

EDUCATIONAL



THE UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Report to the Education Interim
Committee

Civic and Character Education

October 2018

Robert Austin
K-12 Social Studies Specialist
Robert.austin@schools.utah.gov

Jennifer Thronsen
Coordinator, Language Arts
Jennifer.thronsen@schools.utah.gov

Civic and Character Education

STATUTORY REQUIREMENT

U.C.A. Section 53G-10-204

requires the Utah State Board of Education to submit an annual report to the Education Interim Committee on H.B. 22, Civic and Character Education in Schools (2004 General Session). This report has been submitted annually since 2005.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is provided to the Education Interim Committee to highlight the methods used, and the results being achieved, to instruct and prepare students to become informed and responsible citizens through an integrated curriculum taught in conjunction with regular school work. This report discusses effective methods for teaching civic and character education and how local education agencies and the Utah State Board of Education are working to provide and support civic and character education in the state. It provides some specific examples of civic and character education at work in Utah, and it details key partnerships which also promote civic and character education.

BACKGROUND

Civic and character education are both essential pillars that support the mission of public schools. As defined in statute, civic education means the cultivation of informed, responsible participation in political life by competent citizens committed to the fundamental values and principles of representative democracy. Character education means reaffirming values and qualities of character which promote an upright and desirable citizenry.

In the 2004 General Session, in House Bill 22, Civic and Character Education in Schools, the Legislature established requirements for civic and character education. Statute requires that, through an integrated curriculum, students are taught civic and character education in connection with regular school work. Specifically, students are taught:

- honesty, integrity, morality, civility, duty, honor, service, and obedience to law;
- respect for and an understanding of the Declaration of Independence and the constitutions of the United States and of the state of Utah;
- Utah history, including territorial and pre-territorial development to the present;
- the essentials and benefits of the free enterprise system;
- respect for parents, home, and family;
- the dignity and necessity of honest labor; and

- other skills, habits, and qualities of character which will promote an upright and desirable citizenry and better prepare students to recognize and accept responsibility for preserving and defending the blessings of liberty inherited from prior generations and secured by the Constitution.

EFFECTIVE CIVIC AND CHARACTER EDUCATION

There are a number of proven practices that can result in effective civic and character education in public schools. In particular, leading research in civic education from organizations such as the Education Commission of the States focuses on six areas¹ which are depicted in Figure 1 and described below.

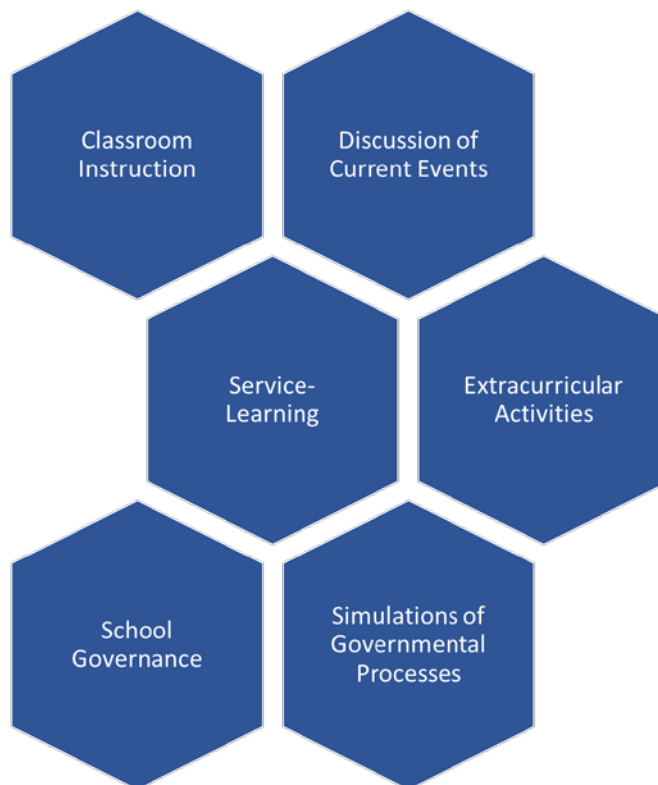


Figure 1. Practices for Effective Civic Learning

1. Classroom Instruction: Schools should provide instruction in government, history, economics, law, and democracy.
2. Discussion of Current Events: Schools should incorporate discussion of current local, national, and international issues and events into the classroom, particularly those that young people view as important to their lives.

¹ Guilfoile, Lisa and Brady Delander. (2014). *Guidebook: Six Proven Practices for Effective Civic Learning*. Education Commission of the States and the National Center for Learning and Civic Engagement. Retrieved from <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/10/48/11048.pdf>

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.
5. School Governance: Schools should encourage student participation in school governance.
6. Simulations of Governmental Processes: Schools should encourage students to participate in simulations of democratic processes and procedures.

