Dear Education Colleagues:

This NASBE report presents a matter for urgent consideration by educators across the country. Having spent the past year studying the present circumstances and future prospects for civic learning in public education, my colleagues and I have concluded that promoting civic engagement in our schools and among our students is fundamental to preserving our traditional American values of self-government and our leadership among nations.

The drive toward standardized testing that has swept through education in recent years has focused almost exclusively on the subjects of math, science, and reading. An unintended consequence of this movement has been to deemphasize instruction in equally important content areas such as social studies, which helps to prepare students for effective citizenship. This situation can no longer be tolerated.

One historic mission of public education has been to prepare students to be informed and engaged citizens. We must reclaim that mission and extend it to include participating in an increasingly interdependent global society. A prominent characteristic of effective citizenship is taking an interest and active role in the civic life of one’s local, national, and global communities. It is that personal connection to an individual’s community that creates, nourishes, and renews the soul of civil society.

That is why I believe this report’s call to action is a matter of utmost importance. We urge you to read it carefully and act on the recommendations that are most appropriate for your state. In doing so, you will join us in our efforts to reinvigorate citizenship education by ensuring that our students have the knowledge, skills, and disposition to engage effectively in their rapidly expanding worlds. The future of democracy as we know it depends on it.

Very sincerely,

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Preface

The first of the duties that are at this time imposed upon those who direct our affairs is to educate democracy.

Alexis de Tocqueville

Decades of reform efforts have firmly entrenched standards-based accountability in public schools, touching the everyday lives of principals, teachers, and students across the country. The result: standards-based reform has moved workforce preparation and postsecondary education to the forefront of the mission of our nation’s educational system. There is little doubt of the importance of preparing students for their future careers—both in their continuing education and in the workforce. Our future as a nation, as a people, and as global citizens, depends on it. Yet, with schools asked to do more and more each year to comply with these reform efforts, another central element to their mission is at risk of being lost: teaching young people the roles and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society.

In January of 2006, the NASBE Study Group on Civic Engagement and Ethical Behavior in a Global Society set out to determine what role state boards of education can and should play in promoting civic learning. The result is a call to action—to all state board of education members across the country—to ensure that students are ready to participate in today’s global society, fully prepared to take on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in the 21st century. This report offers four broad recommendations along with action steps for accomplishing the development of policies and practices that stress the importance of civic learning.
Executing Summary

Dating back to our founding fathers, a central mission of public schools has been to educate young people to become informed and engaged citizens in a democracy. Yet, with schools asked to do more and more each passing year to prepare students for the workforce and postsecondary education, that mission has taken a back seat. We must not only rekindle our commitment to that enduring mission, we must also prepare our young people to be citizens in an increasingly interconnected global stage. This report is a call to action for state boards of education to ensure that students are prepared to participate in a global democracy—prepared to take on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in the 21st century.

Beginning in January of 2006, the NASBE Study Group on Civic Engagement and Ethical Behavior in a Global Society set out to determine what role state boards of education can and should play in promoting civic learning. What follows is a set of recommendations for state boards of education across the country to consider as they work to ensure that civic engagement and ethics are an integral part of K-12 education for all students.

Transform the Culture of Schools

- Develop a mission statement, a code of ethics, and a plan for implementation. Working together with students, staff, parents, and the extended community, school leaders should develop and implement a comprehensive mission statement that includes civic learning and engagement, as well as a set of values for the entire school community to follow. Implementation—making the mission a reality in the daily life of the school—must be part of the plan. While many schools may already have a mission statement, revisiting the statement will be a valuable exercise to ensure that all key stakeholders have input in outlining the civic goals of the education community at-large.
Provide students with civic-minded role models. Adult role modeling can be one of the most powerful tools in promoting civic engagement and ethical behavior. Administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and community members all have a role to play in setting an example for students—both on and off the school grounds. As adults incorporate civic responsibility into their work and personal lives, students follow their example.

Review policies and procedures. School personnel should review policies and procedures already in place to make sure they are aligned with the new mission statement and code of ethics. This is a far-reaching effort that requires effective leadership and a collaborative approach. Changing the school climate is arguably the most difficult change to accomplish, but it is the most important. It should span the different school activities, and ensure that students and parents are given a role in decision-making and the direction of every school’s mission and day-to-day activities.

