**Thomas Bodo**, Riverside High School

* “One of the things that draws me to teaching high school is that this is the time developmentally where adolescents start to think about the world themselves. They begin to realize that the world is not perfect. As they gain an understanding of what Is going on around them, I want to give them tools to make the world better and give them all of knowledge that I can to help them fix things.”
* “In the Civics curriculum, I work to make sure that they are not just following national elections, but state and local elections too.”
* “They perceive politicians to be disconnected. To combat this, I brought in a city council member for them to talk to.”
* “I try to walk them through the registration steps and put them in touch with the local board of elections.”
* “As an assignment, I have them researching a particular candidate and have them keep track of information about people running.”
* Voter registration drive – “Yes. They are able to register to vote in the media center.”
* “Apathy is endemic in a lot of the district that I’m in. A lot of students just don’t care. They are concerned with each other instead.”
* “There is a split – there are some students who are really engaged and some students who don’t care at all.”
* “There is no real district or state-level push to keep me from teaching as I want.”
* Testing – “State-level testing does shape a lot of what we are supposed to teach. In my school, though, there is not a whole that weds me to that. Testing discourages you from slowing down and exploring the depth of issues. It is a barrier, but it is not insurmountable and there are creative ways to get around it.”
* Parents – “Durham is pretty politically homogenous. I would actually kind of like to see more conflict, because conflict is helpful. Instead, it tends to be that a lot of my classes agree with each other. A lot of students don’t like to raise controversial topics. I personally like to take it from both angles anyway.”
* “To me, it is important that I am very objective, and I don’t share my personal view.”
* Trump – “Trump makes things a little harder too. It is more difficult to take the middle road, just because his discourse has been so uncivil. There are certain things of his that I have to disavow, because to say his opinions are equal to the opposing side is to devalue many of my students.”
* Other teachers – “I work in a big department, and there is not as much collaboration as I would like. I would really prefer a more collaborative atmosphere.”
* Methods – “Project-based learning is my favorite way to teach. Students are involved and they are creating something this way. One example is my campaign process project. With this, they pick a candidate running for city council and they act as their campaign team. They make videos and signs.”
* “I have them fill out a sample voter registration sheet.”
* “With a project on the Supreme Court – I gave them summaries of cases and had them rule. They had to identify parts of the constitution that supports their point.”
* For a project on correcting course grade – “I divided them into a House and a Senate, with one group being the body that did well on the quiz and the other being the body that did poorly. Each had to come up with a bill on how to correct the course grade. They ended up coming up with a terrible bill, but it was overall a lesson on how compromise works.”
* “It is one thing to read out of a book and another to pass laws themselves. It is cool for them to see themselves as lawmakers, and it makes them feel more incline to be involved.”
* “The more you involve them in civics work, the more alive it is. It is breathing, it is all around you.”
* “The best direction is engagement, especially with our current state.”
* “I like to see myself less as a teacher and more as a facilitator.”
* “We are churning out voters, and it is important to let them feel it out.”
* “That is the most important thing – to give them a shot at it and make them think ‘Oh, I can do this.’”
* “Civics is the most practical skill that they can learn in high school.”
* “The more it becomes student-focused, the more effective it will be.”

