



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 the University of California at Los Angeles (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. 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, designed to serve kindergarten through twelfth grade, was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. In 1981, the Center became an independent nonprofit organization, although it remains affiliated with the State Bar.

The mission of the Center is to promote an enlightened and responsible citizenry committed to democratic principles and actively engaged in the practice of democracy in the United States and other countries. 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 by Thomas Jefferson expresses the Center's rationale and goals.

"I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion."

Center Programs and Publications

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 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 structured as a simulated hearing where their knowledge of the Constitution is tested. The program is funded by the U.S. Department of Education by act of Congress. Several studies by the Educational Testing Service and Professor Richard Brody, Stanford University, indicate that students who used the curriculum significantly outperformed comparison students on every topic studied. Program participants maintain contact with the Center and with one another through the We the People Alumni Network which continues and extends the reach of the program.

WE THE PEOPLE: PROJECT CITIZEN – a middle grade civic education program designed to develop interest in public policy-making as well as the ability to participate competently and responsibly in state and local government. Project Citizen is administered by the Center in cooperation with the National Conference of State Legislatures. An assessment by Professor Kenneth Tolo, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin, concludes that "students using Project Citizen do make a difference in their communities."

YOUTH FOR JUSTICE – five national organizations working jointly to promote civic competence and responsibility in schools throughout the country. This national network implements civic education programs that involve young people in identifying and participating in solutions that 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.

CIVITAS: AN INTERNATIONAL CIVIC EDUCATION EXCHANGE PROGRAM – provides for a series of exchanges among leaders in civic education in the United States and emerging and established democracies worldwide. The program is funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Education for Democracy Act approved by the U.S. Congress and implemented worldwide in cooperation with the U.S. Department of State.

SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM – a program in elementary and middle schools ranging from large urban school districts to rural schools, Native American schools, and private schools. Evaluative studies of the program will determine whether civic education instruction, using high quality materials and teacher professional development, can serve as a preventative of risk factors that are understood to contribute to the forming of attitudes conducive to violent behavior.

FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRACY SERIES – curricular materials for grades K-12 on basic concepts and principles of constitutional democracy: authority, privacy, responsibility, and justice. This multidisciplinary curriculum draws upon political philosophy, political science, law, history, literature, and environmental studies.

EXERCISES IN PARTICIPATION SERIES – curricular materials 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.

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. The *Standards* were developed with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the U.S. Department of Education and The Pew Charitable Trusts.

CIVITAS: A FRAMEWORK FOR CIVIC EDUCATION – a comprehensive model framework for civic education in the nation's elementary and secondary schools, designed as a resource tool for curriculum developers, school administrators, teachers, and scholars.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – for elementary, middle, and high school teachers, college teachers, and curricular supervisors throughout the nation and in selected sites throughout the world.

SUMMER INSTITUTES – offered throughout the United States, for upper elementary, middle, and high school teachers. These institutes are intensive professional development programs designed to assist teachers in implementing curriculum content, classroom strategies, and performance assessment relevant to the study of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights.

CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE CIVIC EDUCATION – a national campaign with two vital objectives: 1) to affirm the civic mission of the schools, and 2) to influence states and school districts to devote sustained and systematic attention to civic education from K-12.

CENTER WEBSITE – www.civiced.org provides support and assistance to teachers, students, and members of the Center's network. Resources include online curricular materials, event and institute calendars, email directories, and links to various government and research sites.