Reinvigorate Curriculum & Instruction

Incorporate civic learning into standards-based reform efforts. State leaders should incorporate civic learning into standards, pedagogy, assessment, and accountability policies whenever possible. Learning should focus on community, national, and global concepts of civic learning.

Infuse instruction about government, history, law, and democracy into the curriculum, with a strong global perspective. School curricula should include courses focusing on government, history, law, and democracy—through a comprehensive social studies program—beginning as students enter elementary school and continuing until graduation. In addition to addressing aspects of American democracy, the coursework should also provide a comparative global perspective, describing how democracies and other governments outside the United States function.

Discuss and debate current events in the classroom. Incorporate discussions of current local, national, and international issues and events into the classroom, especially those that are interesting to students. Also, encourage student participation in simulations of democratic processes and procedures. Participatory learning sharpens skills of effective citizenship for the community, national, and global arenas.

Incorporate technology into civic learning activities. It has become abundantly clear that the lives of the current generation of
students are inextricably linked to technology. Studies highlight the benefits of technology to learning, and how it can increase the quality and quantity of materials available to students in even the most remote, rural schools in the world. Educators and policymakers must ensure that technology is available in the classroom and other activities and that it is being used effectively and ethically. Technology can be an especially powerful tool for expanding global sensitivities.

- **Include ethical discussions and lessons throughout the school day.** While ethics has traditionally been a component of civic learning, the members of the Study Group felt a particular need to discuss the topic independently in order to stress the need for attention in schools. It is critical that ethics, or values, be infused throughout the K-12 curriculum, as well as extra-curricular activities.

**Incorporate Service-Learning and Other Experiential Opportunities**

- **Work with community organizations to offer experiential opportunities that are relevant to students’ everyday lives and to academics.** School personnel can work with government, regulatory bodies and authorities, and other community-based organizations to create applied and authentic service-learning opportunities for youth.

- **Encourage experiential learning through extra-curricular activities.** The most evident is through such activities as school government. In many local districts, and even states, students are also being offered the opportunity to have a voice by serving on policymaking boards and committees. These activities offer students a hands-on experience in civics that is hard to replicate in the classroom.

**Prepare and Train Educators and Leaders for Civic Teaching**

- **Align pre- and in-service requirements for teachers and leaders with the goals of civic learning.** Schools of education should strengthen pre- and in-service training of teachers and leaders in civics. There should be a strong civics component as part of the training of all educators, regardless of their subject area or focus. In addition, teachers and leaders should be trained to incorporate service-learning and other experiential learning into the curriculum and other school-related activities. Included in this training should be a focus on community-based learning, which focuses on teaching strategies that enable students to learn from the community, which might include the school, neighborhood, or the entire world through the Internet.¹
Part 1. Civic Learning in Today’s Classroom: Knowledge, Skills, and Behavior

Dating back to our founding fathers, a central mission of public schools has been to educate young people to become informed and engaged citizens in a democracy. Yet, national and international assessment data reveal a startling picture of a downward spiral in the civic-related knowledge and skills of future generations in the United States. Public opinion polls mirror the assessment data: In a recent survey on attitudes about civic education, the American public gave students a C- for their civic awareness and engagement, while giving schools a grade of C.²

Today’s low levels of civic learning, whether measuring knowledge, skills, or behaviors, have been well documented in both national and international studies. For example, results from the most recent National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) exam in civics reveal a dim future for democracy in the United States—only 30 percent of 12th graders scored at proficient or above.⁴ Among Hispanic students—the fastest growing subgroup of the population in the United States—only 11 percent scored at or above proficient, compared to 33 percent of white students.⁵ Another study of students in grade 9 from countries spanning the globe revealed that the greatest weakness among students in the United States was in content knowledge.⁶ Both results are of concern, as research has established that informed citizens are better citizens.⁷

Beyond the lackluster knowledge of civics and democracy in the United States, American students have even less understanding of govern-
Defining Civic Education

A report from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Civic Mission of Schools, outlined a vision for a more comprehensive approach to civic education in the United States. Included in the report were the goals of civic education designed to “help young people acquire and learn to use the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will prepare them to be competent and responsible citizens throughout their lives.” This new vision for civic education was derived from a series of meetings involving leading scholars and practitioners from diverse political and disciplinary backgrounds. The group concluded that “competent and responsible citizens...”

