College, Career, and Citizenship Readiness:

Preparing the Next Generation of American Citizens

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What is Civics Education?

The term civic learning is used to emphasize the civic significance of preparing students with knowledge and for action. Today’s education for democracy needs to be informed by deep engagement with the value of liberty, equality, individual worth, open-mindedness, and the willingness to collaborate with people of differing views and backgrounds toward common solutions for the public good. These qualities are not automatically transmitted to the next generation, they must be passed down through schools. Ultimately, schools are the guardians of democracy.
Core Civic Competencies

§ Civic Content Knowledge - Civic content includes both core knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge to different circumstances and settings.

§ Civic Skills – Intellectual – Intellectual civic skills encompass knowing how to identify, assess, interpret, describe, analyze, and explain matters of concern in civic life.

§ Civic Skills – Participatory – Civic participatory skills encompass knowing how to cope in groups and organizational settings, interface with elected officials and community representatives, communicate perspectives and arguments, and plan strategically for civic change.

§ Civic Dispositions - Civic dispositions encompass interpersonal and intrapersonal values, virtues and behaviors (respect for others, commitment to equality, capacity for listening, capacity to communicate in ways accessible to others, etc.).
§ **Classroom Instruction**: Schools should provide instruction in government, history, economics, law, and democracy.

§ **Discussion of current events and controversial issues**: Schools should incorporate discussion of current local, national, and international issues and events into the classroom, particularly those that young people view as important to their lives.

§ **Service-Learning**: Schools should design and implement programs that provide students with the opportunity to apply what they learn through performing community service that is linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction.

§ **Extracurricular Activities**: Schools should offer opportunities for young people to get involved in their schools or communities outside of the classroom.

§ **School Governance**: Schools should encourage student participation in school governance.

§ **Simulations of democratic processes**: Schools should encourage students to participate in simulations of democratic processes and procedures.
The Civics Renewal Network

• The Civics Renewal Network is an alliance of 26 nonprofit, nonpartisan organizations that provide free online classroom resources for civics education.

• Sharing the belief that understanding the Constitution plays a vital role in creating knowledgeable and engaged citizens, they agreed to work together as the Civics Renewal Network to raise the visibility of civics education and to make high-quality resources more accessible to teachers through a one-stop website.

• The network partners collaborate on developing resources on events such as Constitution Day and Bill of Rights Day.
Civics Renewal Network Partners

The Troubling Decline in Civic Knowledge

A survey released last year by the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania found that –

– Only 1 in 3 Americans could name all three branches of the U.S. government, while just as many could not identify even one; and,

– And about 1 in 10 Americans say the Bill of Rights includes the right to own a pet.
The Troubling Decline in Civic Knowledge

- Only 23% of students score at or above proficient in basic civics knowledge.

- Proficient students can –
  - Explain the purposes that government should serve.
  - Recognize discrepancies between American ideals and reality.
  - Describe continuing efforts to address those discrepancies.
  - Explain how citizens influence government.
The Civics Education Crisis Extends to Higher Education

We are not only failing to teach our citizens about U.S. history and the Constitution in primary and secondary school, but also in college.

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni surveyed 1,100 colleges and universities last year and found that only 18.3% of those schools required even a single foundational course in American government or history.
The Funding Crisis in Civics Education

In 2011, federal funding for civics education through the U.S. Department of Education was zeroed out, cutting nearly $35 million of support from the civics education community.

Between 2011 and 2013, private foundations gave between about $33 and $41 million dollars annually to the entire civics education community. By point of comparison, just the Intel Foundation (one foundation out of hundreds) gave $45 million to STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education.
Without Civics Education, Our Students.

- Shut out other perspectives, opinions and values.
- Develop partisan mindsets.
- Cannot effectively advocate for themselves.
“Though [the people] may acquiesce, they cannot approve what they do not understand.” - Thomas Jefferson, Opinion on Apportionment Bill, 1792
But there’s hope!

