

## **Appendix E - Educating for Democracy: Civic Education in the History–Social Science Curriculum**

“A Republic, if you can keep it.”

Benjamin Franklin, in response to the question, “Well Doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?” at the Constitutional Convention (1787)

“The qualifications for self-government in society are not innate. They are the result of habit and long training.”

Thomas Jefferson (1824)

“I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of 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.”

Thomas Jefferson (1820)

### **Why is Civic Learning Important?**

Preparing students for informed, skilled, and engaged participation in civic life is a key goal of social studies education and is addressed throughout the California History/Social Science Framework and Standards. Our constitutional democracy and its institutions depend on citizens who are knowledgeable about how government works, understand and abide by the rule of law, vote, serve as jurors, stay informed about and make evidence-based decisions about public issues, respect the rights of others, participate in public affairs, and seek the betterment of their communities, state, and country.

In twenty-first century California, civic learning is also important for a healthy economy and workplace. To succeed and thrive, the economy and business need stable and law-abiding communities, a populace that understands and embraces fundamental Constitutional principles such as free expression, the rule of law and the legitimate protections of property rights. They need an educated workforce. Business and the professions need leaders and individuals who can think critically, solve problems, make good decisions, respect the rights of coworkers, and work in heterogeneous environments.

Schools that support high-quality civic education programs provide students with opportunities to be engaged, motivated, and committed to their educational progress. In a high-quality civic education program, students have the opportunity to discuss and deliberate current issues, participate in simulations and activities that model governmental process and explore public policy making, engage in civic-based service learning, and develop participatory skills through school governance and extra-curricular activities that encourage civil discourse, working together, and consensus-building. Civic education addresses real-life issues and helps students understand the connections between the past and the present and between the present and the future.

### **What Are the Components of Civic Education?**

The components of civic education include knowledge and foundational content, cognitive skills, participatory skills, and dispositions that enable citizens to engage effectively in political and civil society. A high-quality civic education systematically addresses all four components at all grade levels

and builds upon skills and knowledge from one grade level to the next.

Knowledge and foundational content provide the basis for understanding constitutional democracy, including its historical and contemporary institutions, representative government, the functions and processes of the three branches of government, constitutional principles and concepts, federalism, the justice system, current issues and their historical, economic, and geographical contexts, public policy making at various levels of government, and international and global awareness. Students with a strong foundation in civic education will have learned the significance of landmark Supreme Court cases, how Congress works, the divisions and levels of government, citizenship roles and responsibilities, and national interests and their relationship to international relations, and human rights. Students will gain understanding of constitutional and democratic principles and concepts such as liberty, freedom, rule of law, individual rights and the rights of property, human rights, justice, equal protection, due process, representation, privacy, civic responsibilities, and “the common good.” Civic education would be ineffective without specific attention to the development of cognitive skills that help students engage in effective decision-making and problem-solving processes, evaluate sources of information, consider multiple viewpoints, construct and defend a position based upon reasoning and factual support, and develop intellectual skills that allow students to understand the interrelatedness of social, political, and economic issues. These cognitive skills are similar to and supplement the Historical and Social Science Analysis Skills that students learn to apply throughout the standards-based history–social science curriculum. With effective civic education, students will recall, recognize, and remember facts and information and understand democratic principles and concepts and be able to apply them to real-life social, political, and economic issues.

High-quality civic education develops critically important participatory skills that include listening and speaking, working together, encouraging and analyzing various points of view, engaging in civil discourse, deliberation, and debate, team-building, consensus-building, compromise, and effective communication and presentation. Activities that develop proficient participatory skills include structured discussions and deliberations, simulations of institutional processes such as mock trials, mock congressional hearings, or models United Nations activities, service-learning projects, debate, project-based civic actions, and project presentations. Dispositions and attitudes fostered through high-quality civic education include respect for legitimate authority, opposition to tyranny, tolerance, respect for diversity and different points of view, adherence to law, respect for and support of the rights of others, responsibility, equity and inclusiveness, being informed and interested in political and community issues, and active participation in civic life.

