



NEWSLETTER

About Us

The Campaign to Promote Civic Education effort is a fifty state campaign (including the District of Columbia) aimed at restoring the civic mission of our nation's schools by encouraging states and school districts to devote sustained and systematic attention to civic education from kindergarten through twelfth grade. This quarterly newsletter provides a forum for information exchange in the civic education community; it is produced by the Center for Civic Education (Center). For more information on the Campaign to Promote Civic Education, please contact:

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Guest Columnists: Dr. Sheldon Berman and Dr. Natalie Bolton

Sheldon H. Berman, Ed.D. became the superintendent of the Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky in July 2007, having previously served as the superintendent of the Hudson (MA) Public Schools for 14 years. A former social studies teacher and the founder and past-president of Educators for Social Responsibility, he is the author of numerous articles, books and book chapters on civic education, character education, service-learning, and education reform.



Natalie Bolton, Ph.D. is the Director of the Office of Civic Education and Engagement at the University of Louisville whose mission is to enhance teacher content knowledge and pedagogy in the area of government and civics. She is a former middle school social studies teacher, middle school assistant principal and P-12 state social studies consultant with the Kentucky Department of Education. Natalie's research interests include civic education and engagement, assessment and curriculum design. Currently, she also serves as a district coordinator for We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution and We the People: Project Citizen and assists with Civitas partnerships in South Africa and Morocco.



CIVIC EDUCATION NEEDS TO BEGIN EARLY

All too often, civics instruction at the elementary level means teaching children to abide by the rules, understand patriotic symbols, and absorb a simplified version of American history as teachers race—in nine months—from early exploration of the Western Hemisphere to twenty-first century United States. We inaccurately assume that if we provide children with basic academic competency, they will naturally evolve into good citizens. This lack of attention to the development of civic understandings and skills among elementary-age children derives in part from a misconception that children are unaware of the social and political world around them and are unable to understand that world.

However, research indicates that children formulate at a very young age a concept of how society works and their role in it. In fact, in a longitudinal study of children's political understanding, Moore, Lare, and Wagner (1985) found that some kindergartners were aware of select current political events. More significant, they found that children made the greatest gains in political understanding between the second and fourth grades.

Pressures of federal and state accountability testing have narrowed the elementary curriculum. Social studies, the arts, and physical education have been impacted the most by the No Child Left Behind Act's assessment focus on reading, mathematics, and science. Although a balanced curriculum that encourages the teaching of all core content (language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) is often supported by state legislation, administrators and teachers intentionally sacrifice social studies instructional time for additional preparation in tested curricula. The decline of civic education impacts the future

Funding Report

Since March 2009, the Center for Civic Education has committed more than \$20,000 to the following states to advance the efforts of Campaign facilitators:

Arizona	Colorado	Maine	New Jersey	Rhode Island
\$5,000	\$2,500	\$6,000	\$5,000	\$5,000

(*Berman and Stiglitz, cont.*) of our communities and the development of future leaders, and is rightfully a concern not only of educators but also of local business and community leaders.

Over the past two decades, elementary social studies has received very little public or private funding to support research and development of high-quality materials and instructional strategies. The National Science Foundation has provided tens of millions of dollars to underwrite the development of high-quality math and science curricula that are now used throughout the country. However, there is limited federal funding available for social studies such as the federal Teaching American History grants that support the deepening of traditional American history content knowledge—predominantly for middle and high school teachers—and the We the People programs that provide an innovative course of instruction on the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. These are important investments that we need to build upon.

Finally, and most importantly, the current content of most commercial social studies programs does not address the needs of urban students, many of whom live in poverty. Poverty and racism leave behind an extended generational wake of disempowerment. In a culture of poverty, individuals tend to feel powerless to change their circumstances. Civic engagement means little when one believes there is no return on the investment of time and effort. The nationwide academic achievement gap may actually reflect an empowerment gap experienced by students and families. Impoverished students need a strong social studies curriculum that teaches the value of community; that honors and affirms cultural diversity; and that develops the knowledge, skills, and convictions to overcome personal circumstances and become responsible and contributing members of our democratic society.

We can and must do better. The Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky, and the Office of Civic Education and Engagement at the University of Louisville, in partnership with a wide variety of community organizations, through the

support of the JPMorgan Chase Foundation, are developing an innovative, dynamic, and powerful elementary social studies curriculum that will enable students to experience the value of community and culture and empower them to participate in making a difference for themselves and their community.

Research indicates that civic development doesn't just happen. It takes intention, attention, and time. Because children acquire a general concept and fill in the details later, particular concepts serve as cognitive organizers to help them make sense of new information. Students who grasp these organizers are significantly more knowledgeable than those who do not.

At its base, the elementary social studies curriculum must be focused on three core concepts: community, culture, and civic participation. These ideas must be interwoven throughout the elementary years in a way that leads students to understand that

- they are a valuable part of a larger community and must carry out responsibilities to ensure the community works together to protect and promote the common good;
- there is a diversity of cultures in the United States and throughout the world and we can learn much about our commonalities from the traditions and values of these cultures; and
- civic participation matters and we can make our community and our world more just through individual and collective actions.

