

Education *Matters*

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ARE THEY READY?

National Study Reveals Civics Deficit in U.S. Schools

“America’s school children are woefully unprepared to take their place as informed, engaged citizens,” said Charles N. Quigley, executive director of the Center for Civic Education, in response to the recent release of “The Nation’s Report Card: Civics 2006.”

The study on civics knowledge done by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the only nationally representative, continuing evaluation of the condition of education in the United States and has served as a national yardstick of student achievement since 1969.

“The fact that only a little over 24 percent (aggregate of three grade levels) of students tested were able to achieve a proficient score on this important national measure is hardly surprising, given the narrowing of the curriculum and testing that focuses on a few subjects to the exclu-

sion of all others,” Quigley added. “Our system of public education was founded with the twin goals of preparing each generation for the workplace and active citizenship. This new report demonstrates we have lost sight of educating the citizen in favor of concentrating on preparing the worker.”

The 2006 NAEP civics report card evaluated 25,000 students in grades 4, 8, and 12 regarding their understanding of the democratic institutions and ideals necessary to become informed citizens in shaping America’s future. The five content areas were:

1. What are civic life, politics, and government?
2. What are the foundations of the American political system?
3. How does the government established

by the Constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?

4. What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?
5. What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?

Approximately two out of three American students at grades 4, 8, and 12 have at least a basic knowledge of civics. Average scores improved from 1998 to 2006 only at grade 4. Most of this improvement was seen among low-performing students.

Three of four students at grade 4, or 73 percent, scored at or above Basic, meaning they demonstrated at least a partial mastery of civics knowledge and skills fundamental for proficient work at their grade. One in four students (24 percent)

scored at or above the Proficient level, meaning they demonstrated at least competency over challenging subject matter.

Overall, eighth-graders' knowledge of civics has not changed since the 1998 assessment. Of eighth-graders, 22 percent scored at or above the Proficient level, and 70 percent scored at or above Basic. White and Hispanic students showed score gains.

Twelfth-graders, tomorrow's voters, performed at about the same level in 2006 as they did in 1998. No student group showed a statistically significant increase. Twenty-seven percent of twelfth-graders scored at or above the Proficient level, and 66 percent scored at or above Basic.

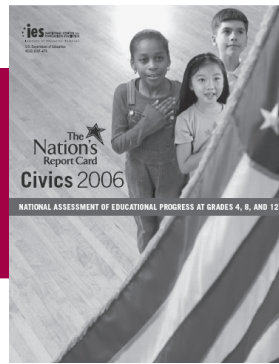
Since 1998, the Center for Civic Education has led the Campaign to Promote Civic Education. "Working with civic education professionals and policymakers in each state and the District of Columbia, we have built state campaign coalitions dedicated to strengthening civic education policies and practice," Quigley said. "The state campaigns to restore the civic mission of schools have made great progress."

The more notable accomplishments of the Campaign to Promote Civic Education include the following:

- Every state has established a campaign coalition to strengthen civic education.
- Alaska, Arizona, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Nebraska, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia have created officially sanctioned state commissions on civic education or civic literacy.
- Twenty-six states have held state-level summit conferences on the importance of effective civic education.

"Although great progress has been made by the state campaigns to restore the civic mission of schools, 'The Nation's Report Card: Civics 2006' shows much work needs to be done to ensure that each student receives the education necessary to become an informed, engaged citizen of this nation," Quigley said. ■

Source: This article was adapted from information provided by the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the Center for Civic Education. Copies of "The Nation's Report Card: U.S. History 2006" and "The Nation's Report Card: Civics 2006" are at <http://nationsreportcard.gov>.