- are informed and thoughtful; have a grasp and an appreciation of history and the fundamental processes of American democracy; have an understanding and awareness of public and community issues; and have the ability to obtain information, think critically, and enter into dialogue among others with different perspectives.

- participate in their communities through membership in or contributions to organizations working to address an array of cultural, social, political, and religious interests and beliefs.

- act politically by having the skills, knowledge, and commitment needed to accomplish public purposes, such as group problem solving, public speaking, petitioning and protesting, and voting.

- have moral and civic virtues such as concern for the rights and welfare of others, social responsibility, tolerance and respect, and belief in the capacity to make a difference.”

Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), The Civic Mission of Schools.³
Ethics and responsibility were once an integral part of civic learning, and a cornerstone of life for young people. Learning to act responsibly and in the best interest of the common good has all but disappeared in many classrooms, as citizens question whether or not there is a common set of values. Yet, while history has always highlighted unethical decision-making, by individuals, governments, and corporations, schools have been particularly plagued in recent years. Media reports have highlighted ethical questions in schools. As more and more high-stakes testing has taken hold in classrooms, we are annually told of teachers sharing questions, giving students extra time, or providing answers. On the student front, the Internet has played host to a new world of ethical issues from plagiarism to cheating. Anecdotal evidence highlights many of these issues that are perhaps best summed by a recent National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) survey of sophomores. When asked about the outcomes they value for the future, only 19 percent mentioned working to correct social or economic inequalities, while 71 percent mentioned becoming an expert in their chosen field. The results highlight what many other researchers have noted: a shift from the greater good to the individual.

Reviews of state-level policy may provide some explanation for the problem with civic learning in the United States. While nearly every state addresses civics content in its academic standards, the quality and extent of coverage varies greatly. One independent review of state standards found that half the states did not have clearly specified content for civics. Further, the analysis found that in no state were the topics teachable within the allotted time frame. Reports also lament weak standards and coverage in classrooms for world history, with especially weak coverage of political history. On the assessment front, few states gauge civics knowledge, relying instead on classroom-adminis-
tered end-of-course exams. Inclusion of the topic in accountability systems occurs even less frequently. As a whole, there is a shocking disregard for the knowledge and skills essential to success for young people in the 21st century.

Beyond the classroom, several measures highlight a mixed picture of civic engagement among youth. The most common measure—voting—reveals low participation rates among young adults. Presidential elections dating from 1972 until 2000 show voter participation rates among young adults declining. That same group also had a substantially lower turnout rate than voters 25 and older. While the most recent presidential election in 2004 saw an increase in youth voter participation (up 11 points to 47 percent among 18-24 year olds), it remains to be seen whether this indicates a reversal of almost 30 years of declining participation. It should also be noted that voter participation rates in the United States, regardless of age, are generally lower than in other countries.

Other measures of civic engagement reveal some promise. In 2006, thousands of students across the country protested a Congressional proposal to toughen U.S. immigration policy, with many leaving school grounds to do so. Responses to the walkouts varied, with approval from some principals and teachers, and threats of suspension from others. Unlike most adults, who learned of the proposal through news media, students learned by word of mouth, fliers, text messages, and the Inter-

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**Employees for the 21st Century**

In a 2005 speech on education in an age of globalization, Michael Eskew, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the United Parcel Service (UPS), outlined six traits the company is looking for in future employees—the same six traits he believes the future leaders of American companies should hold—which included being:

- trade literate;
- sensitive to foreign cultures;
- conversant in different languages;
- technology savvy;
- capable of managing complexity; and
- ethical.13
Motivating Young People to Volunteer

A recent study focusing on how youth perceive activism found four key themes:

- The emergence of new technologies, including the Internet, have transformed the way communities are defined, not only by geography, but also by common interests. Several other studies have highlighted the importance of technology to this generation of students, and the need for policymakers and educators to incorporate technology into learning.

- There is an “activation gap” among youth, meaning a disparity between interest in an issue and involvement in an issue. For policymakers and educators, the key is to move students from “interested” to “action.” Real issues of direct relevance to young people can often serve as the connector.