The ultimate goal of our emerging elementary social studies program is to provide a solid grounding in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that support a student's confidence in and commitment to civic engagement. To achieve this goal, we have outlined a six-year sequence that builds upon itself.

The proposed curriculum introduces primary-age children to the concepts of community and culture so they begin to understand the interrelatedness of individuals and to appreciate the diversity of cultural backgrounds within our community. The focus for kindergarten and first grade is on creating community from diversity. Students learn about self-identity and the

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Federal Update

Congress has moved closer to restoring funding for civic education programs supported under the Education for Democracy Act. In July 2009, both chambers of Congress took action supportive of the Center's programs. The full House of Representatives passed an appropriations bill that includes funding for the Center for Civic Education's domestic and international programs, among others, with a modest increase. The Senate Appropriations Committee restored funding for the Education for Democracy Act to the FY09 level. The full Senate is expected to take up the appropriators' bill in the coming weeks.

A "Dear Colleague" letter campaign in support of the Education for Democracy Act garnered support from 99 members of the U.S. House and 33 U.S. Senators, an extremely high signature total for this type of funding letter. In their budget proposal to Congress, the Administration had proposed converting the Education for Democracy Act programs, and two other small federal programs, into a competitive grant program administered by the U.S. Department of Education. However, the House and Senate Appropriations committee rejected that proposal and supported the Education for Democracy Act which provides equitable, fair, and even assistance to every state and congressional district.

The Center supports the idea of a competitive grant program in the U.S. Department of Education. However, the Center believes that such a program should be in addition to, not as a replacement for, a proven and successful program that effectively meets the well-documented need to improve civic education in our nation's schools. The Center plans to work cooperatively with others to establish a competitive grant program in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, in addition to reauthorizing the Education for Democracy Act. The Education for Democracy Act programs are authorized in current law and have been supported by the U.S. Congress for more than two decades. The provisions of the Act include the We the People programs that have been highly successful in raising student achievement in civics, and whose effectiveness have been validated by independent studies and evaluations. For more information on these studies please visit www.civiced.org/research

Civics on the Web

The Center for Civic Education is pleased to announce 60-Second Civics www.civiced.org/index.php?page=60_second_civics_podcast, a new daily podcast that provides a quick and convenient way for listeners to learn about our nation's government, the U.S. Constitution, and American history. The podcast explores themes related to civics and government, the constitutional issues behind the headlines, and the people and ideas that formed our nation's history and government. You can also follow the podcast on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).



Follow the Center on Twitter

The Center has launched three new Twitter feeds to broaden its public outreach. The first, the Center's general Twitter feed, can be found at www.twitter.com/civiceducation. It provides a daily update on what's happening at the Center. The second is the 60-Second Civics Twitter feed, which provides daily tweets about the podcast. It can be found at www.twitter.com/60SecondCivics. The third feed is www.twitter.com/GovGuru. GovGuru is an ambitious project to adapt the Center's Elements of Democracy text to a question-and-answer format for Twitter. It went live on Constitution Day. Follow all three feeds to get a daily dose of civic education.

Facilitator Meeting

The Campaign hosted a meeting of state facilitators at the We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution Coordinators Conference on June 27, 2009. Facilitators in attendance had an opportunity to talk with co-managers and provide feedback on a range of initiatives including the newsletter, the national civic education survey, the *Advocacy for Civic Education* report, and the campaign website, <http://campaign.civiced.org> The Campaign is interested in receiving comments. Please submit your ideas to Liza and Justin or email them to

State Update: Montana

Facilitator: Sally Broughton

In 2006, the Committee for the Civic Mission of the Schools of Montana conducted a survey to determine the state of civic education in Montana schools. A glaring result: for many years, Montana teachers had not been offered inservice opportunities in civic education. Therefore, one of the major goals of the committee became providing this professional development experience to interested teachers.

In 2009, thanks to a grant from Humanities Montana—with assistance from the Center for Civic Education and Representative Democracy in America—forty-one teachers met from June 14–19 at Montana State University – Billings for a week of civic education training. Teachers came from across the state, some traveling as far as 350 miles to attend.

Submitted by Sally Broughton

State Update: Colorado

Facilitator: Barbara Miller

The Center for Education in Law and Democracy (CELD) participated in a formal review process of newly drafted grade-level expectations released in Colorado. CELD organized a meeting of educators, scholars, legislators, and representatives of the legal community and foundations on August 10, to review and offer formal comment on the drafts. With recommendations from experts in the state, CELD submitted a formal response to the draft standards on August 31.

National Conference

The National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) held its annual conference on September 9. A wide range of panelists, representing the government sector, civil society, and corporate America, led an interactive discussion based on the theme “Sustainable Impact: A Civic Return on Investment.” In addition to the more than 500 participants in attendance at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., NCoC opened the conference to students and citizens online and invited active virtual participation through Twitter. To find out more about the conference and the state of civic health in the United States, visit: www.ncoc.net.