“I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves: and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education. This is the true corrective of abuses of constitutional power.” – Thomas Jefferson
The Civics Renewal Network: Our Approach

- Foster civic knowledge, skills and attitudes
- Integrate 21st century skills
- Promote civic equality

{ Create free classroom tools
Provide teacher training
Convene content providers }
In Action: The Newseum
In Action: The Constitutional Sources Project (ConSource)

Connecting citizens of all ages to the text and history of the United States Constitution
How State Legislators Can Get Involved in Helping to Solve the Civics Education Crisis
Informal Ways State Legislators Can Promote Civic and Constitutional Knowledge

• Hand out pocket Constitutions to constituents
• Direct educators to the Civics Renewal Network website
• Keep a list of organizations and websites that provide free or low cost information about our nation’s Constitution and system of government.
• Participate in or host a Constitution Day or Bill of Rights Day program in your state or locality. [Reach out to us, we can help you plan!]
• Participate in a naturalization ceremony on Constitution Day.
• Participate in the Preamble Challenge Challenge on Constitution Day.
Civics Education in the States

• All states have some requirement for civic education, though such requirements come through a variety of mechanisms.

• While all states have some requirements related to civic education, only about half of the states assess student learning in this area and hold schools accountable for such learning.
## Civics Education in the States

### Civic Education Assessment and Accountability in the States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Policy</th>
<th>Number of States</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civics, citizenship education, or social studies included in state standards</td>
<td>All states and the District of Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civics or citizenship education included in curriculum frameworks</td>
<td>44 states and the District of Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civics or citizenship education included as high school graduation requirement</td>
<td>All states and the District of Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civics, citizenship education, or social studies included in other state statutes</td>
<td>48 states</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civics, citizenship education, or social studies included in state administrative codes</td>
<td>24 states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civics, citizenship education, or social studies included in state assessments</td>
<td>33 states</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social studies included as a required state assessment</td>
<td>23 states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies included as a test students are required to pass in order to graduate high school</td>
<td>10 states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civics, citizenship education, or social studies included in state accountability system</td>
<td>24 states</td>
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</tbody>
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A comprehensive state civic education policy should address the following elements of instructions –

§ Standards and curricula for civics education at each grade level.

§ Inquiry-based instruction that results in informed action and demonstration of learning.

§ Integration of civic learning across all academic disciplines.

§ Teachers at all levels and in all course who are well prepared to be civic educators.
Effective State Policies for Civic Education

A comprehensive state civic education policy should address the following elements concerning continuous improvement and accountability:

§ Assessments of student progress toward civic learning outcomes used to measure student performance and inform instructional efforts.

§ Accountability indicators of teacher, school, and district performance.

§ Measures of community impact.
We Need Well-Prepared Civic Educators

Important components of professional development and teacher preparation that support the successful implementation of civics curricula include:

- Mastering methods of engaged pedagogies and student-centered learning across academic disciplines.
- Understanding how to use high-quality reflection and relevant assessment tools.
- Fostering a tolerant educational climate.
- Leveraging community resources in support of civic engagement.
Examples of Successful State Programs – State/Private Partnership – Democracy Schools, Illinois

The Illinois Civic Mission Coalition (ICMC) awards the distinction of “Democracy School” to schools that show a deep commitment to civic learning and the state’s commitment to civic education is reflected by the increase in the number of Democracy Schools from 4 in 2006 to 52 in 2016.
The school’s mission states that “by engaging students with an appreciation for history and an understanding of the democratic principles embodied in the United States Constitution, this college preparatory high school will develop the next generation of engaged citizens and civic leaders in government, public policy, and law.”
Continuous Improvement and Accountability

- Assessment of student progress toward civic learning outcomes used both for individual students and aggregated for subgroups of students that include some combination of the following –
  - Traditional standardized tests.
  - Alternative/authentic assessments (e.g., essays, projects, posters, presentations, etc.).
  - Experiential and project-based learning, including service-learning and action civics.
Continuous Improvement and Accountability

• Accountability indicators of teachers, school, and district performance, such as
  – Student surveys (e.g., attitudes and dispositions, behaviors and practices, educator behaviors, school climate, etc.)
  – Educator surveys (regarding school climate, administrator supports, etc.)
  – Number and types of pre-service and in-service opportunities offered and taken.
  – Educator evaluations on indicators related to civic education (e.g., whether an educator supports open and respectful discourse in his/her classroom).
  – School-level measures (e.g., attendance, on-time graduation, bullying rates, etc.)
Continuous Improvement and Accountability

• Measures of community involvement, including:
  – Community surveys (e.g., regarding student contributions to community, connection to the school, etc.)
  – Broader measures of community civic health (e.g., The Civic Health Index).
Examples of Comprehensive Civics Assessments in Utah, Florida and Tennessee
Examples of Successful Civic Education Policy Initiatives in the States

- The Florida College System Civics Literacy Initiative
- The Massachusetts Commission on Civic Learning and Engagement
- The Virginia Commission on Civics Education