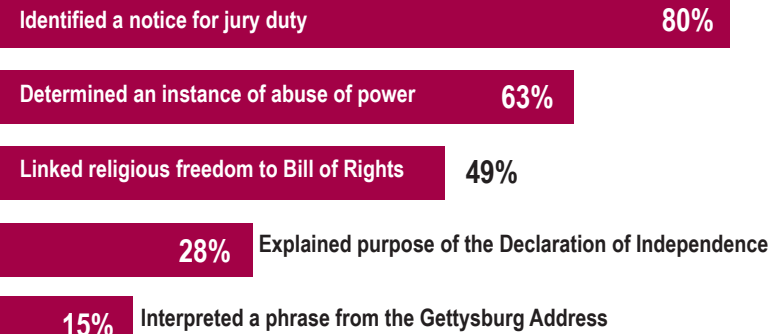
The Nation's Report Card Civics 2006

The report is available at www.nationsreportcard.gov.

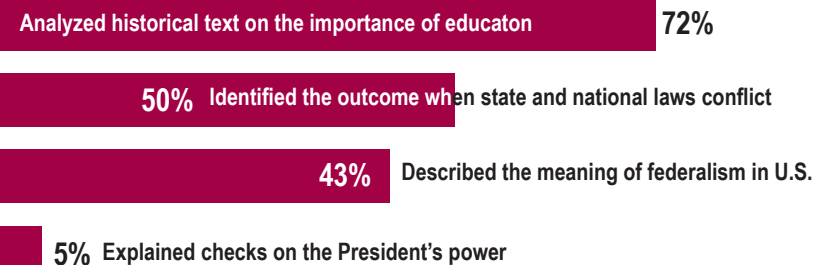
What Fourth Grade Students Know about Civics



What Eighth Grade Students Know about Civics



What Twelfth Grade Students Know about Civics



Making the Cut

Many school districts spend more time on reading and math while cutting time in other areas

A majority of the nation's school districts report that they have increased time for reading and math in elementary schools since the No Child Left Behind Act became law in 2002, while time spent on other subjects has fallen by nearly one-third during the same time, according to a report from the Washington, D.C.-based Center on Education Policy.

The report, based on a nationally representative survey of nearly 350 school districts, finds that to make room for additional curriculum and instructional time in reading and math – the two subjects tested for accountability under the No Child Left Behind Act – many districts are also spending less time in other subjects that are not the focus of federal accountability.

Among the districts reporting increased time for English and math, the average increase was substantial, amounting to a 46 percent increase in English, a 37 percent increase in math, and a 42 percent increase across the two subjects combined.

Meanwhile, 44 percent of districts reported cutting time from one or more other subjects or activities at the elementary level, including science, social studies, art and music, physical education, lunch and recess. On average, the cuts amounted to about thirty minutes a day.

The report, *Choices, Changes, and Challenges: Curriculum and Instruction in the NCLB Era*, also finds that overall, the decreases represent an average reduction of 31 percent in the total amount of instructional time devoted to these subjects since 2001-2002.

The report notes that the increases and decreases are more prevalent in districts that are home to struggling schools.

School districts with at least one school identified for improvement under NCLB reported in greater proportions that they had increased time for English and/or math at the elementary and middle school

levels and had cut back on time for other subjects since 2001-2002 (78 percent) than did districts without schools identified (57 percent).

What's Tested is Taught

In addition to increasing time spent on English and math, many districts appear to be changing their curriculum to provide a greater emphasis on content and skills covered on high-stakes state tests used for the purposes of No Child Left Behind.

In elementary reading, for example, 84 percent of districts reported that they have changed their curriculum "somewhat" or "to a great extent" to put greater emphasis on tested content. Seventy-nine percent of districts made a similar change in middle school English, while 76 percent did so at the high school level.

Similarly, 81 percent of districts reported changing their math curriculum at the elementary and middle school levels to more closely match the content of state tests, while 78 percent of districts reported doing so at the high school level.

The report is from CEP's "From the Capital to the Classroom" series of reports tracking the implementation of the law in its fifth year. Based on five years of research on how the No Child Left Behind Act has affected instruction and curriculum in states, districts, and schools, the report includes the following recommendations to ensure that students receive a well-balanced curriculum and adequate instructional time in all core subjects:

- Stagger testing requirements and include tests in other subjects. Students should be tested in English language arts in grades 3, 5, 7 and once in high



school, and in social studies and science in grades 4, 6, 8 and once in high school.