Center for Civic Education

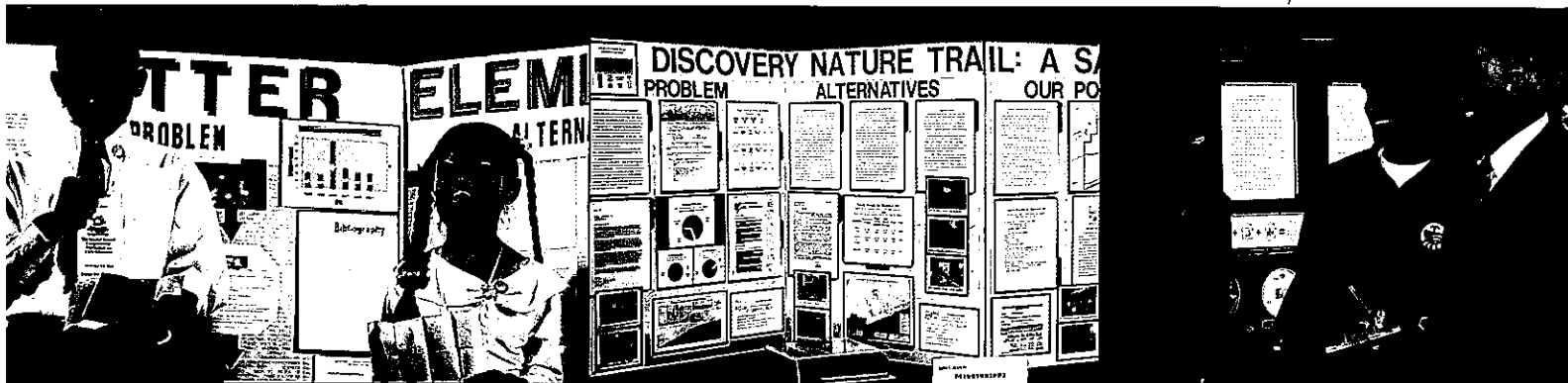
Main Office

5145 Douglas Fir Road
Calabasas, CA 91302-1440
(800) 350-4223 • fax (818) 591-9330
cce@civiced.org • www.civiced.org

Washington, DC Office

1743 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009-1108
(202) 861-8800 • fax (202) 861-8811
centereast@civiced.org • www.civiced.org

We the People: Project Citizen



LEFT: Project Citizen showcase presentation MIDDLE: Project Citizen portfolio, Mississippi RIGHT: Project Citizen portfolio

Project Citizen is administered by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Education for Democracy Act passed by the United States Congress. The program is conducted in the United States in partnership with the National Conference of State Legislatures. The goals of the program are to help students learn how to monitor and influence public policy; to become competent and responsible participants in the political life of their communities and nation; and to develop a reasoned commitment to the fundamental values and principles of American constitutional democracy. Project Citizen is an instructional program for middle, secondary, and postsecondary students, youth organizations, and adult groups. Project Citizen is used in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, as well as in more than 70 other countries. For more information, see www.civiced.org.

PROGRAM IMPACT ON STUDENT KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ATTITUDES

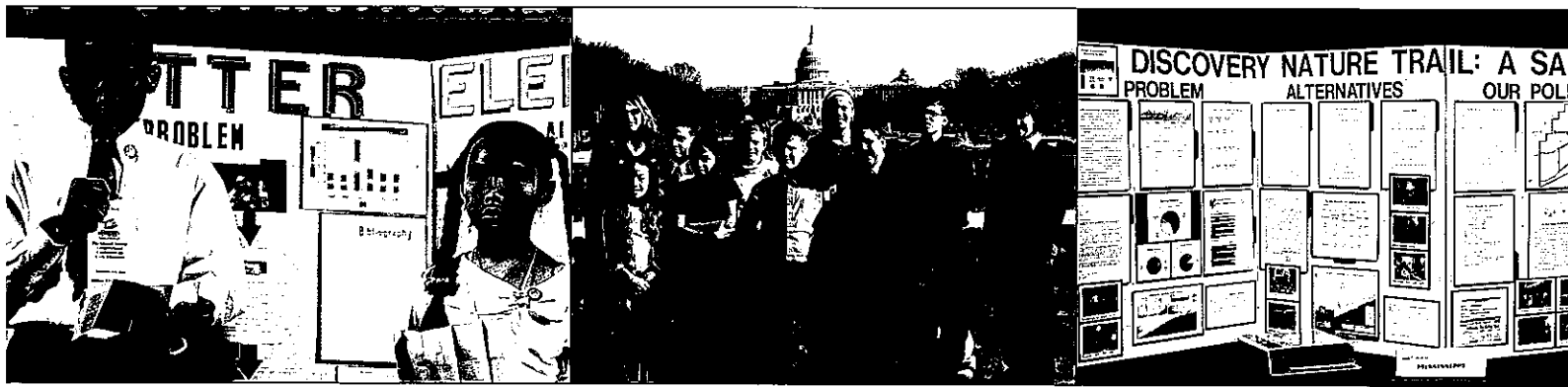
- Students in the program believe they can and do make a difference in their communities. They develop a commitment to active citizenship and governance.
STUDY CONDUCTED BY KENNETH W. TOLO, LYNDON B. JOHNSON SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, AUSTIN, TEXAS
- Participating Indiana adolescents increased their levels of civic knowledge and skills, in contrast to a matching control group.
STUDY CONDUCTED BY THOMAS S. VONTZ, KIM K. METCALF, AND JOHN J. PATRICK, INDIANA UNIVERSITY, BLOOMINGTON
- Students in grades 3–12 showed significant increases in civic skills. Teachers perceived that students were better able to discuss issues constructively, formulate position statements, and give effective presentations on public policy issues.
STUDY CONDUCTED BY THE RMC RESEARCH CORPORATION, DENVER, COLORADO

