The role of civic education

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THE ROLE OF CIVIC EDUCATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

Societies have long had an interest in the ways in which their young are prepared for citizenship and in how they learn to take part in civic life. Today that interest might better be described as a concern in fact as a growing concern, particularly in democratic societies. There is evidence aplenty that no country, including our own United States, has achieved the level of understanding and acceptance of the rights and responsibilities among the totality of its citizens that is required for the maintenance and improvement of any constitutional democracy.
In the past decade we have witnessed dramatic demands for freedom on the part of peoples from Asia to Africa and from Central and Eastern Europe to Latin America. And as we have seen one totalitarian or authoritarian regime after another toppled and fledgling democratic governments replace them, we may have become too optimistic about the future of democracy. We also may have become too complacent, too sure of democracy's robustness or of its long term viability. History, however, teaches us that few countries have sustained democratic governments for prolonged periods, a lesson which we as Americans are sometimes inclined to forget. Americans, of course, should take pride and confidence from the fact that they live in the world's oldest constitutional democracy and that the philosophical foundations underlying their political institutions serve as a model for aspiring peoples around the world. The "shot heard 'round the world" two centuries ago at the opening of the American Revolution continues to resound today, and it should remind Americans that free institutions are among humanity's highest achievements and worthy of their full energies and earnest devotion to preserve.

Americans also should realize that civic education is essential to sustain our constitutional democracy. The habits of the mind, as well as "habits of the heart," the dispositions that inform the democratic ethos, are not inherited. As Alexis de Tocqueville pointed out, each new generation is a new people that must acquire the knowledge, learn the skills, and develop the dispositions or traits of private and public character that undergird a constitutional democracy. Those dispositions must be fostered and nurtured by word and study and by the power of example. Democracy is not a "machine that would go of itself," but must be consciously reproduced, one generation after another. Civic education, therefore, is or should be a prime concern. There is no more important task than the development of an informed, effective, and responsible citizenry. Democracies are sustained by citizens who have the requisite knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Absent a reasoned commitment on the part of its citizens to the fundamental values and principles of democracy, a free and open society cannot succeed. It is imperative, therefore, that educators, policymakers, and members of civil society make the case and ask for the support of civic education from all segments of society and from the widest range of institutions and governments.

It is relatively easy for a society to produce technically competent people. But the kind of society Americans want to live in and the kind of government they want to have requires effort and commitment on the part of its citizens. Americans want a society and a government in which human rights are respected
• in which the individual's dignity and worth are acknowledged
• in which the rule of law is observed
• in which people willingly fulfill their responsibilities, and
• in which the common good is the concern of all.

Making that kind of society, that kind of government a reality is the most important challenge Americans face and the most important work they could undertake.

II. WHAT IS CIVIC EDUCATION?

Civic Education in a democracy is education in self government. Democratic self government means that citizens are actively involved in their own governance; they do not just passively accept the dictums of others or acquiesce to the demands of others. As Aristotle put it in his Politics (c 340 BC), "If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost." In other words, the ideals of democracy are most completely realized when every member of the political community shares in its governance. Members of the political community are its citizens, hence citizenship in a democracy is membership in the body politic. Membership implies participation, but not participation for participation's sake. Citizen participation in a democratic
society must be based on informed, critical reflection, and on the understanding and acceptance of the rights and responsibilities that go with that membership.

Civic education in a democratic society most assuredly needs to be concerned with promoting understanding of the ideals of democracy and a reasoned commitment to the values and principles of democracy. That does not mean, however, that democracy should be presented as utopia. Democracy is not utopian, and citizens need to understand that lest they become cynical, apathetic, or simply withdraw from political life when their unrealistic expectations are not met. To be effective civic education must be realistic; it must address the central truths about political life. The American Political Science Association (APSA) recently formed a Task Force on Civic Education. Its statement of purpose calls for more realistic teaching about the nature of political life and a better understanding of "the complex elements of 'the art of the possible'." The APSA report faults existing civic education because all too often it seems unable to counter the belief that, in politics, one either wins or loses, and to win means getting everything at once, now! The sense that politics can always bring another day, another chance to be heard, to persuade and perhaps to gain part of what one wants, is lost. Political education today seems unable to teach the lessons of our political history: Persistent civic engagement the slow, patient building of first coalitions and then majorities can generate social change. (Carter and Elshtain, 1997.)

A message of importance, therefore, is that politics need not, indeed must not, be a zero-sum game. The idea that "winner takes all" has no place in a democracy, because if losers lose all they will opt out of the democratic game. Sharing is essential in a democratic society the sharing of power, of resources, and of responsibilities. In a democratic society the possibility of effecting social change is ever present, if citizens have the knowledge, the skills and the will to bring it about. That knowledge, those skills and the will or necessary traits of private and public character are the products of a good civic education.

III. WHAT ARE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF A GOOD CIVIC EDUCATION?

What are the essential components of civic education appropriate for a democratic society? That question was addressed recently in the course of the development of the National Standards for Civics and Government. (Center for Civic Education, 1994.) More than 3,000 individuals and groups participated in the development and/or review process. Those voluntary standards which have been well received and critically acclaimed, not only in the country of their origin but in many other nations as well, identify three essential components: civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions. Civic Knowledge Civic knowledge is concerned with the content or what citizens ought to know; the subject matter, if you will. In both the National Standards and the Civics Framework for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which currently is underway in schools across the United States, the knowledge component is embodied in the form of five significant and enduring questions. These are questions that have continued to engage not only political philosophers and politicians; they are questions that do or should engage every thoughtful citizen. The five questions are:

I. What are civic life, politics, and government?
II. What are the foundations of the American political system?
III. How does the government established by the Constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?
IV. What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?
V. What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?

The choice of question format as a means of organizing the knowledge component was deliberate. Democracy is a dialogue, a discussion, a deliberative process in which citizens engage. The use of questions is intended to indicate that the process is never-ending, is an on-going marketplace of ideas, a search for new and better ways to realize democracy's ideals.

It is important that everyone has an opportunity to consider the essential questions about government and civil society that continue to challenge thoughtful people. Addressing the first organizing question "What are civic life, politics, and government?" helps citizens make informed judgments about the nature of civic life, politics, and government, and why politics and government are necessary; the purposes of government; the essential characteristics of limited and unlimited government; the nature and purposes of constitutions, and alternative ways of organizing constitutional governments. Consideration of this question should promote greater understanding of the nature and importance of civil society or the complex network of freely formed, voluntary political, social, and economic associations which is an essential component of a constitutional democracy. A vital civil society not only prevents the abuse or excessive concentration of power by government; the organizations of civil society serve as public laboratories in which citizens learn democracy by doing it.