- Encourage states to give adequate emphasis to art and music and to include measures of knowledge and skills in art and music as one of the multiple measures used for NCLB accountability.
- Require states to have an independent review of their standards and tests at least once every three years to ensure that they are of high quality and rigor.
- Provide federal funds for research to determine the best ways to incorporate and support the teaching of reading and math skills into social studies, science, and other subjects to ensure students will have access to a rich, well-rounded curriculum. ■

For more information, visit www.cep-dc.org



Teacher Brings Technology to History Lessons

Mike Pearce says the best history teachers in today's schools will tell stories, make students relate to the people and events, and use technology to do both.

Starting in 2001, when he was teaching eighth grade, Pearce began integrating his own lesson plans into a PowerPoint system.

"It hits every learning style. We live in an electronic age and kids are now very impressed by instruction that is more contemporary," he said.

Not only does he use this in his own classroom at Ellison High School but also he

earned a commended performance, and 21 percent made a perfect score.

"I've received letters from students and parents just thanking me for creating this system," he said.

Pearce wasn't always a teacher. Nine hours after graduating from high school in his hometown of South Kingstown, R.I., he joined the U.S. Marine Corps and served for four years. He gave another two years to the Reserve before attending college at the University of Rhode Island along with his high school sweetheart and wife, Melanie Pearce.

Because she was enrolled in the ROTC program there, the two ended up in Killeen because of her orders. After she served her four years, they decided to stay here because, "We loved the area and decided to stay. And the political and social climate definitely reflected our own values."

Together they have six children from the age of 2 to 15.

Pearce is working on making a PowerPoint CD for the second half of United States history, as well as for government. It takes him a year to develop each new course supplement, and another six to eight months to tweak it. Those who buy the CD can change the program to fit their own course better – all they need is a PowerPoint program.

For more information, visit www.ushistorynut.com.

Source—Hillary S. Meeks, Killeen Daily Herald

began marketing the CDs through his Web site, www.ushistorynut.com. Teachers in more than a dozen other states and in school districts across Texas are taking advantage of the legwork Pearce has done with this system.

"Don't think this is some boring old PowerPoint. I use music, sound, animation, and art," he explained.

It seems to be working. Last year, when he was teaching eighth grade, 99 percent of Pearce's students passed the social studies portion of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills. Seventy-seven percent

Two Teachers Sue the NEA over Retirement Fund

Two teachers are suing the NEA over the retirement fund it chose for its members. The NEA is accused of providing a high-fee retirement plan for its members in exchange for millions of dollars from two financial firms, Nationwide Life Insurance Company and the Security Benefit Group. The lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court in Tacoma, Washington,

on behalf of 57,000 teachers and school personnel who invested in the retirement plan.

Plaintiffs assert that because the NEA offered a high-fee plan instead of other comparable lower cost plans, NEA members have lost tens of millions of dollars in retirement funds. The teachers who brought the lawsuit are seeking the disgorgement

of any kickbacks paid to the NEA and excessive fees paid to Security Benefit and Nationwide.

They are also seeking any damages for investment losses.



Entire District Leaves the Union in Michigan

The teachers of the Burt Township School District in Grand Marais, Michigan, have recently voted to have the local union, Burt Township Education Association (BTEA), become a local union only. One hundred percent of the teachers voted to decertify the Michigan Education Association (MEA) and the Nation-

al Education Association (NEA). Their departure from the MEA and NEA will save each member \$650 a year. The teachers will now get their liability insurance from AAE.

For more information about the decertification in Michigan, visit www.aateachers.org/pressroom.shtml.

New Scholarship Program Available Exclusively to AAE Members!

Western Governors University is offering two annual scholarships for AAE members:

1. *Educational Leadership Scholarship*, valued up to \$5,000, for teachers with a bachelor's degree and valid certification. Degrees offered are Master in Education degree in Instructional Design, M.Ed. in Learning and Technology, and M.Ed. in Measurement and Evaluation.