- Youth need a sense of belonging, direction, and encouragement from adults, as well as a degree of flexibility. Further, most youth considered “highly involved” started at an early age—usually by age 12.

- Youth noted that better information about opportunities, more time, and opportunities to be involved in volunteerism with friends would all contribute to closing the “activation gap.”

Source: Just Cause, MTV

net. Students most often cited support for their parents as their reason for protesting. As roughly one-fifth of school-aged youth are children of immigrants, this presents an enormous need and opportunity for schools to educate immigrant children about democracy in the United States.

Volunteerism among youth also has some positive trends. The good news is that more than 40 percent of 15-25 year-olds report volunteering. What is more, young people are far more likely to volunteer than adults. However, the youth volunteerism tends to be more of a “one shot deal,” while adults are far more likely to volunteer on a regular basis.
Within school walls, participation in extra-curricular activities is perhaps the best measure of a disposition toward civic engagement. The most recent data from NCES that specifically looks at student government found that just over 15 percent of seniors in high school participate in student government.\textsuperscript{29} Other data from 2002 reveal low rates for academic and hobby-related groups, but that more than half of students participating in sports and roughly one-fifth focusing on music.\textsuperscript{30} Research has found that participation in extracurricular activities can impact political interest and engagement later in life. Yet data from NCES indicate a decrease in participation in extracurricular activities in recent years.\textsuperscript{31}

Given the importance of the global economy and world affairs, it is troubling, at best, that so many students are ill-informed and uninformed, and uninterested in civic learning. The question for state boards of education, then, is “What role should schools play in fixing this problem?”
Part 2. The Role of Schools in Promoting Civic Engagement and Ethical Behavior: Recommendations for State Board Action

Democracy needs to be reborn in each generation and education is its midwife.

—John Dewey

A majority of state constitutions—40 in all—mention the importance of civic literacy. Of those, nearly one-third specifically mention the role of schools in promoting citizenship and democracy. Public opinion mirrors legislators: a recent survey of the American public found that schools should play a central role in teaching civic knowledge and skills.

As the one place where virtually every child and young adult can be reached, schools are in a unique position to reach out to future generations. And given the many years students spend in schools, their power to influence should not be underestimated. Yet providing the opportunity for students to develop and use civic knowledge and skills is no easy task with so many competing interests in how schools allocate time and resources. The members of the Study Group on Civic Engagement and Ethical Behavior in a Global Society discussed a broad array of policy options to address this timely and critical issue. What follows are the four broad policy areas where the group felt state boards of education could provide direct guidance and leadership.
1. Transform the Culture of Schools

Whether the focus is on teacher retention, school safety, or academic performance, changing the school culture is often cited as an effective strategy for improvement. Civic learning is no exception, especially when trying to impact attitude.

- **Develop a mission statement, a code of ethics, and a plan for implementation.**

Working together with students, staff, parents, and the extended community, school leaders should develop and implement a comprehensive mission statement that includes civic learning and engagement, as well as a set of values for the entire school community to follow. This is an important step in establishing ownership by all of the various stakeholders for the ethical code that will guide everyone during school-related activities—including adults. Implementation—making the mission a

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**Ethical and Responsible Behavior in Maine Schools and Communities**

In a survey identifying the biggest problems facing teenagers, one-third of Maine residents cited “declining moral and/or social values,” also mentioning that public schools should play a key role in teaching ethical and responsible behavior.\(^{35}\) Addressing this and other concerns, the Maine Commission for Ethical and Responsible Student Behavior outlined the following values as being important:

- Respect
- Honesty
- Compassion
- Fairness
- Responsibility
- Courage

These values apply to effective citizenship in Maine, the nation, and the globe.

The full report, *Taking Responsibility: Standards for Ethical and Responsible Behavior in Maine Schools and Communities*, can be found online at [www.state.me.us/education/cep/cep_reports.htm](http://www.state.me.us/education/cep/cep_reports.htm).
Assessing the Civic Climate of Schools

The National Center for Learning and Citizenship, housed in the Education Commission of the States, developed a school-based self-assessment that measures the quality of the civic climate. The survey identifies seven characteristics and corresponding indicators, including recognition of the civic purpose of education; meaningful learning of civic-related knowledge; cooperation and collaboration; trust and positive interactions; students’ input and participation skills; thoughtful and respectful dialogue about issues; and engagement in and learning about the community.

