Center for Civic Education
PROMOTING THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF DEMOCRACY
The mission of the Center for Civic Education is to promote an enlightened and responsible citizenry committed to democratic principles and actively engaged in the practice of democracy in the United States and other countries. To that end, the Center administers a wide range of curricular, teacher-training, and community-based programs.
The Center for Civic Education is an independent, nonprofit organization with offices in Los Angeles, California, and Washington, D.C. The Center’s domestic programs are implemented in every state, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the United States Virgin Islands. The Center’s international programs involve partnerships with more than eighty other nations.

The Center has its roots in the interdisciplinary Committee on Civic Education formed in 1964 at the University of California, Los Angeles. The committee was established to develop more effective curricular programs in elementary and secondary civic education. In 1969 the Center became affiliated with the State Bar of California, and in 1981 it was established as an independent nonprofit organization.

The principal goals of the Center’s programs are to help students develop

- an increased understanding of the institutions of constitutional democracy and the fundamental principles and values upon which they are founded;
- the skills necessary to participate as effective and responsible citizens;
- the willingness to use democratic procedures for making decisions and managing conflict.

Ultimately, the Center strives to develop an enlightened citizenry by working to increase teachers’ and students’ understanding of the principles, values, institutions, and history of constitutional democracy.
We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution is a nationally acclaimed civic education program for upper elementary, secondary, and post-secondary school students. The program focuses on the history and principles of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. It is administered with the assistance of a national network of coordinators in every state and congressional district in the nation. The *We the People* curriculum not only enhances students’ understanding of the institutions of American constitutional democracy, it also helps them identify the contemporary relevance of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. The culminating activity of the program is a simulated congressional hearing in which students demonstrate their knowledge and skills as they evaluate, take, and defend positions on historical and contemporary constitutional issues. At the high school level, classes have the opportunity to take part in district, state, and national competitions.

Independent studies show that We the People students make gains in knowledge that are superior to those of comparison students. Students also display significantly greater political tolerance and commitment to the principles and values of the Constitution and Bill of Rights than do students using traditional textbooks and approaches.
The *We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution* high school text features a companion website, http://wtpcompanion.civiced.org, that provides a wealth of resources for students and teachers. This site includes a glossary, biographies, Supreme Court cases, primary sources, an annotated bibliography, podcasts, and videos.

Literacy guides designed to assist teachers of struggling readers are available for the middle school and high school levels. They can be downloaded for free at www.civiced.org.

The We the People Alumni Network provides program alumni with a means of staying connected and offers assistance to current program participants.

The We the People program is funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Education for Democracy Act approved by the United States Congress. Public funds are matched by donations of private funds, in-kind services, and other forms of support.
We the People: Project Citizen is a curricular program for middle, high, and post-secondary school students and youth groups that promotes competent and responsible participation in local, state, and federal government. The program is designed to help students learn how to monitor and influence public policy. In the process, they develop support for democratic values and principles, tolerance, and feelings of political efficacy.

Entire classes of students or members of youth organizations work cooperatively to identify a public policy problem in their community. They then research the problem, evaluate alternative policy solutions, develop their own public policy proposal, and create a political action plan to enlist local or state authorities to adopt their proposed policy. Participants develop a portfolio of their work and present their project to a panel of civic-minded community members in a simulated public hearing.
Every year, leaders of each state's Project Citizen program designate one exemplary middle school portfolio from their state to send to the annual Project Citizen national showcase. This culminating event is held in conjunction with the Legislative Summit of the National Conference of State Legislatures. State legislators, staff, and other adult volunteers from across the nation serve as evaluators, determining the level of achievement attained by each portfolio.

Independent studies of the effects of the Project Citizen program reveal that it has a significant impact on the civic knowledge of young people, their civic skills, and their propensity to participate in civic and political life.

The Project Citizen program is administered with the assistance of a national network of coordinators in every state and each congressional district in the nation and conducted with the assistance of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

We the People: Project Citizen is funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Education for Democracy Act approved by the United States Congress. Additional funding at the state level is also provided by an increasing number of state legislatures.
The Center has established national, state, and regional institutes, seminars, and workshops to explore the content and methodology of the We the People Programs for upper elementary, middle, and high school teachers. These institutes and workshops are held at universities and a variety of other venues across the nation.