The second organizing question "What are the foundations of the American political system?" entails an understanding of the historical, philosophical, and economic foundations of the American political system; the distinctive characteristics of American society and political culture; and the values and principles basic to American constitutional democracy, such as individual rights and responsibilities, concern for the public good, the rule of law, justice, equality, diversity, truth, patriotism, federalism, and the separation of powers. This question promotes examination of the values and principles expressed in such fundamental documents as the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, The Federalist Papers, and landmark Supreme Court decisions. Study of the nation's core documents now is mandated by several states including California, Ohio, South Carolina, Florida, and Kentucky. The United States Commission on Immigration Reform in its 1997 Report to Congress (U.S. Commission on Immigration, 1997), strongly recommended attention to the nation's founding documents saying:

Civic instruction in public schools should be rooted in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution particularly the Preamble, the Bill of Rights, and the Fourteenth Amendment. Emphasizing the ideals in these documents is in no way a distortion of U.S. history. Instruction in the history of the United States, as a unique engine of human liberty notwithstanding its faults, is an indispensable foundation for solid civics training for all Americans.

Knowledge of the ideals, values, and principles set forth in the nation's core documents serves an additional and useful purpose. Those ideals, values, and principles are criteria which citizens can use to judge the means and ends of government, as well as the means and ends of the myriad groups that are part of civil society.

The third organizing question "How does the government established by the Constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?" helps citizens understand and evaluate the limited government they have ordained and established and the complex dispersal and sharing of powers it entails. Citizens who understand the justification for this system of limited, dispersed, and shared power and its design are better able to hold their governments local, state, and national accountable and to ensure that the rights of individuals are protected. They also will develop a considered appreciation of the place of law in the American political system, as well as of the unparalleled opportunities for choice and
citizen participation that the system makes possible.

The fourth organizing question "What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?" is important because the United States does not exist in isolation; it is a part of an increasingly interconnected world. To make judgments about the role of the United States in the world today and about what course American foreign policy should take, citizens need to understand the major elements of international relations and how world affairs affect their own lives, and the security and well being of their communities, state, and nation. Citizens also need to develop a better understanding of the roles of major international governmental and non-governmental organizations, because of the increasingly significant role that they are playing in the political, social, and economic realms.

The final organizing question "What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?" is of particular importance. Citizenship in a constitutional democracy means that each citizen is a full and equal member of a self-governing community and is endowed with fundamental rights and entrusted with responsibilities. Citizens should understand that through their involvement in political life and in civil society, they can help to improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods, communities, and nation. If they want their voices to be heard, they must become active participants in the political process. Although elections, campaigns, and voting are central to democratic institutions, citizens should learn that beyond electoral politics many participatory opportunities are open to them. Finally, they should come to understand that the attainment of individual goals and public goals tend to go hand in hand with participation in political life and civil society. They are more likely to achieve personal goals for themselves and their families, as well as the goals they desire for their communities, state, and nation, if they are informed, effective, and responsible citizens.

Civic Skills: Intellectual and Participatory

The second essential component of civic education in a democratic society is civic skills. If citizens are to exercise their rights and discharge their responsibilities as members of self-governing communities, they not only need to acquire a body of knowledge such as that embodied in the five organizing questions just described; they also need to acquire relevant intellectual and participatory skills.

Intellectual skills in civics and government are inseparable from content. To be able to think critically about a political issue, for example, one must have an understanding of the issue, its history, its contemporary relevance, as well as command of a set of intellectual tools or considerations useful in dealing with such an issue.

The intellectual skills essential for informed, effective, and responsible citizenship sometimes are called critical thinking skills. The National Standards for Civics and Government and the Civics Framework for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) categorize these skills as identifying and describing; explaining and analyzing; and evaluating, taking, and defending positions on public issues. A good civic education enables one to identify or give the meaning or significance of things that are tangible such as the flag, national monuments, or civic and political events. It also enables one to give the meaning or significance of intangibles, such as ideas or concepts including patriotism, majority and minority rights, civil society, and constitutionalism.

The ability to identify emotional language and symbols is of particular importance for citizens. They need to be able to discern the true purposes for which emotive language and symbols are being employed.

Another intellectual skill which good civic education fosters is that of describing. The ability to describe functions and processes such as legislative checks and balances or judicial review is indicative of understanding. Discerning and describing trends, such as participation in civic life, immigration, or employment helps the citizen fit current events
Good civic education seeks to develop competence in explaining and analyzing. If citizens can explain how something should work, for example the American federal system, the legal system, or the system of checks and balances, they will be more able to detect and help correct malfunctions. Citizens also need to be able to analyze such things as the components and consequences of ideas, social, political, or economic processes, and institutions. The ability to analyze enables one to distinguish between fact and opinion or between means and ends. It also helps the citizen to clarify responsibilities such as those between personal and public responsibilities or those between elected or appointed officials and citizens.

In a self-governing society citizens are decision-makers. They need, therefore, to develop and continue to improve their skills of evaluating, taking, and defending positions. These skills are essential if citizens are to assess issues on the public agenda, to make judgments about issues and to discuss their assessment with others in public or private.

In addition to the acquisition of knowledge and intellectual skills, education for citizenship in a democratic society must focus on skills that are required for informed, effective, and responsible participation in the political process and in civil society. Those skills can be categorized as interacting, monitoring, and influencing. Interacting pertains to the skills citizens need to communicate and to work cooperatively with others. To interact is to be responsive to one's fellow citizens. To interact is to question, to answer, and to deliberate with civility, as well as to build coalitions and to manage conflict in a fair, peaceful manner. Monitoring politics and government refers to the skills citizens need to track the handling of issues by the political process and by government. Monitoring also means the exercising of oversight or "watchdog" functions on the part of citizens. Finally, the participatory skill of influencing refers to the capacity to affect the processes of politics and governance, both the formal and the informal processes of governance in the community.

It is essential that the development of participatory skills begins in the earliest grades and that it continues throughout the course of schooling. The youngest pupils can learn to interact in small groups or committees, to pool information, exchange opinions or formulate plans of action commensurate with their maturity. They can learn to listen attentively, to question effectively, and to manage conflicts through mediation, compromise, or consensus-building. Older students can and should be expected to develop the skills of monitoring and influencing public policy. They should learn to research public issues using electronic resources, libraries, the telephone, personal contacts, and the media. Attendance at public meetings ranging from student councils to school boards, city councils, zoning commissions, and legislative hearings ought to be a required part of every high school student's experience. Observation of the courts and exposure to the workings of the judicial system also ought to be a required part of their civic education. Observation in and of itself is not sufficient, however. Students not only need to be prepared for such experiences, they need well planned, structured opportunities to reflect on their experiences under the guidance of knowledgeable and skillful mentors.

