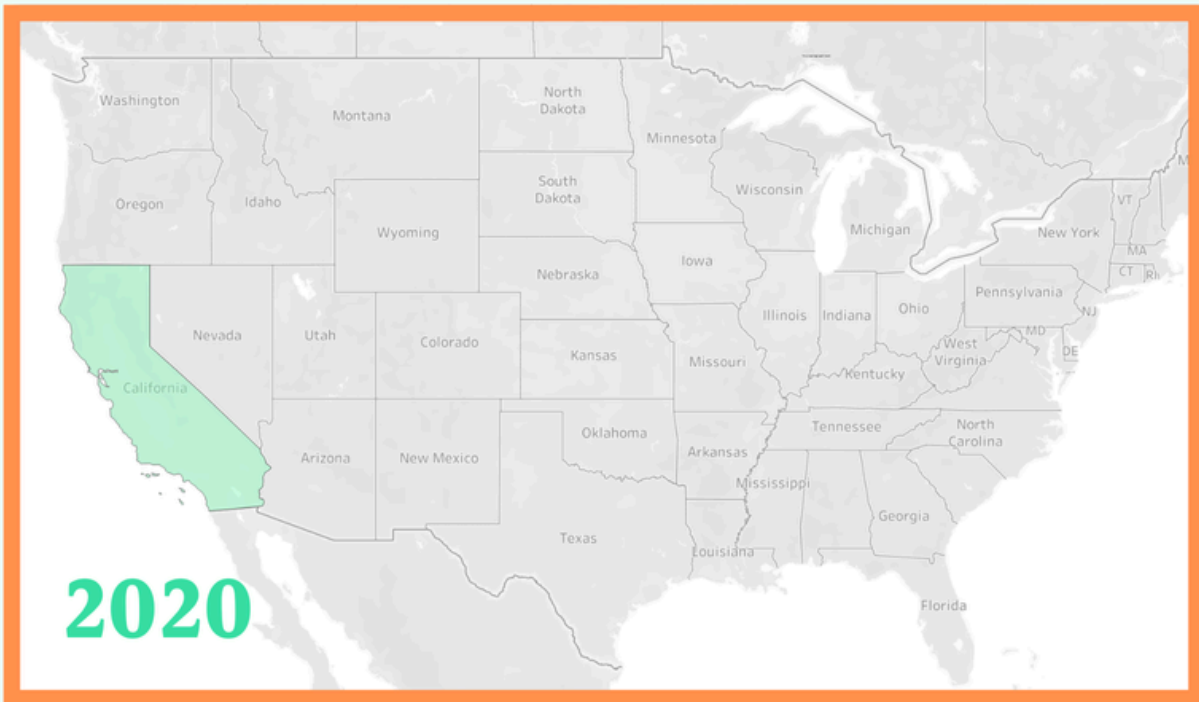
Zachary Cote
Executive Director, Thinking Nation



Thinking Nation's Executive Team and Board Member, Dr. Marco Clark at the 2024 Building Hope Impact Summit

We're growing!

**From Coast to Coast: Our
Expansion Journey from California
to 15+ States (2020-2024)**



2023–2024 Highlight's

OUR MISSION

To shift the paradigm of social studies education by equipping schools and teachers with innovative data-driven curriculum and professional development that empowers students to become thriving citizens.

OUR VISION

That all students will mature into thinking citizens, equipped with the essential skills to participate in a robust democracy. Therefore, with constitutional principles as our foundation, students will be empowered to analyze information effectively, think historically, and write persuasively in order to build a more democratic future.

Thinking Nation rebranded
Aug 2023

4 new board members joined
Thinking Nation
Oct 2023

AI Grading of student essays launched on platform
Dec 2023

Our inaugural research study Published by
EdWeek
Nov 2023

Team presented at AI event at AASA Conference
Feb 2024

Team invited to lead panel at Reagan Library
Feb 2024

Thinking Nation won Phase 1 of Learning Landscapes Challenge
June 2024

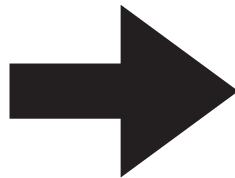
Thinking Nation co-led national webinar with NCSS for Civic Learning Week
Mar 2024

