

Civic Education in Poudre School District

This document uses National Center for Learning and Citizenship's (NCLC) three strands of civic competencies to examine how opportunities for civic education are currently provided to Poudre School District students.

Civic-Related Knowledge (guided by civics standards)

PSD standards: created in 1998; include grades 1-5, 8, 11; due for review and revision

1. Students know what government is, why it exists, and how it is shaped by politics and civic life.
2. Students understand the basic constitutional principles and democratic foundations of our nation.
3. Students know the structure and function of government, and how citizen involvement and democratic principles shape public policy.

PSD Social Studies Curriculum/Formal Instruction

Grade Level	Social Studies Standards (strands that currently exist at each grade level)	PSD Curriculum/Content
K	History, Geography	Family, School, Community, Maps, Seasons & Weather, Holidays & Celebrations, Earth Resources
1	History, Geography, Civics , Economics	School, Neighborhood, Community at Work, Maps & Geography, Weather/Calendar, Historical Figures, Natl. Symbols, Native Americans, Holidays & Celebrations
2	History, Geography, Civics , Economics	Fort Collins History
3	History, Geography, Civics , Economics	Tour of the Continents (in-depth look at one country on each continent)
4	History, Geography, Civics , Economics	Colorado History
5	History, Geography, Civics , Economics	U.S. History to the Revolutionary Era
6	Geography, History	Maps, North Am., Middle Am., South Am.
7	Geography	World Geo & Cultures, Europe, Russia & W. Neighbors, S.W. & Central Asia, Africa, S. Asia, E. and S.E. Asia, Pacific World & Antarctica
8	History, Civics , Economics	U.S. History from the Revolutionary Era
9	History	World History (Western Civilizations)
10	Geography	World Geo & Cultures, W. Europe, E. Europe, U.S. & Canada, Japan & Koreas, Pacific World, Latin America, Africa, Middle East, China, S. Asia, S.E. Asia
11	History, Civics	U.S. History Survey Course
12	Civics	American Government (one semester)
7-12		Variety of elective courses

Cognitive and Participative Skills (extracurricular and in classes)

Civic skills and community connections are developed through the following:

- Junior High Leadership classes taught by guidance counselors
- Senior High elective courses such as Leadership and We The People
- Service learning projects and volunteering
- Student Think Tank
- AIM program
- IB Program and AP programs
- Communications courses and activities
- CiviConnections project
- Guided discussion of issues and events
- Mock congress
- Environmental projects
- Student councils
- History clubs
- Debates
- Mock trials
- Model United Nations programs
- Amnesty International clubs
- Travel with a service component
- Peer mentoring
- Service clubs
- Mock elections
- Character education
- School-based elections

Core Civic Dispositions (developed on an individual and site level)

There is currently nothing in place district-wide that defines, requires, or measures the development of civic dispositions in PSD. However, many educators and sites in PSD are committed to encouraging their students to develop civic dispositions.

Typically, these dispositions include such attitudes and values as personal responsibility, respect for human rights, commitment to others' well being, support of justice and democracy, willingness to hear others' views, etc.

Questions:

- When will CDE complete their review of civics standards?
- What is PSD's timeline for revising our civics standards?
- What does PSD want our standards or other civic education requirements to encompass (knowledge, skills, dispositions)?
- Should civics standards be addressed at all grade levels?
- Will civics standards, and any other civic education requirements, be social studies based, or interdisciplinary?
- Will outcomes be measured in any way other than class grades?
- Should American Government be a yearlong course that encompasses skills and dispositions rather than primarily focusing on knowledge?

Recent and Upcoming Civic Education Professional Development

Individual teachers—many pursue opportunities outside of the district

PSD Service Learning class, summer 2007 (Jess Burge)

PSD Civic Engagement through Service Learning class, fall 2007 (Andrea Delorey)

Strengthening Civic Education in Colorado Schools—

Strengthening Civic Education in Colorado Schools is a professional development initiative funded by the Colorado Department of Education to enhance student learning in Colorado's Civic Content Standards. In its first year, the project offered four regional conferences in civic education—in Alamosa, Greeley, and La Junta (in La Junta, separate conferences were held for elementary and secondary teachers). The conferences were designed to update teachers' knowledge about best practices in civic education and provide resources to implement new or improved instruction in civic education.

This year, Poudre School District and Boulder Valley School District are being funded to design and implement their own civic education professional development conferences focused on civics standards and the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools' "Six Promising Approaches to Civic Education."

Through CELD (the Center for Education in Law and Democracy) CDE is funding:

- The PSD planning team to attend the CELD conference in Denver (Dec. 2007) and an additional day and a half for planning

- One sub day for 50 teachers to attend the PSD conference (the other day is to be funded by sites sending teachers)
- A \$500 grant for each participating teacher who implements a civic education strategy or program (to be used to continue the strategy or program)
- A class set of *We The People* texts for those 5th grade teachers completing training at the conference
- All conference costs for 50 teachers plus 25 others who do not need subs or grants
- Continued support for teachers at their sites
- *Question of whether additional participants may attend if funded by site?*

The PSD planning team (made up of 8 teachers and counselors plus the social studies facilitator) has proposed the following:

**Strengthening Civic Education in PSD conference for K-12 educators
April 22nd and 23rd, 8:30-3:30, Fort Collins Hilton**

- Targeting 5th grade teachers, secondary department chairs, and American Government teachers
- Different strands for different levels
- Focus on service learning, critical thinking, simulations, discussion models, civics and literacy, info about civics programs, and PSD's vision for civic education
- Day 1: opening session, 3 sessions throughout day, speakers at breakfast and lunch, civics "speed dating" (different civic education and community organizations set up to share information)
- Day 2: intensive session strands, speakers at breakfast and lunch, collaborative time, closing session