

WE THE PEOPLE: THE CITIZEN AND THE CONSTITUTION





The primary goal of We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution is to promote civic competence and responsibility among the nation's elementary and secondary students. The design of the instructional program, including its innovative culminating activity, makes the program successful with both teachers and students. The program enjoys the active participation of members of Congress, as well as support from educational, professional, business, and community organizations across the nation. Since the inception of the We the People program in 1987, more than 30 million students and 90,000 educators have participated in this innovative course of study.

Curriculum

The foundation of the We the People program is the classroom curriculum. It complements the regular school curriculum by providing upper elementary, middle, and high school students with an innovative course of instruction on the history and principles of U.S. constitutional democracy.

Critical thinking exercises, problem-solving activities, and cooperative-learning techniques help develop intellectual and participatory skills while increasing students' understanding of the institutions of American constitutional democracy. The We the People curriculum fosters attitudes that students need in order to participate as effective, responsible citizens.

PROFESSIONAL Development

The Center sponsors professional-development activities across the country with the assistance of a national network of directors, mentor teachers, and scholars. These activities range in length from one day to seven days. Participants explore content, teaching methods, and assessment strategies. Free materials are provided.

The Center also sponsors a series of advanced content seminars. Past seminars have included James Madison: The Man and His Political Philosophy, held at James Madison's Montpelier; the Civil Rights Movement, held in Birmingham, Alabama; An Intimate Portrait of the Founders, held in Madison, Wisconsin; John Marshall: The Man and His Judicial Philosophy, held in Richmond, Virginia; and the Navajo Nation Experience, held in Chinle, Arizona.

In a study conducted by Dr. Thomas Vontz, professor of education at Kansas State University, participation in a We the People summer institute had a positive and statistically significant effect on teachers' civic knowledge across civic concepts, and significantly increased teacher confidence at all grade levels in teaching core civic concepts: constitutionalism, representative democracy, human rights, citizenship, and civil society.



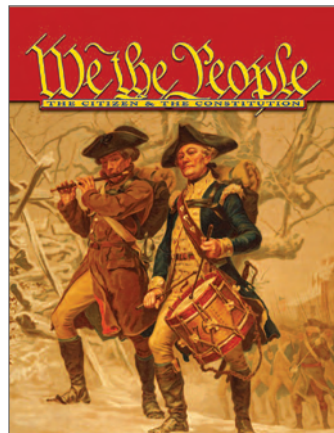
Textbooks

We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution is available at the upper elementary, middle school, and high school levels. Teacher's editions for each level contain lesson plans and suggested activities to enrich classroom instruction. The high school text also features a companion website, <http://wtpcompanion.civiced.org>, that provides a wealth of resources for students and teachers, including a glossary, biographies, Supreme Court cases, primary sources, and an annotated bibliography. Literacy guides designed to assist teachers of struggling readers are available for the middle school and high school levels. They can be downloaded for free at www.civiced.org.

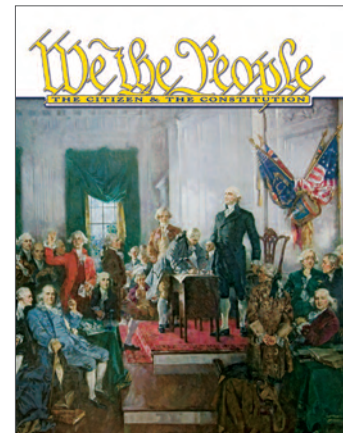
Classroom sets include 30 student books and a teacher's edition. Instructional information and supplies necessary to complete the program are included with the teacher's edition. Free classroom sets are available on a limited basis in every congressional district in the nation. Additional sets may be purchased from the Center at a nominal cost. Sample lessons and other resources for students and teachers are available on our website at www.civiced.org.



UPPER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



MIDDLE SCHOOL



HIGH SCHOOL



The Hearing

Students may participate in a simulated congressional hearing as the culminating activity for the We the People program. The entire class, working in groups, presents prepared statements on constitutional questions before a panel of community representatives acting as congressional committee members. Each group of students then answers questions posed by the committee members. The format gives students an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of constitutional principles while providing teachers with authentic means of assessing student performance. Teachers may engage their students in a noncompetitive simulated congressional hearing at the upper elementary, middle, and high schools levels, or a competitive hearing at some levels in certain states.

National Finals

High school competition begins at the congressional district level with classes from each school vying for the district championship. Congressional district winners advance to compete in a statewide hearing. State champions travel to Washington, D.C., to take part in the annual We the People National Finals. Approximately 1,200 high school students and their teachers participate annually in the National Finals. While in Washington, students have opportunities to explore historic sites, visit museums, and meet with members of Congress and other prominent officials. To view videos of each of the top-ten teams participating in the final day of simulated congressional hearings during the National Finals, please visit www.civiced.org/top10.

Results

An independent evaluation by RMC Research Corporation found that We the People students scored 30 percent higher than their peers and 36 percent higher than college students on a comprehensive test of political knowledge. Participating students made significantly greater gains in their understanding of core values and principles of democracy, constitutional limits on governmental institutions, and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Students also improved their civic skills, including their ability to analyze issues, debate, persuade, and achieve group consensus.

Surveys conducted annually from 1999 to 2009 reveal that high school students who compete at the We the People National Finals possess significantly greater knowledge of American democratic institutions and processes than the average American citizen. Students surveyed have repeatedly outperformed the national sample of high school students participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress in every category of civic knowledge delineated in the survey.

Repeated studies of We the People alumni have demonstrated that they are better informed and more politically engaged than their peers. Voting rates are consistently higher among alumni than for nonparticipating peers surveyed in the American National Election Studies.