Thinking Nation hosted student art exhibit at National Charter School Conference
June 2024

Four DC Charter LEAs committed to a comprehensive curriculum by Thinking Nation
April 2024

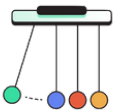
Click on underlined text to learn more

Our Rebrand



Thinking Nation

In the first quarter of our fiscal year, our organization underwent a rebrand. In our early stages as an organization, we've advocated that a quality history education *is* an exercise in civics. We believe that the disciplines within social studies can empower students with the skills and disposition needed for success. Our new brand, which highlights dialogue as essential, as dialogue reveals thinking, conveys this in all contexts, not just in United States history or government classes.



Causation



Historical Empathy



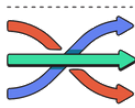
Historical Significance



Comparison



Contextualization



Continuity and
Change over Time



Evaluating
Arguments



Evaluating
Evidence



Perspective



Quantitative Analysis

OUR DISCIPLINARY THINKING SKILLS

As part of our rebrand, we aligned 100% of our curriculum and assessments to specific historical thinking skills. Through Thinking Nation, educators can measure student success based on these skills, rather than merely on students' content knowledge. Having these icons embedded throughout our curriculum reminds students what to focus on to master the disciplines within social studies.

Notes from our Collaborators

“Our partnership with Thinking Nation has been just amazing because it has allowed us to be able to provide consistent support to history teachers.

Our teachers feel extremely proud in how they are now able to help support the ELA teachers to help develop better writing skills for all of our students. In fact, with the support of Thinking Nation’s resources and professional development, our school administrators are seeing more in depth, grade level writing happening in our social studies classes than in our ELA classes.”

Yvette King-Berg, Executive Director, Youth Policy Institute Charter Schools



“IDEA Public Schools has been working with Thinking Nation over the past 3 years. During this time, Thinking Nation has developed quality writing products to help with the implementation of IDEAs disciplinary literacy goals. The quality of the products and alignment to best practices coupled with the technology that they offer with their AI program has been invaluable to teachers and school leaders as they partner to make instructional decisions, because they can trust the quality of the product that they are using, and it eliminates the potential misalignment of feedback.”

Chelsee Alcantara, Social Studies Curriculum Manager, IDEA Public Charter Schools



“Working with Zach and Thinking Nation was a smooth and inspirational process. Through our collaboration we implemented a Socratic Seminar on the topic of Slave Resistance and witnessed how this activity helped build community in the History classroom. Presenting about our experience at the California Council for Social Studies conference was an opportunity for me to grow as an educator and ultimately, better serve my students.”

Abraham Martinez, History Teacher, Stella Middle Charter Academy



“Managing engagement in a coalition of 350 organizations, I can honestly say that there are a few organizations that embody an ambitious name the way Thinking Nation does. They are great collaborators and thought leaders in areas of interest ranging from civics and history education more broadly to the future of AI policy, always serving as a thoughtful partner and doer.”

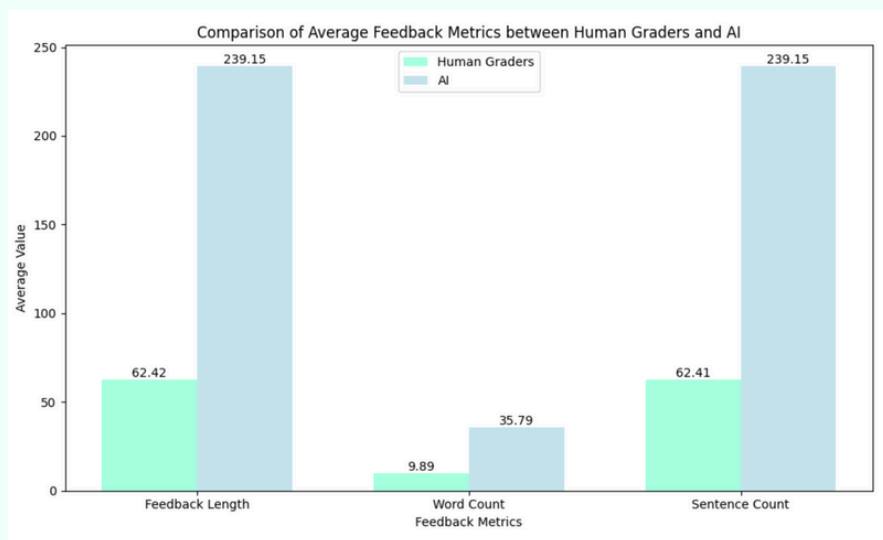
Ace Parsi, Director of Coalition Engagement, iCivics



In December 2023, Thinking Nation transitioned our grading model to generative AI. AI transforms education by saving teachers valuable time and giving them the data they need to drive learning forward. Teachers can act on data *in the moment* in order to provide students with the support they need to flourish.