**Alexander Groff,** Riverside High School

* Teachers standard and honors world history (ninth grade), psychology (elective – upperclassmen), honors humanities (elective – upperclassmen)
* “One of main concerns is that Americans, as a general rule, have a myopic view of the world.”
* “Being aware of other cultures both within and outside the U.S. is crucial.”
* “Much of this conversation became polarized after 9/11. It was horrific the way it was portrayed. A lot of what I try and emphasize is that no religion, no race, no culture, is destructive. We have far more in common as a human race than we do different.”
* “The North Carolina state curriculum is extremely Euro-centric. In 8th grade they take world history, but it is essentially European history. I try to make room for Asian, Middle Eastern, and African history.”
* “I try to change it around so that it is based on geographic regions. It is supposed to be purely chronological, but I instead change it so that it is 3 weeks on Africa, 4 weeks on Asia, etc., mostly so they gain a better understanding of how diverse and rich these places are.”
* “With my honors classes, I incorporate a lot of activities, such as role playing of Israel and Palesitine or a debate over the Atlantic slave trade.”
* “With both my standard and my honors class, I try to get them to put themselves in other people’s shoes.”
* Participation and engagement – “Because they are 14 years-old, their ability to engage is more limited. Especially in regard to voter registration and campaigning – their engagement is more limited.”
* “In my humanities class, I can get them to engage in social issues if it is something that they deeply care about.”
* Challenges/Obstacles – “There is a culture of apathy within certain demographics about politics. I see this more in my standard classes with students of lower socioeconomic status. My electives are generally better than my standard classes.”
* “It is very difficult to keep their interest partially the cause of the shift in technology. It is used as a tool of disengagement. Social media replaces other interests. When I stated teaching in 2004, all you could do on a phone was call, maybe text. At that time, there was a higher level of engagement and patience with content. It was easier to get people involved in in-depth discussion – but now they have lost their patience and engagement.”
* Parents – “I am very fortunate that I feel like there are a number of sensitive issues – but there was not a dramatic pushback. Engaging in sensitive issues is essential to be involved and engaged in the world. Students tend to engage with sensitive issues.”
* Parents (cont.) – “When parents are uninvolved, when students don’t feel like it means anything, they won’t be engaged.”
* “There are a lot of kids and parents who don’t feel like there is any aspect of this that is a search for knowledge. They think they are just here to get a piece of paper.”
* Testing – “I don’t feel that testing is an impediment. Standardized testing for world history is poorly designed, but poorly designed for my benefit. You can learn nothing and still pass based on your ability to read. Because that, I can teach non-Eurocentric material. However, the ability to read and pass is still an issue.”
* Culture of community – “Yes, the culture of the community is an impediment. There are parts of the community that have experienced multigenerational poverty. I don’t know what I could do, and I am currently not doing much. This really affects the culture of the school and the teaching in the school.”
* “Yes, my school holds a voter registration drive.”
* “There are other teachers who do a very good job of engaging students in discussions. When students discuss, they learn and engage more.”
* “The biggest part of civic engagement is being actively involved.”
* “One problem with the civic engagement is that school ends up being very isolated from the rest of the world. They are in a box. There needs to be more of a connection between the classroom and the real world.”
* “There needs to be less of a wall between politicians, community activists, and students. Even field trips would be an improvement.”
* “This isn’t about just knowledge. We just need to give them the ability to engage with the world.”

**Leslie Norber**, Riverside High School

* Teaches 11th grade American history 1 and 2
* In the past has taught U.S. history, U.S. government, economics (7th year teaching, 2nd in North Carolina, 5 previous in Arlington, VA)
* “My goal as a social studies teacher to help students understand that democracy depends on them”
* “They are part of the system. The system only works if people speak out.”
* “History shows that the world is dependent on people agitating government to live of to the promises of their founding.”
* “I try to get students to see that they have agency – people like them have affected change.”
* “Since voter registration is not automatic – school can be a center of action/communication. People can come in to register students. This is important, since students are more likely to vote if they are registered.”
* “It is really important to show kids – since voting is all done in the abstract. This makes things more real and takes away the mystery of it all/”
* “Yes, there is a voter registration drive. The organizations were YouCanVote and the League of Women Voters. Some teachers do it on their own.”
* “Voter registration can get awkward if someone is not a citizen.”
* “I have to be sensitive to both citizenship and to felony convictions. The age for adult court is 16 in North Carolina. I have students who have served time. This brings up a debate – have you removed yourself from society by committing a crime? As a teacher, I can facilitate that conversations, and they can take it or leave it.”
* “I don’t ask my students what their citizenship status is – but when it comes up, some students avert their eyes.”
* “In terms of felony convictions, the majority of my school is non-white. Everybody knows someone who has been convicted.”
* “Hopefully the students can go home and say, ‘Hey, we learned today that you can vote if you are done serving your time.’”
* Parents – “I haven’t heard or seen any frustration about registration. The only time this can get somewhat uncomfortable is that students can register as a political party. There are relatively few students wearing Trump gear or talking openly about supporting him People make comments or give looks.”
* “Testing absolutely has an impact. When I taught a survey course on U.S. history, there was no test. If I needed more time, I had it. Now, with the test, I have very little flexibility and wiggle room.”
* “The difficulty is teaching a narrative rather than just a list of factors.”
* “There is a debate around teaching to a test. If I do it, then I validate the test. If I don’t, I am doing my students a disservice. Some say that you just need to teach them to think – the issue is that some can’t read almost at all.”
* “Another challenge is that the standardized test is 20% of the semester grade.”
* “Best practices say that I should teach critical thinking. There is a disconnect between best practices and what state says. But I understand that the state wants evidence that I’m doing my job.”
* “When my students come back to class after the standardized test – they are a mess; they are catatonic. They are really fried – the test is long, boring, and hard – and they don’t see the point.”
* “We need to continue doing voter registration in schools. And we need to provide opportunities to interact with elected officials. We need to teach students community organizing principles.”
* “A lot of students feel victimized by government policy and don’t think that they can affect change. I need to help them understand the role that they can play in democracy.”