SUPPORTING CIVIC AND CHARACTER EDUCATION



Local education agencies (LEAs) provide training (professional learning), direction, and encouragement for and the delivery of civic and character education. The Utah State Board of Education (USBE) provides support and guidance to LEAs. In particular, regarding the practices for effective civic learning, the USBE has the most direct impact on classroom instruction, discussion of current events, school governance, and simulations of governmental processes.

The USBE affects classroom instruction and discussion of current events through the core standards. The Utah State Board of Education, in consultation with local school boards, school superintendents, teachers, employers, and parents, is responsible for establishing the core standards for Utah public schools. The social studies core standards, which includes history, address every civic and character education component called for in statute.

Civics and civic-mindedness are a central component of the core curriculum standards from kindergarten to 12th grade. Civics education is also supported with the examination of political science topics including the study of foundational documents in American history such as the United States Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. Approved in 2016, the newly revised secondary standards include specific references to civic preparation in every course description.

In June 2018, the USBE coordinated a civics and character education conference to provide further support to LEAs on civic and character education. Educators from across the state heard from 39 speakers, state and national leaders in civic and character education. The conference targeted 13 topic areas with 17 breakout sessions and keynote speeches addressing critical elements of civic and character education. Key takeaways from the conference were a continuing need and desire for educators to learn more about news media literacy and the strategies necessary for skillful navigation of the always-changing media landscape.

In addition, another important point from the conference was the strong desire to develop action-oriented civics programs in schools so students can apply civic goals and service ideals.

UTAH CIVIC AND CHARACTER EDUCATION

Utah teachers and schools take civic and character education seriously and work diligently and creatively to provide content and pedagogy that supports effective civic and character education. One of the most instructive ways to learn about the range of approaches being used to provide civic and character education is to read comments from educators themselves. In their own words, here are some of the ways that educators are making a difference regarding civic and character education. Next to the statements are tags highlighting a support function or proven practice being discussed.



Pre-Service, Utah Valley University: Every elementary social studies teacher that goes through our program has one 3 hour class period where we discuss the Utah Code, character education and how to create a classroom where we discuss the "hard stuff" of social studies. In addition, we conduct morning meetings every week where we model a responsive classroom that is always practicing qualities of character and maintaining safe zones for discussion. Our secondary ed social studies majors get two sessions with Martha Ball in which they receive 3Rs training.



Utah Council for the Social Studies: We offer an annual conference which includes sessions on teaching civics and character education. Instructive and inspiring lessons from historic events, whether contemporary or from the past, are a regular part of these conferences.



Pre-Service, University of Utah: Because I teach the elementary Social Studies methods class, I teach our preservice teachers about how community engaged learning promotes student engagement, higher level thinking skills, real-world connections to the curriculum, character development, leadership skills, problem solving, and civic engagement. Through this process, the Teacher Candidates plan, design, and implement a community engaged project in each of the urban classrooms in which they are student teaching within the Salt Lake School and Granite School Districts.



Alpine School District: In our district professional meeting last June, 2018, all of our social studies teachers met with their content specific areas and created a social studies vision for learning for their specific content including knowledge, skills, and dispositions. For example, in US History II, their dispositions across the district are citizenship, global/historical empathy, and resilience. Utah Studies dispositions are personal accountability, citizenship, and civil discourse. Each content has constructed their own skills and dispositions according to their essential

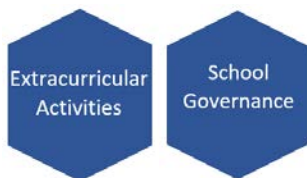
learnings within their content. With our district leadership team, we will continue the conversation about what are our next steps in regards to and also to ensure that the skills and dispositions agreed upon by our teachers are happening in the classroom along with the knowledge portion of our vision for learning.



Utah Law Related Education: *Our program helps students to become familiar with and understand the principles and philosophies of the constitution, and its supporting documents. Students learn to apply those principles to current events and learn to discuss their ideas and opinions with respect for others' differing ideas. Students who have participated in our program are 95% more likely to vote and be involved in their communities. They leave with a love and deep understanding of the U.S. Constitution.*



Maeser Preparatory Academy: *At Maeser, one of our foundational classes for each grade level is called Socratic Seminar. We combine English and history into one two-hour class, and use Socratic discussions to discover and explore the Roman virtues and the principles of natural law. These Roman virtues include honesty, integrity, morality, civility, duty, honor, service, diligence, family respect and responsibility, and obedience to law, as well as public virtue and service to the community and others. Students read, annotate, and discuss classic works and primary sources deeply to find these virtues and principles and how to apply them to better themselves and those around them. Our U.S. Government and Socratic Seminar 11 (American history and literature) classes are aimed at discovering the foundational principles of liberty underlying documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and many of the primary sources that were studied in creating these documents. Students again use discussion to find these principles and their application in order to become responsible citizens who understand our government, know how to maintain and preserve our liberty, and are motivated to do so. Once students understand principles, we practice applying them through simulations such as the Constitutional convention, Cuban Missile Crisis, Cherokee removal case study, mock Congress, mock Supreme Court cases, and Civil Rights case studies. Our school's motto is "Truth, Honor, Virtue" and we work hard to make those more than just words.*