High-quality civic learning connects students to real civic life. Students can learn positive involvement through participation in actual governmental processes, such as working at the polls or volunteering in an election campaign, attending and analyzing legislative or administrative public meetings and hearings, visiting courts and attending trials, and communication and interaction with policymakers. Students should be presented with opportunities for school and community involvement through service-learning aligned to the curriculum, action civics projects, class discussion and debate, and participation in school governance.

### **How Is Civic Learning Integrated into the History–Social Science Curriculum?**

Civic-learning content and activities are contained throughout the Framework course descriptions for kindergarten through grade twelve. In addition, the Standards contain a rich array of civic learning

content and opportunities to address civic issues. Through expository reading, writing prompts, class projects, discussion of current events, service-learning, and inter-district student events such as mock trial, civic education can be a part of instruction at every grade level. Thinking and cognitive skills are developed as part of the writing program, expository reading activities, class discussions on application of knowledge, and analysis of historical events and the effects of the past on life in today's society. These skills should be developed and measured so as to build upon them from one grade level to the next.

### **What Are Effective Teaching and Assessment Strategies of Civic Learning?**

In the 2002 *Civic Mission of Schools* report, the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) identified six research-based learning strategies for civic education. In 2011, the *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools* report determined that additional studies strengthened and refined these original “promising approaches” and identified the following six strategies as “proven practices.”

- Classroom instruction in government, history, law, economics, and democracy
- Discussion of current events and controversial issues
- Service-learning linked to the formal and classroom curriculum
- Extra-curricular activities
- Student participation in school governance
- Simulations of democratic processes and procedures such as mock trials, mock congressional hearings, debates, and other participatory activities

These strategies reinforce the knowledge base of civics and government, encourage higher-level thinking skills, build participatory skills, and foster dispositions that support civic engagement.

Knowledge in civic education begins with the strong foundation in history and government gained through the standards-based curriculum in history–social science. Civic knowledge is supported through the teaching of expository reading and writing, research skill development, communication skills, and presentation skills. Expository writing includes problem-solving, taking a position and defending it, developing cause-and-effect narratives, exploring multiple perspectives, and applying conceptual knowledge to current events and global perspectives. Individual and group presentations include structured debate, mock trials, mock hearings, service-learning projects, public policy research and development, and visual displays. Groupings for the projects can be whole class projects, small teams, pairs, or triads of students. Mock hearings by a panel of three to six students can include presentations and follow-up questions by a panel of judges on constitutional issues, current events, landmark Supreme Court cases, and political issues.

Demonstration of civic education skills can be assessed through writing, oral and performance presentations, visual representations of research and application of information, project-based learning including service-learning, debate based on research, classroom dialogue and discussion, and questioning strategies.

## **How does the Common Core Support Civic Learning?**

The reading and comprehension, speaking and listening, and writing skills contained in *the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* support high quality civic learning and can be addressed with civic-learning strategies. Reading and comprehending complex discipline specific expository, narrative and persuasive text such as in foundational documents, court opinions, presidential speeches, candidate position papers, and opinion/editorial pieces introduces students to a rich array of civic content concerning democratic ideals and principles, governmental procedures and processes, and political issues and provides students with multiple opportunities to improve skills.

Listening and speaking skill development is essential for civic discourse. Listening for understanding about key ideas, different points of view and perspectives, claims and arguments helps students analyze and broaden their own perspectives, identify logical fallacies, and draw sounder conclusions. Speaking skill development prepares students to paraphrase information, articulate complex ideas, develop arguments, and take reasoned and evidence-based positions. These skills can be developed by participating in a range of civic-learning strategies including debate, structured discussion, and deliberation concerning public issues.

Writing informative, expository, and persuasive texts further develops students' ability to analyze information, consider and evaluate various points of view, develop and evaluate claims and arguments, and construct evidence based conclusions. These skills are important for civic engagement and can be developed utilizing civic writing activities such as letters to the editor, posts on political issue blogs, and the creation of position papers or opinion pieces. At the secondary level, these skills can be developed with research and writing projects on a current or controversial issue or as a central component of a civic action project.