Diverse Outreach Programs

HIGH-NEEDS INITIATIVE

The We the People High-Needs Initiative is a comprehensive outreach effort to address the needs of schools with significant numbers of high-need students. The initiative focuses on schools that serve high percentages of socioeconomically disadvantaged students and those experiencing attendance or truancy problems. The initiative provides free curricular materials, professional development opportunities, and technical assistance to teachers.

WE THE PEOPLE-FRONTIERS INTERNATIONAL PROJECT



The Center collaborates with Frontiers International, an African American service organization, to promote civic education among urban youth throughout the nation. Frontiers International facilitators implement the We the People program on Saturdays during the spring. The project includes free curricular materials, professional development opportunities, and technical assistance to teachers. The project culminates with urban youth participating in simulated congressional hearings in their respective cities and in the We the People-Frontiers International National Finals held in Birmingham, Alabama.

JUSTICE IS ALSO DEAF PROJECT



The Center collaborates with Civication, Inc., to promote civic education in schools for the deaf. The Justice Is Also Deaf project encourages deaf students and teachers to participate in the We the People program. The project includes free curricular materials, professional development opportunities, and technical assistance to teachers. The project culminates in simulated congressional hearings in these schools and in the Justice Is Also Deaf National Finals in Washington, D.C.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional information on We the People diverse outreach programs, contact Robert S. Leming, Director, We the People Program, at leming@civiced.org, or Mark Molli, Associate Director, Center for Civic Education, at molli@civiced.org.



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COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO
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VIRGIN ISLANDS Contact the Center



Get Involved

TEACHERS AND EDUCATORS

The Center for Civic Education administers the We the People program nationally through a network of coordinators in 50 states, 435 congressional districts, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These coordinators work with their members of Congress, business and community leaders, and local educators to contribute to the success of the program.

- Contact their state coordinator (see following pages) or the Center for Civic Education to involve their students in the We the People program
- Work with their congressional district coordinator to include community leaders and members of Congress as judges, speakers, and presenters at the simulated hearings
- Participate in professional development opportunities including summer institutes, seminars, and academies

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

- Sign and present award certificates, speak or serve as judges at simulated hearings, and welcome students from their state to the National Finals in Washington, D.C.
- Discuss constitutional issues with students in their classrooms and speak at teacher professional development institutes, conferences, and seminars
- Support efforts of district and state coordinators in all aspects of program implementation

COMMUNITY, BUSINESS, AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- Volunteer time and expertise by serving on advisory committees, providing leadership support, and serving as competition judges
- Provide financial support to help purchase program materials, underwrite local and statewide competitions, and send winning classes to state and national competitions

Contact

For more information on participating in the We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution program, contact your state coordinator listed here and on our website.



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Supporting Organizations

American Association of School Administrators
 American Federation of Teachers
 American Lawyers Auxiliary
 Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
 Consortium of Small School Districts, Inc.
 Council for American Private Education
 Council for Chief State School Officers
 Council of the Great City Schools
 Federal Bar Association
 General Federation of Women's Clubs

Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund
 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
 National Association of Attorneys General
 National Association of Counties
 National Association of Elementary School Principals
 National Association of Secondary School Principals
 National Association Towns and Townships
 National Catholic Education Association
 National Conference of State Legislatures
 National Council for Social Studies

National Education Association
 National Parent Teachers Association
 National School Boards Association
 National School Public Relations Association
 Optimist International
 People for the American Way
 United States Catholic Conference
 United States Chamber of Commerce

National Advisory Committee

Hon. Spencer Abraham

Hon. Les AuCoin

Richard D. Bagin

Executive Director, National School Public Relations Association

Hon. Max Baucus

Hon. Bill Bradley

John Bridgeland

President, Civic Enterprises

Anne Bryant

Executive Director, National School Boards Association

Hon. John H. Buchanan Jr.

Hon. Dale L. Bumpers

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Hon. William S. Cohen

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Hon. Mark O. Hatfield

Charles Haynes

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Asst. Superintendent (Ret.), Los Angeles Unified School District

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Glenn Anne McPhee

Superintendent, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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Programs and Publications

We the People: Project Citizen is a program that actively engages middle school students in a study of public policymaking in their state or local communities.

School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program incorporates curricular materials and professional development from Foundations of Democracy, Violence in the Schools, We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution, and Project Citizen.

Education for Democracy: California Civic Education Scope & Sequence is a comprehensive curriculum guide designed to help administrators, curriculum developers, and teachers integrate civic education into the classroom and meet state and national standards.

National Standards for Civics and Government are content standards that state what students should know and be able to do in the field of civics and government, developed with support from the U.S. Department of Education and The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Comparative Lessons for Democracy is a resource book for high school teachers developed by a collaboration of educators in the United States and Central and Eastern Europe; coordinated and edited by the Mershon Center at The Ohio State University.

Civitas International Programs are directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Education for Democracy Act approved by the United States Congress; additional support is provided by the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and other sources.

CIVITAS: A Framework for Civic Education is a model elementary and secondary civic education curriculum framework funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Exercises in Participation is a series designed to help elementary and middle school students address the problems of drugs and violence in the schools.

Foundations of Democracy Series is a K–12 curricular program based on concepts fundamental to understanding constitutional democracy—authority, privacy, responsibility, and justice.

Notice of nondiscrimination: All rights and privileges of program participation and benefits shall be extended equally to all schools and school systems regardless of source of funding, religious identification, or participants' race, color, sex, disability, or national/ethnic origin.