*The School Citizenship Education Climate Assessment* is available online at www.ecs.org/qna/docs/Climate_Assessment_Instrument.pdf.

reality in the daily life of the school—must be part of the plan. While many schools already have a mission statement, revisiting that statement will be a valuable exercise to ensure that all key stakeholders have input in outlining the civic goals of the education community at-large.

The mission statement and code of ethics should be integrated into every aspect of the school experience. For example, participation in athletics provides an opportunity for students to learn about and exhibit good sportsmanship—a code of ethics among athletes. Every student and adult in the school should “feel” the mission of the school every day as they go about their activities.

- **Provide students with civic-minded role models.**

Adult role modeling can be one of the most powerful tools in promoting civic engagement and ethical behavior. Administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and community members all have a role to play in setting an example for students—both inside and outside of the school grounds. Parents and community leaders can serve as great resources to teachers in the classroom—serving as real-life examples of civic engagement. For students, seeing a principal, teacher, or coach volunteering in the community or going door-to-door for a civic cause can send a strong message about becoming involved in local, state, national, and even international issues. As adults incorporate civic life into their work and personal lives, students follow their example.
School personnel should review policies and procedures already in place to make sure they are aligned with the new mission statement and code of ethics. This is a far-reaching effort that requires effective leadership and a collaborative approach. Changing the school climate is arguably the most difficult change to accomplish, but it is the most important. Such an effort should ensure that members of the community are engaged and involved in school activities and decision-making, and that students and parents are given a role in decision-making and the direction of every school’s mission and day-to-day activities.

2. Reinvigorate Curriculum & Instruction

Shifting the focus of what students learn and how they learn it is perhaps the most tangible way to provide students with civic-related knowledge and skills.

- **Incorporate civic learning into standards-based reform efforts.**

State leaders should incorporate civic learning into standards, pedagogy, assessment, and accountability policies whenever possible, with learning focused on community, national, and global concepts of civic learning. While nearly all states have standards that include civic components, analyses have found that the majority of the standards are not clear and specific. Further, few states thus far have included civics in assessment and accountability reforms, instead relying on end-of-course exams.

- **Infuse instruction about government, history, law, and democracy into the curriculum, with a strong global perspective.**

School curricula should include courses focusing on government, history, law, and democracy—through a comprehensive social studies program—beginning as students enter elementary school, and continuing until graduation. In addition to addressing aspects of American democracy, the coursework should also provide a comparative global perspective, describing how democracies and other governments outside of the United States work and assessing how ethical principles guide global interaction.

In addition, curriculum coordinators and teachers should integrate civic learning into all subject areas. For example, a biology course could include a lesson on how pollution, habitat loss, and particularly DDT threatened an American symbol, the bald eagle, then show how activists, volunteers, and concerted government action helped alleviate the prob-
Students for the 21st Century

Discuss and debate current events in the classroom.

Incorporate discussions of current local, national, and international issues and events into the classroom, particularly those that are interesting to students. An open, participatory philosophy should permeate all aspects of school life and become a defining attribute of the school. Also, encourage student participation in simulations of democratic processes and procedures. Participatory learning sharpens skills of effective citizenship for the community, national, and global arenas. Now more than ever, students are part of a global society, and discussing current events and how they impact others is a crucial part of developing critical thinking skills. Students should be encouraged to initiate such discussions and to carry them out in a respectful manner, which allows for a free flow of information among people of differing viewpoints. Teachers and school leaders should be encouraged to include such discussions throughout the curriculum, and be provided with a supportive policy environment in which to do so.

Incorporate technology into civic learning activities.

