Democratic Life: Everything you need to know for party conference season

What can you do for Democratic Life at party conferences?

We understand that you will be attending party conferences for your own purposes, but we hope you will consider our suggestions for how you can also champion Democratic Life while you are there:

- Attend relevant events (on education, young people, engaging more people with politics etc)
- Let us know if you hear anything interesting related to citizenship education
- Ask questions at events to draw out panellists views on citizenship – and mention Democratic Life if you can!
- Spread the word about Democratic Life: our website – www.democraticlife.org.uk – has a wealth of information about the campaign, and citizenship education more broadly. Interested parties can also register their support on the website.

Democratic Life's key messages

(1) Citizenship education is the only National Curriculum subject that teaches young people about their rights and responsibilities as citizens – and how they can participate effectively in society – by developing their understanding of politics, democracy, the law and the economy.

- At a time of financial and political insecurity, it is more important than ever to promote citizenship education as the only National Curriculum subject that explains the way our democracy works and prepares young people for taking part in it – peacefully and responsibly – as citizens.

(2) Citizenship is an intellectually rigorous and successful qualification subject.

- We occasionally hear criticisms of citizenship education that suggest it is not thought of as a serious subject, but rather as a 'do-gooding' exercise that lacks intellectual rigour. These accusations are incorrect; citizenship education contains elements of politics, philosophy and economics (a highly respected combination of subjects) as well as law, ethics and sociology.
- A growing number of schools now offer the GCSE in citizenship studies - which involves students undertaking a research and social action project as well as an exam. 100,000 students a year take the GCSE compared to the 11,000 students who would be able to participate in the first year of the National Citizens Service.

(3) Citizenship can positively transform schools.

- Many schools – particularly those with trained, specialist teachers – are providing high quality citizenship education and are finding that, as a result, students' political knowledge, confidence, behaviour, and their motivation to become involved in their communities, improves.

About Democratic Life

Democratic Life is a coalition of over 600 individuals and 37 organisations who have come together to campaign for better citizenship education.

Along with over 300 of our supporters, Democratic Life recently submitted evidence to the National Curriculum Review being conducted by the Department for Education. We argued that citizenship education should remain a fundamental part of the National Curriculum to ensure that all English pupils learn about politics, the law and the economy.

Democratic Life's key achievements

- 37 supporter organisations[1]
- 650 individual supporters
- 300+ submissions to the National Curriculum Review call for evidence via the Democratic Life website
- Support drawn from across Parliament, from all parties
- 2 meetings with the Secretary of State for Education
- 1 meeting with the Chair of the National Curriculum Review, Tim Oates
- Press coverage in the Times Educational Supplement, the Guardian and SecEd

Future plans

While we have had several opportunities to meet with the curriculum review team to present our case for citizenship education to remain in the National Curriculum, we are very aware that it is crucial to demonstrate the width and depth of support for citizenship in the months leading up to January 2012 (when the review team will publish their proposals). Therefore, we are planning several initiatives with teachers and schools in the Autumn, encouraging them to open up their citizenship classes to MPs to demonstrate best practice and showcase the positive impacts the subject can have on young people. To be kept up to date with these activities, contact hello@democraticlife.org.uk.

---

[1]**Founding members:** Amnesty International; Association for Citizenship Teaching; British Youth Council; Changemakers; Citizenship Foundation; CSV (Community Service Volunteers); Hansard Society; Institute for Global Ethics UK Trust; involver; LSN. **Supporting organisations:** The Co-operative; The Law Society; Institute for Citizenship; United Nations Association – UK; Youth Action Network; UK Youth; Fairbridge; Civic Voice; Envision; British Institute of Human Rights; Democracy Matters; English Secondary Students' Association; Anne Frank Trust UK; National Association for Teaching of English; Media Trust; UNICEF UK; National Youth Agency; Five Nations Network; Public Legal Education Network (PLENET); UK National Commission for UNESCO; Oxfam GB; NUS; ActionAid UK; IARS; Unlock Democracy; ILEX; British Humanist Association.

National Curriculum Review key dates

Date	Action
January 2011	Review launched
January 2011	Call for Evidence (phase one) begins
April 2011	Call for Evidence (phase one) ends
Early 2012	Public consultation on phase one recommendations (including new Programmes of Study for English, mathematics, science and physical education
Early 2012	Call for Evidence (phase two) begins
Spring 2012	Ministers announce decisions on (1) the Programmes of Study for English, mathematics, science and physical education and (2) the other subjects to be included in the new National Curriculum
Spring 2012	Call for Evidence (phase two) ends
September 2012	New Programmes of Study for English, mathematics, science and physical education made available to schools
Early 2013	Public consultation on new Programmes of Study for all other subjects to be included in the National Curriculum
Spring 2013	Ministers announce decisions about the Programmes of Study for all other subjects to be included in the National Curriculum
September 2013	Teaching of the new Programmes of Study for English, mathematics, science and physical education becomes statutory
September 2013	New Programmes of Study for all other subjects included in the new National Curriculum are made available to schools
September 2014	Teaching of the new Programmes of Study for all other subjects to be included in the National Curriculum becomes statutory

www.democraticlife.org.uk