



**State Teams**

- Alaska
- Arizona
- Colorado
- Idaho
- Illinois
- Louisiana
- Oregon
- Maine
- Michigan
- Nebraska
- Nevada
- New Hampshire
- New York
- North Carolina
- Pennsylvania
- Vermont
- Wisconsin

BECAUSE THEY REACH ALMOST EVERY YOUNG PERSON IN THE NATION, SCHOOLS ARE BEST positioned to prepare the next generation of Americans for active citizenship. The public increasingly recognizes that students’ civic learning is important to maintaining our representative democracy, and parents are calling for schools to help prepare young people for civic and political participation.

However, over the last several decades, public schools have become increasingly less attentive to their civic purpose. Many public schools have drastically reduced opportunities for students to participate in civic-related instruction and extracurricular activities like service, school newspapers, and government. At the same time, young people’s civic and political participation outside of school has declined.

The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools is working with advocates from across the political spectrum to dramatically elevate civic learning as an educational priority. Political and school district leaders have particular and significant opportunities to change public education policy and restore civic purpose to American schools.

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# Six Challenges to Civic Learning State Leaders Can Meet

## Challenge #1 | ELEVATE “EDUCATING FOR DEMOCRACY” AS A PRIORITY

Civic learning improves our schools and strengthens our democracy. State leaders can link these priorities by making “Civic Learning: Educating for Democracy” a central part of the vision of schools.

- **ESTABLISH A COMMISSION** to hold public hearings on civic learning
- **INCORPORATE STATEMENTS** about civic learning in election campaigning
- **REQUIRE DISTRICTS’ ANNUAL YEARLY PROGRESS REPORTS** to account for civic learning
- **INCORPORATE CIVIC LEARNING** as a priority in education reform initiatives

## Challenge #2 | INTEGRATE CIVIC LEARNING INTO THE CURRICULUM

Based on research about what works, *The Civic Mission of Schools*, a 2003 report by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, identifies six promising approaches to civic learning. State leaders can improve the quality and quantity of civic learning by implementing these approaches throughout schools.

- **CREATE STATEWIDE NETWORKS** of education leaders and teachers to share strategies to improve students’ civic competencies
- **SHOWCASE EFFECTIVE CIVIC LEARNING** to encourage districts to adopt high-quality practices
- **INSTITUTE POLICIES** to safeguard time and resources for civic learning

### SIX PROMISING APPROACHES TO CIVIC LEARNING

- Instruction in history, law and government
- Guided discussion of civic and social issues
- Active learning experiences such as service-learning
- Civic-related co-curricular activities
- Simulations of democratic practices and procedures
- Participation in school governance

## Challenge #3 | IMPLEMENT SOUND CIVIC LEARNING STANDARDS

Over 40 states now cite civic learning in their educational statutes and policies, but many state standards are weak or impractical, and few states have mechanisms to translate standards into practice. State leaders can turn rhetoric into reality by developing civic learning standards and ensuring that district leaders implement them.

- **INVITE STAKEHOLDERS** from K-12 and higher education, civic groups, business leaders, and parents to develop or review civic learning standards
- **ALLOCATE SUBSTANTIAL TIME AND FUNDING** for developing a K-12 scope and sequence
- **PROVIDE ACCOUNTABILITY PROCEDURES** and support for districts to adopt standards

### CIVIC LEARNING STANDARDS SHOULD

- State clear expectations for the civic content, skills, and dispositions students must master
- Link overarching ideas, themes, and questions so that students can draw connections across subjects
- Apply to all students, regardless of school track
- Adopt a complementary K-12 scope and sequence

## Challenge #4 | DEVELOP BETTER ASSESSMENT METHODS TO EVALUATE STUDENTS' CIVIC LEARNING

While being careful not to increase testing burdens, civic learning experts agree on the importance of holding schools, districts, and states accountable for meeting their civic mission. By making “Educating for Democracy” part of schools’ assessment and accountability systems, state leaders can create incentives for civic learning.

- **INCLUDE CIVIC ITEMS** on existing statewide assessments
- **INCREASE THE FREQUENCY** of the state NAEP civic assessment
- **ENCOURAGE DISTRICTS** to adopt assessments that measure students’ civic skills and dispositions, as well as their knowledge
- **FUND TEACHER TRAINING** in using performance assessments

### MAKE CIVIC LEARNING PART OF SCHOOLS' ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS BY

- Identifying specific student competencies by grade level
- Measuring students’ civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions
- Training teachers in administering and interpreting performance-based assessment
- Involving parents and community members in conversation about the school’s civic mission

## Challenge #5

## IMPROVE TEACHERS' AND ADMINISTRATORS' TRAINING IN CIVIC LEARNING

Schools of education must expand their course offerings and requirements to include civic learning, and professional development organizations must provide continuing training in civic learning for teachers already in the field. State leaders can make high-quality civic learning a reality in the schools by supporting these efforts with policies and funds.

- **URGE COLLEGES** and graduate schools of education to increase civic learning coursework
- **INCREASE FUNDING** for pre-service and in-service teacher education
- **ADD CIVIC LEARNING** to certification requirements for teachers
- **PROVIDE INCENTIVES** and awards for the professional development of teachers and administrators in civic learning

## Challenge #6

## INCREASE COLLABORATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

Schools, families, and communities share responsibility for young people's civic learning. By increasing scheduling flexibility, encouraging community partnerships, and supporting teachers engaging in innovative approaches to civic learning, state leaders can help create meaningful links between schools, families, and the broader community.

- **PROMOTE FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING**, encourage school-community partnerships, and support innovative approaches to civic learning
- **ENCOURAGE TEACHERS** to invite outside speakers into the classroom, particularly those working on contentious civic issues
- **INVITE POLITICIANS** and candidates to meet with students to discuss government and politics and how and why young people can be involved in civic and political life
- **SEEK, IDENTIFY, AND ENCOURAGE** student civic internships with community agencies and public offices

### ACTIVITIES LINKING SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES INCLUDE

- Service-learning and community service
- Bringing community activists, legal experts, and others into the classroom to speak about civic issues
- Visits to civic institutions and from local policymakers
- Coordinating programs and resources with youth-serving community based organizations