Results from the most recent NAEP Civics test in 1998 indicated a gap between how we are teaching the subject matter and how students of this generation learn—almost three-quarters of fourth-graders and more than half of eighth-graders indicated social studies teachers either never

The Civitas Exchange Program

The Civitas Exchange Program brings together educators from around the world from emerging and established democracies. Administered by the Center for Civic Education, in cooperation with the U.S. Departments of Education and State, the program provides civic leaders with opportunities to learn from each other. For example, representatives from Delaware, Maryland, and Oregon are working with educators in Croatia to develop model lesson plans for civic learning. The Civitas Exchange Program brings together educators from around the world from emerging and established democracies. Administered by the Center for Civic Education, in cooperation with the U.S. Departments of Education and State, the program provides civic leaders with opportunities to learn from each other. For example, representatives from Delaware, Maryland, and Oregon are working with educators in Croatia to develop model lesson plans for civic learning.
Concerned about how schools can best prepare students for the 21st century, a partnership among corporate, non-profit, and government agencies included in its blueprint a focus on teaching and learning in a 21st century context. (See the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, online at www.21stcenturyskills.org.) The partnership highlighted a need for more instruction in three areas in particular: global awareness; financial, economic, and business literacy; and civic literacy.40

West Virginia recently completed an extensive process of revising its content standards to include the 21st century skills outlined by the partnership. The 21st Century Learning Skills and Technology Tools Content Standards and Objectives for West Virginia Schools can be found online at: wvde.state.wv.us/policies/p2520.14_co.pdf.

The North Carolina State Board of Education has also endorsed the framework from the partnership, outlining five goals:

- North Carolina public schools will produce globally competitive students.
- North Carolina public schools will be led by 21st Century professionals.
- North Carolina public school students will be healthy and responsible.
- Leadership will guide innovation in North Carolina public schools.
- North Carolina public schools will be governed and supported by 21st Century systems.

North Carolina was also the first state to create a Center for 21st Century Skills in cooperation with the national partnership in 2005.
Students for the 21st Century

or hardly ever used the Internet in their classrooms. It has become abundantly clear that the lives of this generation of students are inextricably linked to technology. Studies highlight the benefits of technology to learning and how it can impact the quality and quantity of materials available to students in even the most remote rural schools in the world. Technology can be an incredibly powerful tool in connecting students to the global community, and such connections are an important aspect of civic engagement. Educators and policymakers need to ensure that technology is available in the classroom and other activities and that it is being used effectively and ethically.

- **Include ethical discussions and lessons throughout the school day.**

It is important that discussions of ethical issues be infused throughout the curriculum—for students in all grade levels. This should include extra-curricular activities as well. For example, as students progress through their educational careers, they are often asked to write reports on any number of topics. The Internet has unfortunately made plagiarism a common incident in schools. Virtually any classroom, regardless of the subject area, could provide lessons on plagiarism, why it is wrong, and how to avoid it. Other examples of infusing ethics may focus on a particular subject. Using science classes as an example again, teachers can initiate discussions about the ethics of research, discussing everything from Nazi experiments on humans to the debate on stem cell research, or even the public debate on scientific research funded by drug companies. Asking appropriate ethical questions, no matter what the subject matter, is an effective means to create ethical dispositions and sensibilities in young people, and can also help make academic discussions more personally relevant and engaging to students.

3. **Incorporate Service-Learning and Other Experiential Opportunities**

In order to fully understand what it means to be a citizen, students must be able to connect subject matter with the places where they live and the issues that affect them. Service-learning is one of the most direct ways to make that connection for students. Schools should offer service-learning opportunities connecting curriculum and community beginning in the early grades and continuing through high school.

- **Work with community organizations to offer experiential opportunities that are relevant to students’ everyday lives and to academics.**

Civic Engagement and Ethical Behavior in a Global Society
School personnel can work with government, regulatory bodies and authorities, and other community-based organizations to create applied and authentic service-learning opportunities for youth. Using the community as real-world learning opportunities provides an excellent way to connect the students to the community—and the community to the school. When students are engaged in real issues confronting communities, schools become part of the problem-solving agenda and contribute to community-building in a palpable way.

■ Encourage experiential learning through extra-curricular activities.

Another way to encourage civic learning is through extra-curricular activities. The most evident is through such activities as school government, when students have a real opportunity to effect policy and practice. In many local districts, and even states, students are also being offered the opportunity to have a voice by serving on policymaking boards and committees. These activities offer students a hands-on experience in civics that is hard to replicate in the classroom.

4. Prepare and Train Educators and Leaders for Civic Teaching

Integral to the success of any civic learning strategy is having a well-qualified staff to implement it. Preparing and training teachers and leaders for civic learning will require efforts from local, state, and higher education leaders to align standards, training, and classroom practice to meet the goals of educating students to participate in a democracy in the 21st century.