If citizens are to influence the course of political life and the public policies adopted, they need to expand their repertoire of participatory skills. Voting certainly is an important means of exerting influence; but it is not the only means. Citizens also need to learn to use such means as petitioning, speaking, or testifying before public bodies, joining ad-hoc advocacy groups, and forming coalitions. Like the skills of interacting and monitoring, the skill of influencing can and should be systematically developed.

Civic Dispositions: Essential Traits of Private and Public Character

The third essential component of civic education, civic dispositions, refers to the traits of private and public character essential to the maintenance
Civic dispositions, like civic skills, develop slowly over time and as a result of what one learns and experiences in the home, school, community, and organizations of civil society. Those experiences should engender understanding that democracy requires the responsible self-governance of each individual; one cannot exist without the other. Traits of private character such as moral responsibility, self-discipline, and respect for the worth and human dignity of every individual are imperative. Traits of public character are no less consequential. Such traits as public spiritedness, civility, respect for the rule of law, critical mindedness, and willingness to listen, negotiate, and compromise are indispensable to democracy’s success.

Civic dispositions that contribute to the political efficacy of the individual, the healthy functioning of the political system, a sense of dignity and worth, and the common good were identified in the National Standards for Civics and Government. In the interest of brevity, those dispositions or traits of private and public character might be described as:

• Becoming an independent member of society. This disposition encompasses adhering voluntarily to self-imposed standards of behavior rather than requiring the imposition of external controls, accepting responsibility for the consequences of one’s actions and fulfilling the moral and legal obligations of membership in a democratic society.

• Assuming the personal, political, and economic responsibilities of a citizen. These responsibilities include taking care of one’s self, supporting one’s family and caring for, nurturing, and educating one’s children. They also include being informed about public issues, voting, paying taxes, serving on juries, performing public service, and serving in leadership positions commensurate with one’s talents.

• Respecting individual worth and human dignity. Respecting others means listening to their opinions, behaving in a civil manner, considering the rights and interests of fellow citizens, and adhering to the principle of majority rule but recognizing the right of the minority to dissent.

• Participating in civic affairs in a thoughtful and effective manner. This disposition entails becoming informed prior to voting or participating in public debate, engaging in civil and reflective discourse, and assuming leadership when appropriate. It also entails evaluating whether and when one’s obligations as a citizen require that personal desires and interests be subordinated to the public good and evaluating whether and when one’s obligations or constitutional principles obligate one to reject certain civic expectations.

• Promoting the healthy functioning of constitutional democracy. This disposition encompasses being informed and attentive to public affairs, learning about and deliberating on constitutional values and principles, monitoring the
adherence of political leaders and public agencies to those values and principles and taking appropriate action if adherence is lacking. This disposition also inclines the citizen to work through peaceful, legal means to change laws that are thought to be unwise or unjust.

The importance of civic dispositions, or the "habits of the heart," as Alexis de Toqueville called them, can scarcely be overemphasized. The traits of public and private character that undergird democracy are, in the long run, probably of more consequence than the knowledge or skills a citizen may command. Judge Learned Hand, in a speech made in New York in 1944, captured the centrality of civic dispositions in his now famous words:

Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it. While it lies there, it needs no constitution, no law, no court to save it.

IV. WHERE AND HOW DOES CIVIC EDUCATION TAKE PLACE?

Many institutions help develop citizens' knowledge and skills and shape their civic character and commitments. Family, religious institutions, the media, and community groups exert important influences. Schools, however, bear a special and historic responsibility for the development of civic competency and civic responsibility. Schools fulfill that responsibility through both formal and informal education beginning in the earliest years and continuing through the entire educational process.

Formal Instruction

Formal instruction in civics and government should provide a basic and realistic understanding of civic life, politics, and government. It should familiarize students with the constitutions of the United States and the state in which they live, because these and other core documents are criteria which can be used to judge the means and ends of government. Formal instruction should enable citizens to understand the workings of their own and other political systems, as well as the relationship of the politics and government of their own country to world affairs. Good civic education promotes an understanding of how and why one's own security, quality of life, and economic position is connected to that of neighboring countries, as well as to major regional, international, and transnational organizations.

Formal instruction should emphasize the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a constitutional democracy. The Declaration of Independence, which many consider to be an extended preamble to the United States Constitution, holds that governments are instituted to secure the rights of citizens. Those rights have been categorized in various ways but a useful and generally accepted categorization divides them in this manner:

- **Personal rights** such as freedom of thought, conscience, expression, and association
  and freedom of residence, movement, and travel.
- **Political rights** such as freedom of speech, press, assembly, and petition, as well as
  the right to vote and run for public office.
- **Economic rights** such as the right to acquire, use and transfer property, to choose
  one's work or change employment, to join a labor union or a professional
  organization, to establish and operate a business, to obtain a copyright or patent, and
  to enter lawful contracts.

Instruction about rights should make it clear that few rights can be considered absolute. Rights may reinforce or conflict with one another or
with other values and interests and therefore require reasonable limitations. The rights of liberty and equality, for example, or the rights of the individual and the common good often conflict with one another. It is very important, therefore, that citizens develop a framework for clarifying ideas about rights and the relationships among rights and other values and interests. This framework then can provide a basis for making reasoned decisions about the proper scope and limits of rights.

Formal instruction in civics and government should be no less attentive to the responsibilities of citizens in a constitutional democracy. An understanding of the importance of individual rights must be accompanied by an examination of personal and civic responsibilities. For American democracy to flourish, citizens not only must be aware of their rights, they must also exercise them responsibly and they must fulfill those personal and civic responsibilities necessary to a self-governing, free, and just society. Those responsibilities include:

- **Personal responsibilities** such as taking care of one’s self, supporting one’s family, and caring for, nurturing, and educating one’s children, accepting responsibility for the consequences of one’s actions, adhering to moral principles, considering the rights and interests of others, and behaving in a civil manner.

- **Civic responsibilities** such as obeying the law, being informed and attentive to public issues, assuming leadership when appropriate, paying taxes, voting, serving as a juror, or in the armed forces, monitoring the adherence of political leaders and governmental agencies to constitutional principles and taking appropriate action if that adherence is lacking, and performing public service.

Instruction about responsibilities should make it clear that rights and responsibilities go hand in hand. Responsibilities are the other half of the democratic equation. A sense of personal responsibility and civic obligation are in fact the social foundations on which individual rights and freedoms ultimately rest.

**The Informal Curriculum**

In addition to the formal curriculum, good civic education is attentive to the informal curriculum. The informal curriculum encompasses the governance of the school community and the relationships among those within it, as well as the “extra” or co-curricular activities that a school provides.