**WE THE PEOPLE  The Citizen and the Constitution**

The purpose of We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution institutes, seminars, and workshops is to provide teachers with the content, teaching methods, and assessment strategies to help them effectively implement the curriculum through use of both the text and a simulated congressional hearing. These rigorous professional-development programs bring together teachers from across the United States to work with constitutional scholars from a variety of disciplines.

Teachers attend lectures and sessions dedicated to teaching methods appropriate to the *We the People* curriculum. They also participate in a simulated congressional hearing modeled on the We the People authentic assessment activity. A typical day consists of a morning lecture and discussion, early afternoon teaching strategies sessions, and a late afternoon hearing preparation. Participants are divided into groups led by mentor teachers who assist them in grasping content, applying classroom strategies, and preparing for a simulated congressional hearing held at the end of the institute.
WE THE PEOPLE  Project Citizen

We the People: Project Citizen hosts regional institutes each year across the United States. The purpose of these institutes is to provide teachers and youth organization leaders with a solid foundation for understanding the public policymaking process in a way that allows effective implementation of the Project Citizen program. These institutes are hands-on and interactive. They culminate with teachers producing a portfolio display board and documentation binder and participating in a simulated public hearing. Teacher mentors help guide participants through the program process and demonstrate grade-appropriate lesson plans throughout the week.

Participants are selected through an application process that includes a written essay and statement of administrative support. Selected participants must also agree to implement Project Citizen in their classroom or organization during the following academic year. Institutes are open to educators at all levels.

The Project Citizen curriculum has been translated and adapted for use in more than eighty nations in programs supported by the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of State, and the United States Agency for International Development.
The School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program is a curricular, training, and research program that provides students the opportunity to engage in high-quality civic education and group-participation exercises. The program is designed to improve students’ civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes. It provides in-depth training for teacher participants that supports the curriculums and emphasizes critical thinking, cooperative learning, group problem-solving, and performance-based assessment. The program includes research on changes in students’ civic knowledge and attitudes as they relate to tolerance for the ideas of others; civic responsibility; authority and the law; and social and political institutions.

The program is implemented in grades four through twelve in large urban, public, rural, and private school districts, as well as several Native American reservation schools. Each site is administered by a local site coordinator who works directly with participating teachers and students to provide support and guidance throughout the year.
Teacher participants attend a minimum of fifty hours of professional development during the school year and incorporate the program’s curricular materials—*Foundations of Democracy, We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution*, and *Project Citizen*—into their regular social studies curriculum. It is important to note that the School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program has blended the curricular materials from three separate programs. Although each curriculum deals with a different specific focus and content base, they are in fact interrelated. The relationship provides students with a strong knowledge base and a greater opportunity to engage in critical-thinking practices.

Teachers integrate a minimum of 90–110 hours of program instruction and involve students in two mandated activities: a public policy portfolio and a simulated congressional hearing.

The School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program is funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Education for Democracy Act approved by the United States Congress.
A Project of the Alliance for Representative Democracy

This national project educates Americans on the critical relationship between government and the people it serves. The program is implemented by the Center for Civic Education in partnership with the Center on Congress at Indiana University and the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Representative Democracy in America provides innovative elementary, middle, and high school educational materials, conducts teacher trainings, and informs the general public about representative democracy through a variety of media. In July 2008, the Alliance launched a professional development initiative to promote the use of its extensive curricular materials in classrooms across the country.

Through local workshops, teachers are given a greater understanding of the history, philosophy, and workings of state and federal government. The educators also learn classroom strategies from the project’s publications, video series, podcasts, e-learning modules, and virtual world instruction.
Representative Democracy in America Video Series

The Center’s major activity in this project is a six-part video series that helps middle and high school students understand our system of representative democracy. The six programs, each approximately fifteen minutes in length, address the following topics:

- The roots of representative democracy
- Federalism and the separation of powers
- The roles of representatives, executives, and justices
- Choosing representatives
- How representatives work
- Citizens’ roles in representative democracy

The video series is accompanied by an instructional guide that includes twelve lesson plans, a synopsis of each program, a bibliography, and correlations.

