

Date Printed: 06/16/2009

JTS Box Number: IFES_79
Tab Number: 61
Document Title: History, Mission and Programs of the
Center for Civic Education
Document Date: 1996
Document Country: United States -- General
Document Language: English
IFES ID: CE01979



* C D 5 8 F E 4 5 - 3 6 A 1 - 4 7 F 9 - 9 8 B D - F 3 D 7 3 E F E 1 B 0 D *



History, Mission, and Programs of the CENTER FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

The Center for Civic Education, based in Los Angeles, California, has its roots in the interdisciplinary Committee on Civic Education formed at UCLA in 1964. The Committee was established to develop curricular programs in precollegiate civic education. It consisted of faculty from the departments of philosophy and political science, the law school, and the school of education. The Center's executive director, Charles Quigley, became the Committee's executive director in 1965. The Committee's programs were field-tested throughout the nation.

In 1969, the State Bar of California asked the Committee on Civic Education to develop a statewide civic education program. This curricular effort, called the Law in a Free Society project, focused on basic concepts of constitutional government such as justice, authority, privacy, and responsibility. The project was designed to serve kindergarten through twelfth grade and was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. In 1981, the Center for Civic Education became an independent nonprofit organization, although it remains affiliated with the State Bar.

The mission of the Center is to promote informed, responsible participation in civic life by citizens committed to values and principles fundamental to American constitutional democracy. Today, the Center administers a wide range of critically acclaimed curricular, teacher-training, and community-based programs. The principal goals of the Center's programs are to help students develop (1) an increased understanding of the institutions of American constitutional democracy and the fundamental principles and values upon which they are founded, (2) the skills necessary to participate as effective and responsible citizens, and (3) the willingness to use democratic procedures for making decisions and managing conflict.

The following statement of Thomas Jefferson expresses the Center's rationale and goals.

"I know of 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."

Center Programs and Publications

1. **We the People... The Citizen and the Constitution**, an instructional program on the history and principles of American constitutional democracy for elementary, middle, and high school students. The program is based on *We the People...* curricular materials developed by the Center and acclaimed by leading educators. Simulated congressional hearings, excellent for performance assessment, are built into the curriculum. At the high school level, classes may choose to enter a competition based on the simulated hearings that tests their knowledge of the Constitution. The program is funded by the U.S. Department of Education by act of Congress. Several studies by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) indicate that students who used the *We the People...* curriculum "significantly outperformed the comparison students" on every topic studied.

2. **We the People... Project Citizen**, a civic education program designed to foster the development of middle school students' interest and ability to participate competently and responsibly in their state and local government. The project is administered by the Center in cooperation with the National Conference of State Legislatures.
3. **Law in a Free Society Series, *Foundations of Democracy*** curricular materials for grades K-12 on basic concepts and principles of constitutional democracy—Authority, Privacy, Responsibility, and Justice. This multidisciplinary curriculum draws upon such fields as political philosophy, political science, law, history, literature; and environmental studies.
4. **Exercises in Participation**, a series designed to develop participatory skills for upper elementary and middle school grades. *Drugs in the Schools: Preventing Substance Abuse* and *Violence in the Schools: Developing Prevention Plans* help students develop a sense of responsibility as they create plans to combat substance abuse and violence in a hypothetical school.
5. **Youth for Justice**, a national network of programs designed to promote civic competence and responsibility at all grade levels and in all states. The Center and four other nationally recognized organizations work jointly to implement this civic education program. The program is committed to involving young people directly in identifying and implementing solutions that will lead to safe, disciplined, drug-free schools and communities. Youth for Justice is supported by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the U.S. Department of Justice.
6. **CIVITAS: A Framework for Civic Education**, a model curriculum framework for the nation's elementary and secondary schools, developed in collaboration with the Council for the Advancement of Citizenship with funding provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts.
7. **National Standards for Civics and Government**, standards for grades K-12 that identify what students should know and be able to do in the field of civics and government when they complete grades 4, 8, and 12. Developed with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the U.S. Department of Education and The Pew Charitable Trusts.
8. **Teacher Training and Summer Institutes**, in-service training and summer institutes for elementary, secondary, and college teachers, and curricular supervisors throughout the nation.
9. **The American Teacher Awards**, a national program sponsored by The Walt Disney Company and McDonald's, designed to honor teachers and inform the public of the contributions of the teaching profession, developed and implemented with the cooperation of major educational organizations.
10. **The Civitas International Civic Education Exchange Program**, a cooperative project of a consortium of leading organizations in civic education in the United States and other participating nations. The program is supported by the U.S. Department of Education and is being conducted with the cooperation of the United States Information Agency and its affiliated offices in participating nations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (EEN/NIS). The program enables civic educators from the United States and the EEN/NIS to learn from and assist each other in improving education for democracy.
11. **International Civic Education Programs**, conferences, exchanges of instructional materials, and other curricular assistance involving civic educators, scholars, and officials from the United States and other countries. The primary purpose of these programs is to exchange ideas and experiences regarding the goal of developing civic competence and responsibility among youth in a free society.

Center for Civic Education

5146 Douglas Fir Road / Calabasas, California 91302-1467
818-591-9321 / fax 818-591-9330 / e-mail center4civ@aol.com

September 1996