2. *The Classroom Excellence Scholarship*, valued up to \$5,000, for teachers with a bachelor's degree and valid certification. Degrees offered with this scholarship are Master of Arts in Mathematics Education, M.A. in Science Education, M.A. in English Language Learning (K-12),

and Master of Science in Special Education.

For more information, visit www.wgu.edu/aaescholarships or call 1-866-225-5948. Apply as soon as possible! Application deadline is December 31, 2007; however, WGU may award the scholarships early.

Western Governors University (WGU) is a private, nonprofit, competency-based online university nationally accredited by the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC). WGU offers bachelor's and master's degrees in information technology, business, teacher education, and health professions. The WGU Teachers College received full unconditional accreditation from the National Council on Accreditation for Teacher Education (NCATE) for five years in October 2006, becoming the first online university ever to receive this prestigious teacher accreditation. The WGU Teachers College now has more than 4,500 students nationwide, including more than 1,000 studying math and science.

The Condition of Education 2007

At nearly 350 pages, this year's *Condition of Education* is shorter than last year's. The 2007 edition contains a special section on high school course taking, including an in-depth look at the explosion in students taking AP courses. Their number doubled between 1997 and 2005, with the greatest gains made by Hispanics (up 213 percent) and African-Americans (up 177 percent).

On the down side, while white and Asian scores on AP tests remained fairly constant over those years (hovering around 3 out of a possible 5), Hispanic scores fell from 3.1 in 1997 to 2.5 in 2005.



(Are schools forcing more students into AP classes than are able to do the work, or are there too few good teachers to teach them? Or both?)

The amount of time spent on homework by high school sophomores report-



American Inventor in Your Class?

HopeLab is awarding up to \$300,000 in cash and prizes for product ideas that will get kids moving! HopeLab (www.hopelab.org), a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the health and quality of life of young people with chronic illness, is sponsoring an online competition called Ruckus Nation. Ruckus Nation challenges participants to imagine innovative products that will increase physical activity among kids ages 11 to 14. The competition is open to people of all ages. Students are especially encouraged to join in, as individuals or in teams.

Students who participate in

Ruckus Nation may have the opportunity to see their ideas come to life; the best product ideas will be prototyped, tested, and broadly distributed to young people. Up to \$300,000 in cash and prizes will also be awarded for the best product ideas, including \$2,500 prizes to teachers who inspire winning entries.

Make Ruckus Nation a fun, informative project for your class or after-school program! For more information, or to sign up for e-mail updates about contest registration, materials for teachers, and other news, please visit us at www.ruckusnation.com/info.

edly rose between 1980 and 2002, and so, too, did the percentage of students coming to school without their homework completed.

Overall spending per child is up, with most of the new money going to capital outlays and interest (which makes some sense because the student population is projected to rise every year from now to 2016).

There's much more of note, of course, so you should download a copy for yourself at <http://nces.ed.gov>.

Source: *Martin A. Davis, Jr.*



Funds for Union Oversight Slashed

During the summer, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill. The House's budget for Labor was \$935 million above President's Bush's request, giving many programs in the Department of Labor an increased budget. One budget was cut by 20 percent—the Office of Labor Management Standards (OLMS). OLMS oversees union activity and has brought about the convictions of 775 corrupt union officials and more than \$70 million in restitutions for members.

“Union members are also discovering the extent to which their dues money is funding lavish trips for union officials to luxury resorts and other expensive perks unrelated to collective bargaining,” said Labor Secretary Elaine Chao.

Unions are required to disclose information about their finances in LM-2 forms. They have complained though that the reporting requirements are too costly. The AFL-CIO has claimed that having to comply with the reporting costs unions \$1 billion and the ALF-CIO alone, \$1 million. According to the Department of Labor, it only has cost the AFL-CIO \$54,150 to comply with the reporting requirements. It is also important to remember that according to the Department of Labor, unions had \$22 billion in assets from members' dues in 2005. Also, note that Congress is increasing the Securities and Exchange Commission's budget to monitor businesses but decreasing funds for any office that monitors unions.