A seventh program on participation will be available in 2011. This video program features students discussing their involvement in government and examines how new media draws young people into the political process.

Representative Democracy in America is funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Education for Democracy Act approved by the United States Congress.
The Center for Civic Education’s Civitas International Programs bring exemplary civic education curricula to students worldwide in partnership with organizations in the United States and in eighty countries. This unique network of educators, civil society organizations, educational institutions, and governmental agencies has worked for more than a decade to develop high-quality curricular materials and train teachers throughout Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East.

Countries involved in the Center’s Civitas International Programs work cooperatively with the Center and its partners in twenty-nine U.S. states and the District of Columbia. These partnerships are designed to identify the civic education needs of each state and international site; to develop programs addressing those needs in a manner that takes advantage of the experience, expertise, and programmatic offerings of the partners; and promote their institutionalization.

The Center hosts an annual World Congress on Civic Education at which Civitas International Programs partners from around the world share new ideas and best practices. The fourteenth World Congress was held in Jakarta, Indonesia, July 23–27, 2010.
CIVNET.org

CIVNET.org is the website of Civitas International. Administered by the Center, CIVNET.org serves as an online clearinghouse and forum for civic educators, scholars, policymakers, civic-minded journalists, nongovernmental organizations, and others promoting civic education around the world. CIVNET.org is a place to interact, network, and share information, ideas, and resources as a virtual community. Users can discuss issues of mutual concern and publicize and disseminate civics lesson plans, syllabi, curricula, textbooks, and teaching materials without regard to borders, distances, or other physical barriers.
Foundations of Democracy is a K–12 curricular program based on concepts fundamental to an understanding of politics and government, such as Authority, Privacy, Responsibility, and Justice. This multidisciplinary program draws upon such fields as political philosophy, political science, law, history, literature, and environmental studies.

Since knowledge, skills, and dispositions are best developed when implemented at an early age, the Foundations curricular materials are designed to progress sequentially in scope and complexity through four levels: Grades K–2, 3–5, 6–9, and 10–12.

The primary goal of the Foundations of Democracy program is to promote civic competence and responsibility among the nation’s elementary and secondary students. The curriculum fosters attainment of this goal by

- promoting an increased understanding of the institutions of American constitutional democracy and the fundamental principles and values upon which they are founded;
developing the skills needed by young people to become effective and responsible citizens; and

increasing understanding and willingness to use democratic processes when making decisions and managing conflict, both in public and private life.

In this course of study, students are challenged to discuss and debate situations involving such topics as the use of authority, the protection of privacy, and the choices that need to be made between competing values and interests. Students are asked to decide how responsibilities should be fulfilled and how justice could be achieved in a number of situations. The methodology employed is the use of “intellectual tools” to evaluate these situations. Intellectual tools help students think clearly about issues of authority, privacy, responsibility, and justice. They help students develop their own positions and support their positions with reasons.

The knowledge and skills gained in this course of study allow students to address issues of public policy and help students navigate everyday situations.

Foundations of Democracy curricular materials have been developed and disseminated with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education.
The Campaign to Promote Civic Education is a fifty-state effort conducted with the assistance of a network of civic educators and other concerned citizens and organizations within each state and the District of Columbia. The Campaign has two principal objectives:

- To reaffirm the civic mission of our nation’s schools
- To encourage states and school districts to devote sustained and systematic attention to civic education from kindergarten through the twelfth grade

A series of four national annual summit conferences, the Congressional Conferences on Civic Education, have been cosponsored by the Center, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the Center on Congress at Indiana University. Across the country, state coalitions have been developed to restore the civic mission of schools. Fourteen states have created officially sanctioned state commissions on civic education. Thirty-seven pieces of legislation strengthening civic education efforts have been passed. For more information on the Campaign, visit www.representativedemocracy.org.
Every year, this national awards program honors three educators for their exemplary work in preparing young people to become informed and engaged citizens. Sponsored by the Center for Civic Education, the Center on Congress at Indiana University, and the National Education Association, the program is open to full-time, K–12 classroom teachers serving in public or private schools.