## **How Does Civic Education Connect to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills?**

California is one of 19 states that have joined the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, a national collaboration to promote education that will prepare students for work and life in the modern world. In addition to a sound grounding in core subjects including civics and government, the partnership calls for students to develop learning and communication skills, particularly those that promote critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity; life and career skills, information, media, and technological skills. The development of these skills can be promoted by a high quality civic learning.

Through civic learning students develop strong foundations in understanding local, state, national and international issues. They develop problem-solving skills that address relevant issues. Through discussion, deliberation, simulations, service learning and civic action projects, they hone interpersonal skills that contribute to collaborative work, learn to build consensus and how to negotiate and compromise, and creatively seek solutions to local, national, and global issues. In conducting research-based projects and making presentations on their findings students can learn about and utilize a wide range of technology and media including the internet, social networking applications, presentation software such PowerPoint, and video production utilities.

## How Is Civic Learning Connected to Other Core Social Science Disciplines?

As mentioned in the introduction of this Framework, *The College, Career and Civic Life Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (C3 Framework) can be an important tool for local or site level curriculum planning and development and for teachers in refining their practice. The C3 Framework consists of four dimensions, Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries (Dimension 1), Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools from Civics, Economics, Geography and History (Dimension 2), Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence (Dimension 3), and Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action (Dimension 4). Each of these dimensions are important for preparing students to become informed and engaged.

Citizens are often confronted with civic-related compelling questions such as, What is justice? What is equal protection? What is due process? These kinds of questions lead to other questions, such as, Does affirmative action promote equal protection? or, Does police use of deadly force comport with due process? Each question raises additional questions and prompts planning inquiries to answer them. Dimension 1 maintains that students preparing for informed and engaged citizenship need to be able to anticipate and form questions and develop strategies for answering them.

To form reasoned and evidence-based conclusions about many local, state, national, and international issues, a citizen needs a sound grounding in the concepts and tools of civics, economics, geography, and history because each of these disciplines provide insight into the causes and contexts of the issues. For example, when considering a proposal to build a housing development on undeveloped land, economic and geographic factors often come into play. When considering a dispute over voting redistricting at the state level, historical evidence of discrimination and the political dimensions of the dispute could be important. Indeed, it is possible that content from all four disciplines may be important. For example, disputes over international borders, claims to territory, and issues of self-determination require the disciplinary lenses of all four disciplines. Dimension 2 recognizes that students need grounding in core social studies disciplines.

In today's information age, informed citizens must be prepared to evaluate multiple and often contradictory sources to identify evidence for constructing claims, making arguments, or drawing conclusions about public issues, policy and political candidates. Dimension 3 urges that students be given the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to both evaluate sources and effectively use evidence.

Effective engagement in civic life often requires collaboration, communication, the ability to critique, and persuasion. Moreover, it also requires citizens to make informed decisions and take informed action to address issues and problems. Dimension 4 recognizes these requirements and seeks to prepare young people to be able to construct effective explanations and arguments based on reasoning and evidence and communicate them to a variety of audiences through writing, speaking and the use of multimedia. They must also be able assess options and apply a range of deliberative and democratic strategies to make decisions and take action in and out of school.

### For Further Reference

*Education for Democracy, Scope and Sequence*, Los Angeles County Office of Education, 2003.

*Guardian of Democracy: the Civic Mission of Schools*, Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania and the Campaign for the Civic Mission of

Schools, 2011.

*Preparing Students for College, Career and CITIZENSHIP*, Los Angeles County Office of Education, 2011.

*California Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*, California Department of Education, 2013.

*College, Career & Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards*, National Council for the Social Studies, 2013.

*Revitalizing K-12 Civic Learning In California: A Blueprint For Action*, California Department of Education, 2014.

*A Blueprint for Environmental Literacy*, California Department of Education, 2015.