Integrating AI into our online platform both benefits our partner schools and ensures a more sustainable model for our organization. Due to AI, we are able to maintain low costs for our partners, provide higher quality support for teachers, and expand without compromising consistency. Our mission is to empower students. AI helps us do it better.

INTEGRATING GENERATIVE AI TO PROMOTE DEEP THINKING



AI feedback is consistently more thorough than human feedback

Grader

"The thesis appropriately answers the prompt and is historically defensible."

AI

"The essay provides a clear thesis in the introduction that aligns with the prompt by claiming that agriculture allowed early civilizations to have a surplus of food, live in permanent houses, create during their free time, and that it had negative effects such as the spread of diseases, which can be defended with textual evidence throughout the essay."

EdSurge PODCAST

In April 2023, our executive director was invited on to *The Edsurge Podcast* to talk about how AI can boost Civic education.



Scan the QR code to read about or listen to the Interview.

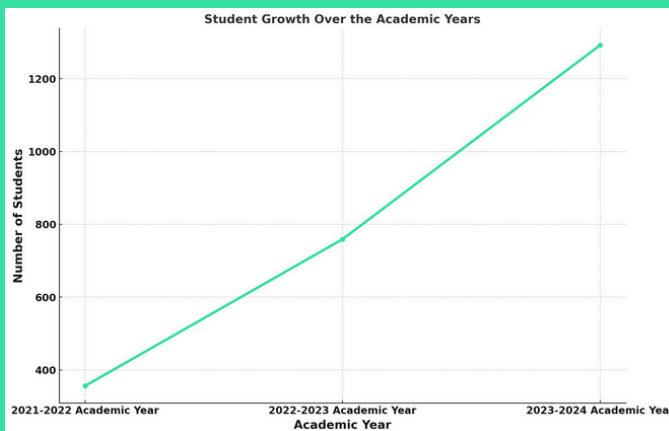
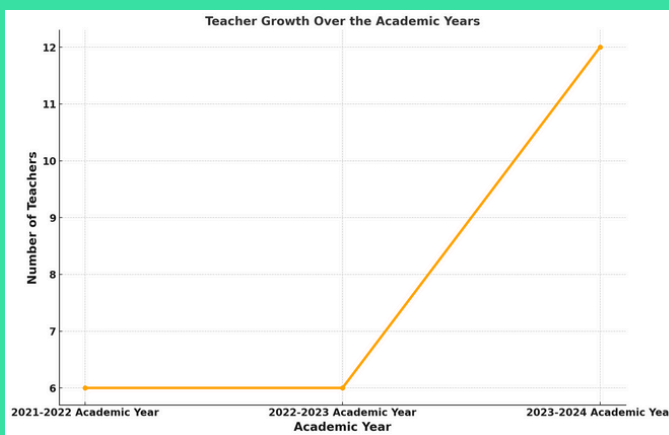
"Thinking Nation's use of AI technologies provides unique opportunities to enhance creativity in history and social studies. The AI provides immediate feedback for students while allowing for educators to stay in the loop of their learning progressions."

Andrew Ko, Founder of Kovexa and Chief Innovation Advisor for AASA, The School Superintendents Association

Shifting paradigms is no small endeavor. Often, many teachers who are accustomed to a content-focused classroom are reluctant to adopt an inquiry-based approach. However, with targeted support, more teachers see how this approach can transform their classroom and empower their students to think more deeply.

THINKING NATION TRANSFORMS SCHOOLS

Overtime, more teachers seek to shift the paradigm.



100%

Growth in teacher usage after one academic year of intervention.

263%

Growth in student usage over 3 academic years.