ACETA recipients receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., to participate in an educational program that includes observing committee hearings in Congress, meeting members of Congress and other key officials, and visiting sites such as the National Archives and the U.S. Supreme Court. The teachers are recognized during an awards ceremony at a major civic education conference.
NATIONAL STANDARDS

The *National Standards for Civics and Government* is a resource for the development and implementation of civic education programs. Widely in use as a model for state curricular frameworks and standards throughout the country, the text describes what students should know and be able to do in the field of civics and government at the end of grades 4, 8, and 12.

CIVITAS

*CIVITAS: A Framework for Civic Education* is a comprehensive K–12 model for civic education. CIVITAS sets forth the civic knowledge, skills, dispositions, and commitments necessary for effective citizen participation in the twenty-first century.

RES PUBLICA

*Res Publica: An International Framework for Education in Democracy* is an expression of a cross-cultural consensus on the central meanings and character of the ideas, values, principles, and institutions of democracy. It identifies common elements of knowledge that should be included in the curriculum of any nation desiring to promote an understanding of democratic citizenship and its practice.
ELEMENTS OF DEMOCRACY

The ideas that surround the practice of democracy are among the most consequential of the modern world and are destined only to become more so. Elements of Democracy is an exploration of the range of ideas that make up the vocabulary of democracy. It is an excellent resource for high school, college-level, and adult audiences.

AMERICAN LEGACY

A pocket-sized paperback edition, American Legacy: The United States Constitution and Other Essential Documents of American Democracy contains the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence together with passages from other documents that encompass essential ideas of American democracy. The documents are arranged chronologically beginning with the Mayflower Compact. An extensive index to the Constitution is included.

SCOPE & SEQUENCE

Education for Democracy: California Civic Education Scope & Sequence describes ways in which civic education content and skills are introduced in the primary grades and built on through high school. Designed to assist California educators, Scope & Sequence is also valuable for school administrators, district curriculum development coordinators, classroom teachers, school board members, and parents in every state. The scope and sequence for each grade level includes civic education content and skills, an overview of the content for that grade level, a description of the topics addressed within each grade level, and a matrix displaying standards, sample classroom applications, and sample resources.
The Center conducts a variety of quantitative and qualitative studies to determine program effectiveness. A goal of these studies is to measure political knowledge, civic competence, and civic dispositions related to responsible political engagement of American and international elementary and secondary students. In addition to research on students, the Center also funds evaluations of Center programs and professional development institutes for teachers. A complete list of studies can be viewed on the Center’s website at www.civiced.org.
We the People Participants Outperform Peers and Adults

- A 2011 survey of We the People alumni revealed that they are better informed and more politically engaged than their peers: 88% reported voting in November 2008, in contrast to 73% of their peers surveyed in a national sample of young adults.

- Surveys conducted annually from 1999 to the present reveal that We the People students who compete at the national finals outperform the national sample of students participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress in every category of civic knowledge. We the People students also correctly answered five key knowledge questions asked in the American National Election Studies at a rate of 73%, versus 17% of adults and 8% of high school students.

- A 2007 study conducted by RMC Research Corporation found that We the People students scored 30 percent higher than their peers, and 36 percent higher on average than college students on a comprehensive test of political knowledge. In addition, participating students made greater gains than comparison students in their understanding of core values, principles of democracy, and rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Participants improved their civic skills, including the ability to analyze issues, to debate, to persuade, and to achieve group consensus.

Students Excel in We the People: Project Citizen

- A recent study conducted by the Center evaluated Indonesian middle school students from eighty-four different ethnicities. Participants in Project Citizen demonstrated increased political participation by meeting with groups and officials, persuading others to support solutions to community problems, and attending council meetings.

- In a study consisting of pre- and posttests with matching control groups of middle and high school students in Colorado, Michigan, and Oklahoma, RMC Research Corporation found that students who participated in Project Citizen had more knowledge of public policy and democracy and possessed better problem-solving skills. Statistically significant results showed that students demonstrated greater growth than peers in their persuasive writing ability and in their ability to articulate, research, and advocate policy solutions in their essays.