

“Democracy must be reborn in each generation and education is its midwife”

John Dewey, 20th Century Education Reformer

The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools recommends six “proven practices” that, together, constitute well-rounded civic learning. We urge all schools K-16 to adopt these practices, which have been shown by research to provide the most effective and comprehensive approach to ensuring all students receive the civic knowledge and skills necessary for informed and engaged citizenship. These six proven practices are:

1. Classroom Instruction: Schools should provide instruction in civics & government, history, economics, geography, law, and democracy. Formal instruction in these subjects increases civic knowledge and increases young people’s tendency to engage in civic and political activities over the long term. However, schools should avoid teaching only rote facts about dry procedures, which is unlikely to benefit students and may actually alienate them from civic engagement.

2. Discussion of Current Events and Controversial Issues: Schools should incorporate discussion of current local, national, and international issues and events in to the classroom, particularly those that young people view as important to their lives. When students have an opportunity to discuss current issues in a classroom setting, they tend to have a greater interest in civic life and politics as well as improved critical thinking and communication skills.

3. Service-Learning: Schools should design and implement programs that provide students with the opportunity to apply what they learn through performing community service that is linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction.

4. Extracurricular Activities: Schools should offer opportunities for young people to get involved in their schools or communities outside of the classroom. Studies show that students who participate in extracurricular activities in school remain more civically engaged than those who did not, even decades later.

5. School Governance: Schools should encourage meaningful student participation in school governance. Giving students more opportunities to participate in the management of their classrooms and schools builds their civic skills and attitudes.

6. Simulations of Democratic Processes: Schools should encourage students to participate in simulations of democratic processes and procedures. Evidence shows that simulations of voting, trials, legislative deliberation and democracy, leads to heightened civic/political knowledge and interest.

More information on each of these practices and the research that shows their effectiveness may be found in “Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools” Report, available at www.civicmissionofschools.org.