The importance of the governance of the school community and the quality of the relationships among those within it can scarcely be overemphasized. Classroom and schools should be managed by adults who govern in accord with democratic values and principles, and who display traits of character, private and public, that are worthy of emulation. Students also should be held accountable for behaving in accord with fair and reasonable standards and for respecting the rights and dignity of others, including their peers.

Research has consistently demonstrated the positive effects of co-curricular activities. Students who participate in them are more motivated to learn, more self confident, and exhibit greater leadership capabilities. Further, a major new survey, the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health (1997), has found that “connectedness with school” is a significant protective factor in the lives of young people. “School engagement is a critical protective factor against a variety of risky behaviors, influenced in good measure by perceived caring from teachers and high expectations for student performance.”

Fortunately opportunities for co-curricular activities related to civic education have been expanding in the United States, and they need to be...
even more encouraged. Some activities have become regional or national events such as mock elections, mock trials, and History Day. Two nationwide programs developed by the Center for Civic Education have now involved more than 26 million students. *We the People... The Citizen and the Constitution* engages students in mock legislative hearings on constitutional issues, and *Project Citizen* teaches middle school students how to identify, research, and devise solutions for local problems, as well as how to make realistic plans for gaining their acceptance as public policies. Both *We the People...* and Project Citizen not only bring students into direct contact with government at all levels and with organizations in civil society, these programs have had other positive civic consequences as well. During the Spring of 1993, Professor Richard A. Brody of Stanford University conducted a study of 1,351 high school students from across the United States. The study was designed to determine the degree to which civics curricula in general and the *We the People...* program in particular affect students' political attitudes. The study focused on the concept of “political tolerance.” “Political tolerance” refers to citizens' respect for the political rights and civil liberties of all people in the society, including those whose ideas they may find distasteful or abhorrent. It is a concept which encompasses many of the beliefs, values, and attitudes that are essential in a constitutional democracy.

Among the most important findings of the Brody study were these:

- Overall, students in high school civics, government, and American history classes display more "political tolerance" than the average American.
- Students in classes using all or part of the *We the People...* curriculum are more tolerant than students following other curricula.
- Tolerance can be learned from experiences that expose one to the norms of American society and from experiences that require the individual to both explain and defend his or her point of view and listen carefully to the viewpoints of others.
- The highest levels of tolerance were demonstrated by students who participated in the simulated congressional hearing competitions which are an optional portion of the *We the People...* program.

Community service is another area of the curriculum in which increasing numbers of students are participating. Community service is in keeping with long established American traditions. It was more than a century and a half ago that Alexis de Toqueville was moved to write that "Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition in life, are forever forming associations. There are not only commercial and industrial associations... but others of a thousand different types religious, moral, serious, futile, very general, and very limited, immensely large and very minute." (de Tocqueville, 1969.) He marveled at Americans penchant for voluntary service to their communities and to causes in which they believed. The experience of getting involved in local voluntary associations, de Toqueville said, generated a sense of individual responsibility for the public good and inclined them to become "orderly, temperate, moderate, and self-controlled citizens."

Present day scholars tend to agree with de Toqueville's observations about the importance of voluntarism and of a vibrant civil society. Seymour Martin Lipset contends that These

Estimates of the number of adult Americans who perform voluntary services vary. A study conducted by the Center for Survey Research at the University of Virginia (Guterbock, 1997) found that about 44 percent of all adults had volunteered time in the preceding year. An earlier World Values Survey puts the number of Americans who are active in and do unpaid work for voluntary associations at "fully three fifths" of the adult population. Only about one quarter of the adults in Britain, Italy, or Japan do unpaid...
voluntary work, while less than a third do so in France or Germany.

The record of American youth for community service is of particular interest and is, in general, encouraging. In a recent study involving more than 8,000 students in grades six through twelve, about half of those interviewed reported participation in some type of service activity. Among those who participated regularly, 12 percent gave more that 30 hours and 19 percent more than 10 hours. Almost all (91 percent) of the students who participated in the 1995-96 school year indicated that they expected to continue to serve. (U.S. Department of Education, 1997.)

Among the more significant findings of that study of student participation in community service activities are these:

- While many students were involved, not all kinds of students were involved equally.
  - Those who were more likely to participate were students who received high grades,
  - females, students for whom English was the primary language they spoke at home,
  - and 11th and 12th graders. By contrast, students who received lower grades, males,
  - and 6th through 10th graders were less likely to participate.
- The greater the number of types of activities students were involved in (i.e., student government, other school activities, non-school activities, or work for pay), the more likely they were to participate in community service. Students who attended private schools, especially church-related schools, were also more likely to have done community service.
- Students were more likely to participate if an adult in the household participated in community service and if the highest degree held by a parent was a college degree or higher.
- The great majority of students (86 percent) were in schools that in some way encouraged community service, and these policies were related to student participation in community service.
- Many students also reported that their schools incorporated their community service into the curriculum.

Community service can be an important part of civic education, provided it is properly conceived as being more than just doing good deeds. Community service should be integrated into both the formal and informal curriculum of the school. Community service is not a substitute for formal instruction in civics and government, but it can enhance that instruction. Schools, therefore, need to do more than make students aware of opportunities to serve their schools and communities. Students need to be adequately prepared for experiential learning. They need to understand the institution or agency with which they will be engaged and its larger social and political context. Students need to be supervised and provided with regular opportunities to reflect on their experiences. In the course of reflection students should be asked to consider questions such as: Is this something government should do? Is this something better attended by private individuals or groups in the civil society sector? How might the school or community problems you have seen be ameliorated? In what ways might you personally contribute to the amelioration of those problems? What knowledge have you personally gained as a result of your experiences? What additional knowledge do you need to acquire in order to be better informed? What intellectual or critical thinking skills have you developed through this service learning activity? How have your skills of interacting, and of monitoring and influencing public policy been improved? How has
your understanding of the roles of the citizen in a democratic society changed?

V. WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE OF THE NEED TO IMPROVE CIVIC EDUCATION?

The idea that American schools have a distinctively civic mission has been recognized since the earliest days of the Republic. Jefferson, Madison, Adams, and others realized that the establishment of well-constructed political institutions was not in itself a sufficiently strong foundation to maintain constitutional democracy. They knew that ultimately a free society must depend on its citizens on their knowledge, skills, and civic virtues. They believed that the civic mission of the schools is to foster the qualities of mind and heart required for successful government within a constitutional democracy.

Americans still believe that schools have a civic mission and that education for good citizenship should be the schools' top priority. The 28th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll conducted in 1996 asked respondents what they considered to be the most important purpose of the nation's schools, apart from providing a basic education. "To prepare students to be responsible citizens" was considered "very important" by more people than any other goal. Nationally 86 percent of those with no children in school and those with children in public schools were in agreement; the percentage in agreement shot up to 88 percent for nonpublic school parents. When Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup conducted a follow-up poll of just teachers the results were the same. (Landon, 1996.) Eighty four percent of America's teachers said "to prepare students for responsible citizenship was "very important," while another 15 percent called it "quite important."