In a 3-year implementation at a large urban high school, we witnessed exponential growth for in both teacher and student usage. A testament to a transformed social studies department.

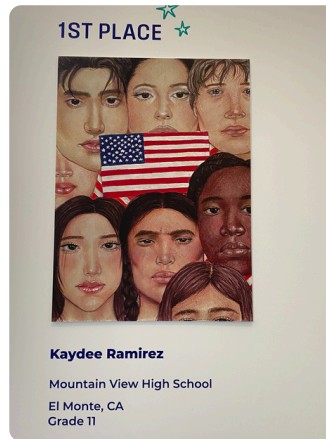
“Because of the PD support and curriculum by Thinking Nation, our students show deeper understanding of history.”

Carlo Aaron Purther, Social Studies Department Leader


National Student Art Contest

THE 2024 NATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL CONFERENCE

Thinking Nation partnered with the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS) to lead a nationwide student art contest centered on the future of American Democracy. NAPCS awarded the winners with cash prizes, with the top 10 students' artwork featured at the 2024 National Conference in Boston, MA from June 30-July 3 2024.



"I created the art piece, "Every single one of us", because I wanted to show that each and every U.S. citizen should know how much power their voice holds and should use their voices to protect their rights. Throughout my drawing process I thought, "Our differences make us this country and we are all US citizens---Why are some voices being disregarded and forbidden from being heard?" I think this is important and a reason why we should speak up over and over until our political leaders finally listen."
Kaydee Ramirez, 1st Place Winner



Student Art Contest: The Future of Democracy

Make your voice heard to educators around the country!

Enter to showcase your creativity and your voice through our Student Art Contest.


The top 20 submissions voted on by our judging panel of community organizers, teachers, and artists will be displayed at the 2024 National Charter Schools Conference in Boston, MA, June 30-July 3. In addition the top 3 submissions will receive cash prizes!

Contest Prompt:
What does the future of American Democracy look like?

Prizes
 1st Place \$1000 cash prize
 2nd Place \$500
 3rd place \$250

ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS:
 02/01/2024-04/01/2024

To Submit, scan the QR Code and fill out the form.





How to Enter

Creatively answer the contest prompt through visual art, poetry, or video.

In your submission, be sure to include:

- The submission to display
- An explanation of your thinking behind your submission
- An answer to this question: If you were asked to deliver a speech to Congress on how to preserve and protect democracy, what would you say?



Executive Director, Zachary Cote, presenting 6th grader, Aarna Dalsania, with her 2nd place certificate.

15

States that Thinking
Nation works in

20k

Students engaging in
Thinking Nation's
online platform

100+

hours of teacher
professional
development provided

362

education stakeholders
downloaded our white
paper on the state of
Social Studies education

16

conferences where
Thinking Nation presented
and/or exhibited

The 2023-2024 fiscal year, in many ways, was defined by growth for the organization. During the year, we hired our fifth full time employee, and secured enough school contracts to hire our sixth at the beginning of fiscal year 2024-2025.

Organizational growth and an expanding team means that more students around the country are being empowered to think deeply about the world around them.

At Thinking Nation, we acknowledge that we cannot empower students without a paradigm shift in the social studies field. Isolated progress rarely brings systemic change. This is why much of our work centers on equipping teachers through professional development and designing curriculum that enhances collaboration and alignment.

The statistics on this page highlight this focus. But an example from one of our partner schools may better illustrate this vision coming to life.

Birmingham Community Charter High School serves more than 3,000 students, making it one of the largest charter schools in the country. The large social studies department was looking for ways to better align across their content areas and have tools to collaborate with each other. Thinking Nation's online platform, AI grading, and common tools have supported this work.

Now, the social studies department has goals for each grade level and the whole department. Through Thinking Nation, they can track progress in these goals from the data reports they receive from our platform. Teachers collaborate more, students practice deep thinking and writing more, and the culture of the department has become much stronger.

Supporting schools in this way is why we exist at Thinking Nation. When we support teachers like this, we empower students with the skills and dispositions they need for success.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to our supportive board of directors for guiding the mission and vision of Thinking Nation and supporting our leadership.

Dinah Ruch, President

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We thank you for your partnership. To support our mission, visit www.thinkingnation.org/donate

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