■ Align pre- and in-service requirements for teachers and leaders with the goals of civic learning.

Schools of education should strengthen pre- and in-service training of teachers and leaders in civics. There should be a strong civics component as part of the training of all educators, regardless of their subject area or focus. In addition, teachers and leaders should be trained to incorporate service-learning and other experiential learning into the curriculum and other school-related activities. Included in this training should be a focus on community-based learning, which focuses on teaching strategies that enable students to learn from the community, which might include the school, neighborhood, or the entire world through the Internet. Training should also include a focus on global perspectives.
Service-Learning in Maryland

In 1992, the Maryland State Board of Education became the first in the nation to require service-learning in order to graduate—and Maryland remains the only state to have such a regulation. The policy states simply that students must complete either 75 hours of service or a locally designed program that has been approved by the State Superintendent of Schools. Almost a decade into implementation of the policy, service-learning has been embraced by policymakers and educators alike, reaching out to students to provide relevant hands-on experience in understanding the problems faced by communities and how to become actively involved in making improvements. Maryland’s seven best practices of service-learning are to:

- Meet a recognized need in the community;
- Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning;
- Reflect throughout the service-learning experience;
- Develop student responsibility;
- Establish community partnerships;
- Plan ahead for service-learning; and
- Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service.

The Division of Student and School Services, Youth Development Branch within the Maryland State Department of Education provides a detailed guidance document for schools outlining the best practices, policies and reporting, and accountability measures, as well as resources, online at: www.mdservice-learning.org. Also see NASBE’s policy brief, Maryland’s Service-Learning Requirement, online at www.nasbe.org/Membership/Educational_Issues/SII/9_3.asp?.

Civic Engagement and Ethical Behavior in a Global Society
**Action Steps: A Checklist for State Boards of Education**

This section includes a list of the major steps to be taken as state boards of education address the issue of civic learning.

- Develop a mission statement that outlines a set of core values for the state board of education that will serve as an example for school personnel, students, and the community. If one is already in existence, review the mission statement to ensure the inclusion of the board’s civic goals.

- Enact a policy encouraging local school leaders to develop a mission statement that outlines a set of core values for the entire school community to follow. Within the policy statement stress the importance of including a broad spectrum of stakeholders, such as students, parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders, religious leaders, and others. For those schools that already have a mission statement, encourage a community-wide review of the statement to ensure inclusion of civic-minded goals and values.

- Review and revise standards, assessments, and accountability policies to ensure that civic learning has been incorporated. Also, ensure that ethics and a strong global perspective are infused throughout standards and assessments. Foreign language proficiency should be included as part of the global perspective.

- Enact a policy encouraging local schools to provide instruction in civic learning through courses in government, history, law, and democracy beginning in kindergarten and continuing through grade 12. (Some states may instead choose to require a specified number of courses for graduation.) As part of the policy, encourage teachers to incorporate discussions and debates on current events, including global issues.

- Ensure that technology is available in every classroom to enhance civic learning, and provide resources that focus on using technology as a tool for civic learning.

- Enact a policy encouraging service-learning and other experiential learning opportunities for students beginning in the elementary grades and continuing through high school. Also, provide examples of community-based and government-oriented organizations that might serve as partners in service-learning, as well as best practices in service-learning programs.
Statement of the New Jersey Coalition to Support the Civic Mission of the Schools

Whereas the most recent National Assessment of Education Progress indicates that one-third of high school seniors lack a basic grasp of the structure and operations of American government; and

Whereas 18 to 30 year-olds vote at barely half the rate of their parents, demonstrating their lack of interest and engagement in public affairs; and

Whereas civic knowledge and engagement are essential to maintaining our representative democracy; and

Whereas the civic mission of the schools, that is, creating citizens with the knowledge, the skills and the inclination to participate in a democratic society, is the very purpose for which public schools were established;

We agree that:

- While the family and other institutions help to develop civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions, it is one of the primary responsibilities of the schools.

- Civic education requires an understanding not only of the functioning of government but also of history, geography, economics, and other social sciences in order to understand current domestic and international public policy issues.

- Well-defined state social studies standards and graduation requirements are necessary to ensure that civic education is taught effectively in K-12.

- Teacher education and professional development are important to ensure effective classroom instruction in civic education.