A survey which compared results from the United States with those of eleven other countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) also is revealing. (U.S. Department of Education, 1997.) When Americans were asked which qualities or aptitudes schools consider "essential" or "very important," 86 percent said "being a good citizen." Unfortunately, when Americans were asked if they had confidence that schools have a major effect on the development of good citizenship only 59 percent said that they did. How justified is that lack of confidence? A brief review of recent research affords some disconcerting evidence.

• The nation's oldest and most comprehensive assessment of the attitudes of freshmen at 464 institutions is conducted annually by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles. The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 1997, (Sax & Astin et.al. 1997), its most recent report, found that "this year's college freshmen exhibit higher levels of disengagement both academically and politically than any previous entering class of students."

• The 1997 freshmen demonstrate the lowest levels of political interest in the history of the survey. A record low 26.7 percent of today's freshmen believe that "keeping up to date with political affairs" is a very important or essential life goal (compared to 29.4 percent last year and a high of 57.8 percent in 1966). Similarly, an all-time low 13.7 percent of freshmen say they frequently discuss politics (compared to 16.2 percent last year, and a high of 29.9 percent in 1968). The percent of students who desire to "influence the political structure" has also dipped to 16.7 percent, from 17.7 percent last year and a high of 20.6 percent in 1993. While the percent
of students working on a local, state, or national political campaign increased from 6.6 percent to 8.2 percent between 1996 and 1997, this figure remains at only half of the record high 16.4 percent reached in 1969. Finally, the percent of freshmen who frequently vote in student elections continues on a dramatic decline from 76.9 percent in 1968 to 21.3 percent in 1997 (compared to 23.0 percent last year).

- Students' disinterest in politics is paralleled by their increasing disinterest in activism. In the five years since students' interest in activism peaked on the 1992 survey, many indicators of activism have declined. The percent of students who say that "becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment" is a very important or essential life goal declined steadily from 33.6 percent in 1992 to 19.4 percent in 1997. Commitment to "helping to promote racial understanding" fell to its lowest point in a decade (31.8 percent, compared to 34.7 percent last year and a high of 42.0 in 1992). The percent who consider it very important or essential to "participate in a community action program" also declined to its lowest point in a decade (22.8 percent, compared to 23.7 percent last year and a high of 30.4 percent in 1975). Finally, the percent of students who are personally committed to "influencing social values" fell to its lowest point in nearly a decade (37.6 percent, compared to 39.0 percent last year and a high of 43.3 percent in 1992). (See Figure 3 on the following page.)


- In a survey conducted in late 1997, (National Constitution Center, 1997), more than 90 percent of Americans agreed that "the U.S. Constitution is important to me" and that "I'm proud of the U.S. Constitution." The National Constitution Center was created by Congress in 1988 to increase Americans awareness of the document. The Center measures public awareness by conducting surveys. Those surveys have shown that "people have an appalling lack of knowledge for a document that impacts their daily lives." According to Mayor Edward G. Rendell of Philadelphia, current chairman of the Center, more than three quarters (83 percent) admit that they know only "some" or "very little" about the specifics of the Constitution. For example, only 6 percent can name all four rights guaranteed by the First Amendment; 62 percent cannot name all three branches of the Federal government; 35 percent believe the Constitution mandates English as the official language; and more than half of Americans don't know the number of
When asked to identify the causes of American ignorance of the document which they profess to revere and which they acknowledge matters a great deal in their daily lives, Rendell faulted the schools failure to teach civics and government. He said he believed Americans lack of knowledge stems partly from an education system that tends to treat the Constitution in the context of history, rather than as a living document that shapes current events. (Morin, 1997.)

U.S. Secretary of Education, Richard W. Riley was equally dismayed by the results of the National Constitution Center's study. In a press release issued September 15, 1997, Riley said

This poll suggests to me that most Americans seem to regard the Constitution like a family heirloom that is kept protectively in an upstairs sock drawer but never taken out and examined. I believe this lack of knowledge about how the Constitution functions leads to many of the discontents in our nation and current levels of distrust toward our national government.

Riley went on to say that:

The U.S. Department of Education is one of the leading contributors to current efforts to overcome this lack of awareness about how our democracy functions. The Department... support(s) the work of the Center for Civic Education, the "We the People" organization and the many efforts by our nation's civics teachers to educate our young people about our democracy. It is clear to me, however, that we have to do much more to keep the spirit of the Constitution alive for all Americans.

• The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a survey mandated by the U.S. Congress to collect and report information about student achievement in various academic subjects. NAEP sometimes is called "The Nation's Report Card," because for more than 25 years it has provided Americans with information about how much and how well students are learning in mathematics, science, reading, history, geography, and other subjects. Currently NAEP is assessing civics.

Results of the 1998 survey will not be available until late 1999 or early in the year 2000. The 1990 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Report Card in Civics, however, revealed that students have only a superficial knowledge of civics and lack depth of understanding. For example, only 38 percent of 8th graders knew that Congress makes laws; and nearly half of high school seniors did not recognize typical examples of the federal system of checks and balances.

Although half of the high school seniors tested displayed a detailed knowledge of
major government structures and their functions, only six percent demonstrated a more developed understanding of a wide range of political institutions and processes. The same NAEP Report Card also showed that although some students made gains in civics proficiency across the twelve year period separating the 1976 and 1988 assessments, most did not. At age 17, the performance of students attending schools in each of the types of communities studied advantaged and disadvantaged, urban and other declined significantly. There were significant gaps in the performance of most students. Particularly disturbing were the disparities among subpopulations. Eighth and twelfth grade males were more likely than their female peers to reach the highest levels of civic proficiency as defined by NAEP.

The percentages of Black and Hispanic students who reached the uppermost levels of proficiency were far smaller than the percentage of White students who did.

• Over the past decade, dozens of studies, commissions, and national reports have called attention to the failure to ensure that America's classrooms are staffed with qualified teachers. The National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (1996) in a particularly hard-hitting report noted that:

  Although no state will allow a person to fix plumbing, guard swimming pools, style hair, write wills, design a building, or practice medicine without completing training and passing an examination, more than 40 states allow school districts to hire teachers on emergency licenses who have not met these basic requirements. Some pay more attention to the qualifications of veterinarians treating the nation's cats and dogs than to those of teachers educating the nation's children and youth.

Teacher expertise, as research has consistently and repeatedly shown, is one of the most telling factors in raising student achievement. One extensive study found that nearly 40 percent of the differences in student test scores were attributable to differences in teacher expertise, as measured by college degrees, years of teaching experience, and scores on teacher licensing examinations. Further, teacher expertise was of more significance than that of any other factor, including parent education, family income, or other socioeconomic characteristics.