Noah Webster Academy: *Our school is founded on 7 values which we teach our scholars. They are patriotism, cultural literacy, moral virtue, conscience, individuality, self government, and excellence. Each grade level focuses on a a different value throughout the year. At the end of the year, we have an amazing assembly where the scholars share with each other what they have learned about their value through songs, poems, or videos. We focus on a difference character word each week with definitions and actions to help us remember the word. We also use the Leader in Me program to help teach our scholars the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. We focus on a habit a month throughout the school. Ways to live the habit*

is shared in our morning announcements. We use bucket filling and dipping rather than the emotional bank account to help our scholars have a common language throughout the school. Each Friday morning we meet as a school for our morning meeting. This meeting, led by our Scholar Council, begins with the pledge and national anthem (verses 1 & 4). It is amazing to see and hear 1st graders singing the national anthem. Our grade levels focus on teaching their established grade level standards. Many of our field trips are civics based as our scholars visit the State Capitol, This is the Place, Natural History Museum, Hope of America, and various places at BYU.



Davis School District has added "Civic Engagement Standards" to all social studies courses. There are two over-arching standards, each with 5 characteristics. An example of one of these is contains the following language: "Demonstrate the values of open-mindedness, engagement, truthfulness, problem-solving, responsibility, diligence, resilience, empathy, self-control, and cooperation." Teachers have been instructed to use discussions surrounding current issues and events which are relevant to students and/or to the curriculum to facilitate meaningful classroom discussions. One purpose of the discussions is to learn, develop, and practice the skills and habits of mind described in the standards.



Jordan School District: We have participated in three programs that stand out in my mind: (1) the Jordan Civics Academy sponsored by the Utah Commission on Civic Ed to promote better teaching of citizenship in JSD schools. (2) The Leader in Me Program in which many of our elementary school participate which focuses on teaching students civic and life skills to be better citizens. (3) The BYU Associates program where 40 administrators and teachers attend a 2-day session with the topic of preparing students to be good citizens. They read several books and articles and spend the two days discussing the topic.

These examples are just a small sample of the ways that educators work toward effective civic and character education.

PROMOTING PARTNERSHIPS

Beyond establishing core standards, the Utah State Board of Education provides support for civic and character education through relevant partnerships and the promotion of programs and opportunities that promote civic processes. Key partnerships include working with the Utah Education Network (UEN), the United States Senate Youth competition, and Utah Law Related Education, and supporting and promoting state capitol and state court field trips and Utah History Day competitions.

With financial support from the Utah Commission on Civic and Character Education, the USBE partnered with UEN in the creation and delivery of an online civics resource page and course designed specifically for teachers

who want to incorporate more civics education in their classrooms. The course was well received and is a recurring offering from UEN's slate of courses.

The Utah State Board of Education coordinates the United States Senate Youth competition, an annual event where student leaders compete for the opportunity to spend a week in Washington, D.C. as the guests of the United States Senate and for unrestricted college scholarship funds. The competition allows students to share a portfolio of their leadership and community service experiences, and they simulate a mock congressional hearing as part of the day.

Mock trials and other simulations also have a strong presence in Utah schools. The USBE supports the work of Utah Law Related Education in their promotion of the Mock Trial and "We the People" programs. These programs simulate deliberative processes and encourage the active civic engagement of participants. More than 1,000 junior and senior high school students on 70 mock trial teams typically participate in the Mock Trial Program. Over 300 students typically participate in the "We the People" competitions.

The USBE promotes Utah History Day which is operated by the Utah Division of State History in the Department of Heritage and Arts. Over 4,000 students from across the state participate in Utah History Day competitions. Students showcase projects of historical research and many students advance in contests from the district level to the state competition. The top state entries advance to compete in the National History Day competition in Washington, DC.

The USBE promotes and, up until fiscal year 2019, coordinated school field trips to the Utah State Capitol distributing funds earmarked for field trip reimbursement. These funds have been coupled with an initiative to provide the best pre-field-trip and post-field-trip materials so that the capitol experience can have the most academic impact. The Utah State Board of Education staff serve on the Utah State Court's Judicial Outreach Committee. In cooperation with the state courts, over 900 students from Utah K-12 schools visited the Matheson Courthouse, learning in-depth lessons about the importance of an independent judiciary.

CONCLUSION

The commitment to civic and character education is supported on multiple fronts and woven into the daily fabric of the classroom. As one of the finalists for the 2019 Utah Teacher of the Year, 4th grade teacher Archer Birrell of Granite School District, when interviewed about his classroom, said:

Superheroes have superpowers. When I see my kids work hard at school I see those superpowers come alive. Martin Luther King said the goal of education is character and intelligence, and character and intelligence are both the end goal in my classroom...I see my students use superpowers of kindness, hard work, resiliency, patience. Those are superpowers. They may seem small, but they are big in the long run.

Civic and character education are essential pillars of public education, and, as illustrated in this report, are integrated throughout the curriculum in Utah public schools.