State Update: New Jersey

Facilitator: Arlene Gardner

The New Jersey Center for Law Related Education (NJCLRE) has been working over the past year on three items to directly improve the state of civic education. These efforts are: lobbying the New Jersey State Board of Education to include a semester of civics as part of high school graduation requirements; working with the New Jersey State Department of Education to revise proposed new state social studies standards; and working with stakeholders and legislators to develop support for Assembly Bill A-1071, which would require a civics course in the middle-school grades. The New Jersey Coalition, headed by NJCLRE, plan to continue these extensive efforts in the fall when committee hearings are expected on A-1071.

Virginia

Facilitators: Kelly Carmichael and Sean O’Brien

The Virginia Commission on Civics Education met on September 15, approving the planning of a 2010 Symposium on Civics Education to be held on March 30-31. This Campaign event will bring in a national perspective on assessing civics in the 21st Century in the wake of Virginia’s recent debate over the elimination of K-3 Social Studies test. The symposium will bring the state commissioners, the consortium of social studies specialists and civic educators together to examine civic education and its current means of assessment in Virginia; a draft report from the meeting’s working groups is anticipated by May 15, 2010. The Virginia Commission held its annual state Civics Summit on September 24, 2009. More information about the summit is available at legis.state.va.us.

Campaign Resources

The Campaign is in the final stages of developing an informational brochure, expected November 15, 2009, that can be used as a resource to convince policymakers about the importance of civic education. The Center will conduct a mailing to facilitators—including the brochures and Campaign pins—later this fall.

different cultures represented in their classroom, and about how people with different backgrounds and skills live together in a community. In second grade, students study a variety of cultures and countries that reflect the cultures present in Louisville. They learn about two countries from each of four areas of the world, e.g., Sudan and Nigeria in Africa—nations from which new immigrants are arriving in Louisville. By studying community and culture, primary-age children acquire an understanding of the important role individuals play in a community and how diversity offers rich opportunities for learning. In addition, as they explore community and culture locally and around the world, children are introduced to the concept of rules and laws across cultures and countries, a critical organizing concept for deeper understanding of civic engagement.

The third- through fifth-grade curriculum concentrates on voice and engagement. The third-grade program addresses history and civics on the local and state levels. Students focus on the essential question: “How do people make effective and responsible community decisions and improvements that benefit the common good?” Students first explore the evolution of Kentucky government from colonial times to the present, and then learn how local government works to serve community needs through coordination with local governmental agencies, individuals, and organizations.

The year closes with a service-learning experience in collaboration with the Metro United Way. Each school’s third-grade classrooms identify a need in their community, study an organization that is addressing that need in Louisville, and work with the organization to develop and implement an action plan to help achieve the organization’s goals. As a culminating activity, the district sponsors a “Make A Difference” fair in which each school develops and displays educational materials on the identified need and how the school collaborated with the organization to address the need. As a result, students develop foundational knowledge in how local and state governments work, as well as how individuals and organizations make a difference in the community. Engaging students in a well-organized service-learning experience that introduces them to the diverse ways people can make a difference empowers and inspires them to see how they, too, can act responsibly to improve their community.

Fourth graders undertake the study of the evolution of our political society through the lens of the development of civil and human rights. The essential question is, “What has enabled the United

States to overcome obstacles and history in order to expand the civil and human rights of people in the United States?” By studying three pillars of liberty (religious, economic, and political) and justice at the nation’s founding, students learn that civic participation of individuals and organizations has been critical in the expansion of civil and human rights in the United States. Topics of study include the First Amendment rights as represented in the American Revolution; the evolution of civil rights through the emancipation from slavery; the civil rights movement; and the expansion of rights for disabled, immigrant, and homeless persons in the last half-century. Their analytical inquiry yields dramatic illustrations of how people make a difference in a democratic society, while providing foundational historical knowledge and inspiring historical models.

Fifth graders extend this study of liberty and justice through the essential questions of “How has democracy developed and changed over time in the United States?” and “How can citizens contribute to a vibrant democracy?” Students study the formation of the Constitution and the evolution of participatory democracy in the early years of the Republic. They then explore the expansion of voting rights, our national political structures and processes, and the importance of civic engagement as a way to make a difference in our community. They examine the evolution of democratic participation as our culture progressed from an agrarian society to an industrial society to the information age. The year ends with students discussing the responsibilities of being a citizen and the opportunities to make a difference through civic engagement. Students use *We the People: Project Citizen* to study, address, and present a public policy of their choice to an audience of community members and elected officials. This activity empowers students to see the role that citizens, even those too young to vote, play in government, and demonstrates civic responsibility in a vibrant democracy.

This new curriculum is poised to unfold over the next few years. We believe that as a result of elementary students’ developing an understanding and appreciation of community, culture, and civic participation, they will come to understand that the answer to the essential questions posed in each of these grades is civic activism. As a result, students will begin to feel empowered to make a difference in their own lives and in the life of their community—and that will be a good outcome for all Americans.

Moore, S. W., Lare, J., and Wagner, K. A. (1985). *The Child’s Political Worlds: A Longitudinal Perspective*. New York: Praeger.