A recent review of research on one of the least recognized causes of poor quality teaching (Ingersoll, 1998) is sobering. The problem is out-of-field teaching, or teachers being assigned to teach subjects that do not match their training or education. It is more widespread and more serious than has been recognized. It happens in well over half of the secondary schools in the nation in any given year,
both rural and urban, affluent and low income. Low income public
schools, however, have a higher level of out-of-field teaching than do schools in
more affluent communities. Studies also show that recently hired teachers are more often
assigned to teach subjects for which they are not trained than are experienced
teachers. Lower-achieving classes are more often taught by teachers without a
major or minor in the field than are higher-achieving classes. Junior
high and middle school classes also are more likely than senior high classes to
be taught by less than qualified teachers.
More than half of all secondary school history students in the country now
are being taught by teachers with neither a major nor a minor in history. No data
currently are available on the subject matter qualifications of teachers of civics and
government, but one could surmise that the numbers of teachers with majors or
minors in political science or allied fields would be even less.
In an effort to ensure that teachers are qualified for the subjects they will
teach, some states have begun to test applicants for teaching positions. The
National Center for Education Statistics reported in 1997 that about one half of the
nation's school districts now require passage of state tests of basic skills while 39
percent require passage of state tests of subject knowledge. While those efforts are
a step in the right direction, they fall short of the goal of assuring that all children
are taught by teachers who not only have in-depth knowledge of the subject they
teach but who also have the skills and the enthusiasm to teach it well.

VI. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CIVIC EDUCATION AND CHARACTER EDUCATION?

Interest in and concern about character education and education for citizenship are not new in America. The two have always gone hand in hand. Indeed, the basic reason for establishing and expanding public schooling was to foster those traits of public and private character necessary for our great experiment in self-government to succeed.

In the early days of our republic, schools were expected to induce pupils to act virtuously. Acting virtuously meant more specifically that one should act with due restraint over his or her impulses, due regard for the rights and opinions of others, and reasonable concern for the probable and the long-term consequences of one's actions.

Virtue in individuals then was seen as an important public matter. "Public virtue cannot exist in a nation without private..." said John Adams. Jefferson agreed with him saying "Public virtue is the only foundation of Republics. There must be a positive passion for the public good, the public interest... established in the minds of the people, or there can be no Republican government, no any real Liberty." It is interesting to note that Adams' warning is echoed in the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 1996) Position Statement "Fostering Civic Virtue: Character Education in the Social Studies." That bold and well-written position statement concludes with these words:

Social studies teachers have a responsibility and a duty to
refocus their classrooms on the teaching of character and civic virtue. They should not be timid or hesitant about working toward these goals. The fate of the American experiment in self-government depends in no small part on the store of civic virtue that resides in the American people. The social studies profession of this nation has vital role to play in keeping this well-spring of civic virtue flowing.

Character, however, does not come pre-packaged. Character formation is a lengthy and complex process. And, as James Q. Wilson (Wilson, 1995), a life-long student of character, reminds us; "We do not know how character is formed in any scientifically rigorous sense." But there is an abundance of anecdotal data and research on which to draw. Those observations and that research tell us that the study of traditional school subjects such as government, civics, history and literature, when properly taught, provide the necessary conceptual framework for character education. Further, those traditional school subjects provide a context for considering the traits of public and private character which are important to the maintenance and improvement of a democratic way of life.

Research also tells us that the ethos or culture of the school and of the classroom exert powerful influences on what students learn about authority, responsibility, justice, civility and respect. Finally, we know that one dynamic by which individuals acquire desired traits of private and public character is through exposure to attractive models of behavior. Probably no one has explained that dynamic better than Robert Coles in The Moral Intelligence of Children, (Coles, 1997). Coles tells us that:

Character is ultimately who we are expressed in action, in how we live, in what we do and so the children around us know, they absorb and take stock of what they observe, namely us we adults living and doing things in a certain spirit, getting on with one another in our various ways. Our children add up, imitate, file away what they've observed and so very often later fall in line with the particular moral counsel we unwittingly or quite unself-consciously have offered them....

Because the United States is the world's oldest constitutional democracy, it sometimes is easy to forget that our American government is an experiment. It is an experiment that requires, as the authors of the Federalist Papers put it, a higher degree of virtue in its citizens than any other form of government. Traits of private character such as moral responsibility, self-discipline, and respect for individual worth and human dignity are essential to its well-being. American constitutional democracy cannot accomplish its purposes, however, unless its citizens also are inclined to participate thoughtfully in public affairs. Traits of public character such as public-spiritedness, civility, respect for law, critical-mindedness, and a willingness to negotiate and compromise are indispensable to the continued success of the great American experiment in self government.

How can civic education strengthen and complement the development of character? Primary responsibility for the cultivation of ethical behavior and the development of private character, including moral character, lies with families, religious institutions, work settings, and the other parts of civil society. Schools, however, can and should play a major role in the overall development of the character of students. Effective civic education programs should provide students with many opportunities for the development of desirable traits of public and private character. Learning activities such as the following tend to promote character traits needed to participate effectively. For example,

- Civility, courage, self-discipline, persistence, concern for the common good, respect for others, and other traits relevant to citizenship can be promoted through cooperative learning activities and in class meetings, student councils, simulated
• Public hearings, mock trials, mock elections, and student courts.
• Self-discipline, respect for others, civility, punctuality, personal responsibility, and other character traits can be fostered in school and community service learning projects, such as tutoring younger students, caring for the school environment, and participating in voter registration drives.
• Recognition of shared values and a sense of community can be encouraged through celebration of national and state holidays, and celebration of the achievements of classmates and local citizens.
• Attentiveness to public affairs can be encouraged by regular discussions of significant current events.
• Reflection on ethical considerations can occur when students are asked to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues that involve ethical considerations, that is, issues concerning good and bad, rights and wrong.
• Civicmindedness can be increased if schools work with civic organizations, bring community leaders into the classroom to discuss issues with students, and provide opportunities for students to observe and/or participate in civic organizations.

VII. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

School Level
• Sustained and systematic attention should be given to civic education in the K-12 curriculum. Although the National Education Goals, as well as the goals, curricular requirements, and policies of every state, express the need for and exalt the value of civic education, this vital part of the student's overall education is seldom given sustained and systematic attention in the K-12 curriculum. Inattention to civic education stems in part from the false assumption that the knowledge and skills citizens need emerge as by-products of the study of other disciplines or as an outcome of the process of schooling itself. While it is true that history, economics, literature, and other subjects do enhance students' understanding of government and politics, they cannot replace sustained, systematic attention to civic education. Civics should be seen as a central concern from kindergarten through twelfth grade, whether it is taught as a part of other curricula or in separate units or courses.
We recommend that states and school districts give serious consideration to the allocation of sufficient time for civics and government. The following proposed allocation is offered for purposes of stimulating discussion.