- Well-designed school programs that foster an understanding and appreciation of democracy and fundamental constitutional principles are essential to civic education.

In recognition of these findings, we resolve to work together to further the civic mission of the schools.
Student Leadership in Education Policymaking

A recent study by NASBE found that 12 states and the District of Columbia allow some form of official student participation in state board activities. Participation varies by number and voting status. In three states—California, Massachusetts, and Vermont—students have full voting rights, and Maryland’s student board member has partial voting rights. Vermont also has a second student representative who serves in an advisory capacity only. Other states, such as Alaska, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, North Carolina, and Washington allow for two student representatives who serve in an advisory capacity. Hawaii, Iowa, Montana, and Nevada allow for one student representative who serves in an advisory capacity.43

In addition to bringing the student view to board discussions and encouraging student participation in civic issues at all levels, student representation enables communication from student leaders back to the student body on board issues particularly relevant to young people.

✔ Develop a policy statement encouraging schools to offer a variety of opportunities for students to participate in extra-curricular activities with a strong civic component.

✔ Provide opportunities for students to participate in state board of education activities. State boards of education should make a formal statement about the importance of including students in the decision-making process at the state level, and work to ensure student representation in an official, ongoing manner. Depending on the governance structure of the state (e.g., constitutional versus statutory), the degree of this participation may vary from serving in an advisory capacity to serving as a full voting member of the board. Also, develop a policy statement encouraging local education boards and committees to include student representation in decision-making processes.

✔ Review and revise pre- and in-service requirements for teachers to incorporate civic teaching. For those states with independent teacher standards boards, enact a policy statement calling for the incorporation of civic teaching.

National Association of State Boards of Education
NASBE Project Will Promote Student Leadership at the State Level

NASBE, in partnership with the MetLife Foundation, is initiating a one-year effort to assist state boards of education in increasing the presence and voice of student leaders at the state level. As part of the project, NASBE will be awarding grants to a number of states to focus on one of two areas:

- Enhancing student involvement at the state board of education; or
- Expanding the peer network of students currently serving on state boards of education.

NASBE will provide technical assistance to selected states to increase the probability of including a student member on the board, and work to enhance the communication tools available to students currently sitting on state boards of education. A pre-conference seminar will be held as part of NASBE’s 2007 Annual Conference in Philadelphia, PA to highlight lessons learned. A request for proposals (RFP) will be made available to state boards of education in December of 2006. Awards will be announced in January of 2007.
Appendix

Resources

Key Reports and other Documents

Over the course of its three meetings, the Study Group on Civic Engagement and Ethical Behavior read many reports and articles on the topic, and reviewed clearinghouse websites. Below are some of the key resources for state boards to review before taking action.


- *Community-Based Learning: Engaging Students for Success and Citizenship*, by the Coalition for Community Schools, online at: www.communityschools.org/CCSDocuments/CBLFinal.pdf.

The National Center for Learning and Citizenship provides a state education policy database, online at: mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=105.


The National Service Learning Clearinghouse, online at: www.servicelearning.org/k-12home/index.php.

Organizations

Many of the leading organizations working in the field of civic learning participated in the Study Group on Civic Engagement and Ethical Behavior. Below are some of the organizations that may provide state boards of education with technical assistance and research as they embark upon action in this area.

- The Asia Society, online at: www.asiasociety.org/.
- Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, online at: www.civicmissionofschools.org.
- Center for Civic Education, online at: www.civiced.org/.
- The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE), online at: www.civicyouth.org/.
- The Institute for Educational Leadership, online at: www.iel.org/.
- The Institute for Global Ethics, online at: www.globalethics.org/.
- The National Alliance for Civic Education (NACE), online at: www.cived.net.
- National Center for Learning & Citizenship (NCLC), Education Commission of the States, online at: www.ecs.org/nclc.
- National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), online at: www.ncss.org/.
- The Rural School and Community Trust, online at: www.ruraledu.org/site/c.beJMIZOCIrH/b.497215/k.CBA7/Home.htm.
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Endnotes


5. Ibid.


10. Ibid.


Revitalizing the Civic Mission of Schools


16. Ibid.


22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.


26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.


33. Ibid.


36. Gagnon, 2003

37. Ibid.


42. Owens and Wang, 2006