- *"As a judge and practicing attorney, I have been involved in many programs, but none that even approached the excitement in civil participation of this program. It is practical experience in democracy and civil involvement."*
JUDGE GREGORY J. DONAT, TIPPECANOE COUNTY COURT I, LAFAYETTE, INDIANA
- *"Benefits extend beyond the classroom. Students get an opportunity to live out the precepts of democracy and representative government."*
MICHAEL LUBELFELD, PRINCIPAL, ELM PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL, HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS
- *"I hope for our country's sake that some of these students opt for a career in public service."*
FORMER SENATOR JAMES M. JEFFORDS (IND. VERMONT)





We the People: Project Citizen Evaluation Brief 2007



LEFT: Project Citizen Showcase Presentation CENTER: Project Citizen Students at the Congressional Conference on Civic Education 2005 RIGHT: Project Citizen Portfolio, Mississippi

THIS EVALUATION BRIEF PRESENTS SELECTED FINDINGS FROM THE OCTOBER 2007 RMC RESEARCH STUDY

We the People: Project Citizen is a citizenship education program directed by the Center for Civic Education. Project Citizen seeks to promote competent and responsible participation in local and state government by teaching students in Grades 5–12 how to monitor and influence public policy in their communities. In a pre- and posttest study with matching control groups, 409 Project Citizen participants and 341 comparison students from Michigan, Oklahoma, and Colorado were surveyed, tested, and interviewed.

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN PROJECT CITIZEN INCREASED MORE (P < .05) THAN COMPARISON STUDENTS IN THEIR

- ★ Knowledge of public policy
- ★ Knowledge of democracy
- ★ Public policy problem-solving skills
- ★ Ability to articulate, research, and advocate policy solutions in essays addressing public policy problems

HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT CITIZEN STUDENTS DEMONSTRATED SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER GROWTH (P < .05) THAN COMPARISON STUDENTS IN THEIR

- ★ Persuasive writing ability
- ★ Knowledge of public policy
- ★ Public policy problem-solving skills
- ★ Civic discourse skills
- ★ Ability to articulate, research, and advocate policy solutions in essays addressing public policy problems

Participants benefited similarly from participating in the program, regardless of student gender, language spoken at home, or participation in extracurricular activities, although some ethnic differences were found.

Teacher experience and skills moderated student outcomes. Students of skilled and experienced teachers had greater increases in knowledge of public policy and improved more in skills for resolving public policy problems.

STUDENT COMMENTS

- *Sometimes as a teenager, you can be looked down upon. Project Citizen gives you a chance to speak out and to make a difference.*
- *We learned about rules, laws, ordinances, and policies and what level of government was involved with each one.*
- *Citizens – I thought they just sat around and paid taxes – but they have to help make decisions.*

For the complete study, contact the RMC Research Corporation at rmc@rmcresearch.com or visit the Center for Civic Education at www.civiced.org. Project Citizen is administered by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Education for Democracy Act passed by the United States Congress.