Proposed Allocation of Time for Civics and Government in the Curriculum for Grades Kindergarten through Twelve Requirements by Grades

• Schools should thoroughly examine the "informal curriculum," or the governance of their school community and the relationships...
The importance of the governance of the school community and the quality of the relationships among those within it can scarcely be overemphasized. Classrooms and schools should be managed by adults who govern in accord with democratic values and principles and who display traits of character, private and public, worthy of emulation.

- **Student participation in the governance of their classrooms and schools should**
  - **be an integral part of civic education beginning in the earliest grades and extending throughout the span of their formal schooling.**

Classrooms and schools should be considered laboratories in which students can employ participatory skills commensurate with their maturity. They should learn to interact effectively, as well as learn how to monitor and influence school and public policies. Governance, as used here, means more than seeking or serving in a class or school office. It means having a voice in such matters as school rules and disciplinary procedures. Governance means that each student is a citizen possessed of the rights and charged with the responsibilities that accrue to citizens in a constitutional democracy.

- **Civic education should help students develop a reasoned commitment to those fundamental values and principles necessary for the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy.** Civic education, however, must distinguish between education and indoctrination. Civic education enables citizens to make wise choices in full awareness of alternatives and provides the kind of experiences and understanding that foster the development of a reasoned commitment to those values and principles that enable a free society to exist.

- **Every student should become familiar with the nation’s fundamental documents through age-appropriate instruction.** These documents would include but are not limited to the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, The Federalist Papers, landmark decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court, the constitution of the state in which they reside, and other significant writings and speeches.

- **Students at all grade levels can profit from the study of exemplary citizens,** both the famous and not-so-famous, those from the past and from the present.
  - The use of a wide variety of age-appropriate historical narratives, biographies, autobiographies, and current accounts in the media should be encouraged.
  - Students, particularly in an age of anti-heroes, should have many opportunities to learn about people who have defended human rights and political
freedoms, fulfilled civic responsibilities, or had the courage to make ethical and moral decisions when they were in the minority.

- **Co-curricular activities that support and extend civic education should be encouraged.** Activities such as mock elections, mock trials, and simulated legislative hearings promote greater interest and understanding of government and civil society. The worth of such activities is attested to by abundant research. Teachers who devote time to the sponsorship of co-curricular activities allied to civic education should be recognized and appropriately rewarded for their endeavors.

- **The opportunity for school and community service should be made available to all young people as a part of their civic education.** Students should be prepared for age-appropriate service, adequately supervised during their service, and expected to reflect on their experiences under the guidance of qualified teachers or mentors.

- **Community service should bring students into direct contact with government at every level and with sectors of civil society appropriate to their study of civics and government.** Students should go out into the community to observe, to interview, and to contribute their time and talents in the interest of the common good. Members of the community government officials, civic leaders, and other knowledgeable persons should be invited into schools to share their insights and expertise with students.

- **States and school districts should be more attentive to the professional development needs of beginning and less experienced teachers.** Requirements for renewal of credentials or licenses should ensure that K-12 civics and government teachers deepen their understanding of the discipline, hone their instructional skills, and broaden their knowledge of and interaction with the civic community.

- **State and school districts should recognize, reward, and retain teachers who are outstanding civic educators so that they are not lost to the nation's classrooms.** More than 200 studies have found that teachers who have greater training in both their subject matter and in how to teach it well are more effective with students. All too often, however, master teachers move into school administration or other professions where financial or other rewards are greater. Efforts need to be made, therefore, to see that recognition and rewards are sufficient to persuade the best teachers to remain in the classroom.
National, State, and Local Level

• Because the maintenance and improvement of our constitutional democracy is dependent upon the knowledge, skills, and traits of public and private character of all our citizens, we recommend a national initiative to revitalize civic education. A nationwide initiative in civic education could focus on the importance of civic education for every child in America which provides a grounding in the rights and responsibilities of members of a constitutional democracy. Such an initiative would increase civic literacy, foster civility among citizens, promote understanding and appreciation of democratic institutions and processes, and enhance a sense of political efficacy.

The groundwork for the renewal of civic education has already been laid by more than two decades of commission reports, books, and articles by educators, scholars, and journalists. In 1987 the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution occasioned an outpouring of interest in the substance of civic education. In 1991, CIVITAS: A Framework for Civic Education was published; and in 1994, the National Standards for Civics and Government were completed. These Standards, developed in response to the Educate America Act, continue to receive national and international acclaim. They delineate what students should know and be able to do when they complete grades 4, 8, and 12. The most recent call for action is the final report of the National Commission on Civic Renewal released in June, 1998. That report, A Nation of Spectators: How Civic Disengagement Weakens America and What We Can Do About It calls upon the American people to "once again rise to the challenge of self government" and "to advance the cause of school-based civic education."

The time is ripe for a nationwide initiative that could promote increased citizen interest, understanding, and participation in local, state, and national government, as well as in the civic associations, processes, and purposes of civil society.

The principal aims of this initiative would be to:

• deepen understanding of the historical, philosophical, political, social, and economic foundations of American constitutional democracy.
• promote understanding of how a constitutional government operates and an appreciation of the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
• promote informed and responsible participation in civic life.
• foster the civic dispositions or traits of public and private character conducive to the preservation and enhancement of American constitutional democracy.
• foster a reasoned commitment to the fundamental values and principles as expressed in core documents, such as the Declaration of
Independence and the U.S. Constitution, that bind us together as a nation and provide a common ground for working together.

- promote understanding of the essential role that the institutions and values of civil society have historically played and continue today to play as foundations of American constitutional democracy. Such understanding includes the idea that the autonomous character of civil society protects society from the abuse of power by government and is therefore a chief support for constitutional government.

Revitalized civic education can provide significant benefits for all Americans.

A nation-wide initiative can:
- increase understanding of the importance and relevance of politics and government and of civil society to the daily lives of all Americans, e.g., their safety and security, education, employment, health, recreation, and overall quality of life.
- promote the development of civic character by fostering recognition of public and private responsibilities and encouraging adherence to the values and principles of American constitutional democracy.
- elevate the sense of civic efficacy, the impact citizens can have on policies at all levels of government and on the character and purposes of the associations and endeavors of civil society.
- build upon the natural idealism, energy, and hopes of American youth to revitalize civic life.

- The importance of civic education should be communicated to the general public through televised public forums, print media, and public service television announcements. Parents, civic leaders, and the media are important influences and have significant contributions to make to civic education, and their support should be enlisted.
- A renewed emphasis on the common core of civic culture that unites individuals from many ethnic, linguistic, religious, and social groups is needed.

We join with the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform and other groups in making this recommendation.

- Americans should be kept informed on a regular basis of the nation’s civic health through publication and wide dissemination of a index such as the one proposed by the National Commission on Civic Renewal (1998).

That index could include, but not be limited to, such items as political participation, political and social trust, membership in voluntary associations, community service, achievement levels in civics and government, and other pertinent information.

- State legislatures, boards of education, schools, and parent...
groups should reexamine the formal curricula and assessment practices to determine the adequacy and effectiveness of their education programs and they should take appropriate action to strengthen the formal curriculum and their assessment practices.

• Every state should require all students to demonstrate mastery of basic civic knowledge and concepts as a condition of high school graduation. We join with the Commission on Civic Renewal and other groups in support of this recommendation.

• To improve and professionalize teaching that the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future say it is "time to get serious about standards for both students and teachers." We concur with that National Commission that there must be agreement on what teachers should know and be able to do in order to help their students meet higher academic standards. Teacher licensing should be based on demonstrated competence, including adequate academic preparation with a major or minor in a field appropriate for civic education, tests of subject matter knowledge, and command of skills and classroom strategies that research has shown to be effective in civic education.

• To reverse the cycle of low expectations and low achievement, states and school districts need to set standards which meet certain criteria. Standards should be clearly focused on academic achievement.

• be rigorous and substantive.

• reflect the best current scholarship in the disciplines from which the substance of civics and government is drawn political science, political philosophy, history, economics, law, and jurisprudence.

• state clearly what students should know and be able to do, and be expressed in language understandable to young people, their parents, and the general public.

• be clear, specific benchmarks against which an individual's performance and progress can be judged.

• Attention needs to be given to the assessment of civic education which presently is inadequate in terms of both content and frequency.

• Despite the fact that National Education Goals 3 and 6 prominently feature citizenship, the annual reports of the National Education Goals Panel have yet to report on achievement in civic and government or on progress toward "responsible citizenship."

• The National Assessment Governing Board is to be applauded for undertaking the Civics Framework for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). However, the Board allowed ten years to elapse between the present and the last assessment of civics. It is
recommended that in the future civics be assessed with the same frequency as mathematics, science, reading, or any other core subject.  
• Many states and districts mandate testing programs in reading, and language arts for elementary grades. Seldom is civic education included in these mandates. Consequently, teachers spend considerable more time working with students on math and reading and neglect civic education. We recommend that all of the eight disciplines identified in the Goals 2000: Educate America Act English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civic and government, economics, arts, history, and geography be given attention.  
• When assessments in civic education do occur, they are primarily in secondary schools and generally take the form of multiple choice tests. Such tests require students to select the correct answers from a number of possibilities and are useful for determining students' knowledge and understanding of basic facts and concepts. However, they fail to assess students' acquisition of a variety of civic skills such as evaluating, taking, and defending positions on political and civic issues, speak and writing on these issues, and monitoring and influencing public policy.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Just months after taking office in 1989, President George Bush took a historic step. Bush asked the nation's governors to gather to consider ways and means of improving education. His call for a "summit" meeting was historic, because it was only the third time in history that a president had convened the governors for a substantive meeting. (Jennings, 1998).

In the United States education has traditionally been the responsibility of each state. The nation's governors, ever mindful of states' rights, have resented and resisted federal intrusions into what they have considered their domain. At this "summit" meeting, however, the governors conceded that education had to be improved and that the states by themselves could not effect the improvements that commission after commission and study after study had said was essential. Nor were the governors deaf to the clamor for educational reform coming from parents, employers, and the media.

The chief executives of the 50 states, including Bill Clinton, then governor of Arkansas and chairman of the National Governors Association education committee, believed that an appropriate starting point was to get agreement on what it was that the nation's schools ought to achieve. In their judgment the focus of America's schools should be sharpened and a declaration of purposes or a statement of national goals set forth. The governors, however, wanted the national goals to be more than verbiage or pious hopes. Progress toward the goals was to be measured against high standards and by testing at national and state levels. The standards were to specify what all students should know and be able to do when they completed grades 4, 8, and 12. The plan was greeted with applause from many segments of society parents, educators, employers, and legislators. Diane Ravitch, a long time proponent of reform, was jubilant. She was later to say that she believed "what may well be an historic development had taken place. "Unlike most other modern societies, this nation has never
established specific standards as goals for student achievement; those nations that do have standards view them as invaluable means of ensuring both equity and excellence.” (Ravitch, 1993).

In the hope of ensuring both equity and excellence, the National Governors Association and the United States Congress moved forward, paying particular attention to civic education. The text of the goals statement adopted by the National Governors Association in March, 1990 declared:

If the United States is to maintain a strong and responsible democracy and a prosperous and growing economy into the next century, it must be prepared to address and respond to major challenges at home and in the world. A well-educated population is the key to our future. Americans must be prepared to:...Participate knowledgeably in our democracy and our democratic institutions;...Function effectively in increasingly diverse communities and states and in a rapidly shrinking world....Today a new standard of an educated citizenry is required, one suitable for the next century....[All students] must understand and accept the responsibilities and obligations of citizenship.

In March, 1994 Congress passed the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Public Law 103-227). Two of the eight national goals the law established deal specifically with civic education.

The National Education Goals

Goal 3: Student Achievement and Citizenship
By the year 2000, all students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography, and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our Nation's modern economy.

All students will be involved in activities that promote and demonstrate...ood citizenship, community service, and personal responsibility.

Goal 6: Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning
By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship (emphasis added).

As this report and those of other concerned groups of Americans make clear, we as a people have not yet achieved the goals of equity and excellence in education that we have set for ourselves. We know and have recognized from our founding that education for citizenship is essential, if we are to maintain and improve our constitutional democracy; on that point there is general, if not universal, agreement. We also know that a new standard of an educated citizenry is needed, if we are to meet the challenges of the next century.

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Civic Education therefore should be a prime concern. There is more important task than the development of an informed, effective and responsible citizenry. Democracies are sustained by citizens who have the requisite knowledge, skills and dispositions. It is imperative; therefore educators, policy makers and members of the civil society make the case and ask for the support of civic education from all segments of society and from the widest range of institutions and governments. It is relatively easy for a society to produce technically competent people. Civic Education in a democracy is education in self government. Democratic self government means that citizens are
actively involved in their own governance; they do not just passively accept the dictums of others or acquiesce to the demands of others. As Aristotle put it in his Politics (c 340 BC), "If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost." In other words, the ideals of democracy are most completely realized when every member of the political community sha