New Campaign for NCLB

A coalition of business, education, community and civil right groups have launched new campaign called *NCLB Works!* These groups believe that NCLB is crucial to the continuation of improvements in student achievement. “The fact that diverse organizations have come together with a common bottom line for the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act is a testament to the law's importance to our country,” stated Susan Traidman, Director of Education and Workforce Policy for the Business Roundtable.

The group is encouraging Congress to strengthen and adhere to some of the fundamental goals of NCLB during the reauthorization of the law. Some examples of the goals that the group supports are: the expectation that all students have the ability to learn; give states incentives to set more rigorous standards, specifically at the middle and high school level; and parents that have children in low-performing schools should have the option to transfer their child to a high-performing school or receive intensive tutoring. For more information, visit www.nclbworks.com.

Left Behind by Design

Two economists, Derek A. Neal and Diane Whitemore Schanzenbach, at the University of Chicago have released a study suggesting that as a result of the No Child Left Behind act children on both ends of the ability spectrum have been neglected academically. Many schools are focusing on the “bubble kids” to ensure that schools meet proficiency targets.

To determine whether some students are being left behind the economists compared reading and math test scores for fifth, sixth, and eighth-graders before and after the implementation of NCLB. The results showed that students who were in the middle academically made significant gains compared to students who were tested prior to NCLB. The bottom 20 percent made the least progress and the top 10 percent made either no academic gains or only slight gains.

In response to the study, Charles Murray, a W.H. Brady scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, a Washington think tank, stated, “This strikes, I hope, a major blow to the chest of proficiency counts as a measure of progress in education. To ask children to perform at levels at which they are incapable is one of the cruelest things you could ask a child to do.”

To read the study in its entirety, visit www.aei.org/docLib/20070716_NealSchanzenbachPaper.pdf.

Engaging Parents in Education

U.S. Department of Education recently released, *Engaging Parents in Education*. “Thanks to No Child Left Behind, schools are now required to provide parents with the information and options they need to ensure their children receive the high-quality education they deserve,” Secretary Spellings said. “Resources like this show how increasing parental involvement is key to improving student achievement.”

The guide profiles five Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) that are representative of how PIRCs and their partnering organizations can successfully increase parental involvement in education. The centers emphasize the power of strong parent-educator partnerships to improve schools and raise students academic achievement.

This guide is part of the Department's Innovations in Education series. To download *Engaging Parents in Education*, visit <http://www.ed.gov/admins/comm/parents/parentinvolve/index.html>



To read AAE press releases, visit www.aeteachers.org. Click on “press room.”



Rewarding Teachers with Higher Compensation

New Report Outlines Plan for Performance Pay

Association of American Educators recently signed onto a study called “Creating a Successful Performance Compensation System for Educators,” funded by the Joyce Foundation and led by the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching.

The report details the necessary elements for a process of compensation that rewards excellent teachers without relying solely on student achievement as the basis for their evaluation. The coalition of groups involved in the study, including National Council on Teacher Quality, the AAE, and the New Teacher Project, recognized that other factors play a role in the quality of teachers and should be considered in a performance-pay package. The elements discussed in the report include evaluation based on professional standards, career advancement opportunities, and ongoing, job-embedded professional development.

The report also makes recommendations for implementation of a successful compensation program. Teacher buy-in is one such recommendation. Giving teachers a sense of ownership of the program

is crucial, the report says, and allowing them to help govern the program, along with administrators, will accomplish that. The example provided, Denver ProComp, employs teacher buy-in, which is one of the key factors in obtaining approval for public funding.

Another suggested implementation tactic in the report is sufficient and stable funding. The report is careful to note that the funding for performance pay should not come at the expense of the base salary for teachers. The funding for a performance compensation system should be budgeted in addition to the existing competitive salary for teachers. Also, a long-term plan should be employed so that the budget for the pay plan can be as guaranteed as possible.

One of the main points of criticism for the public school system is that high-need schools and subjects often do not employ the best and most experienced teachers.

Teachers are incentivized not to teach at these schools, which results in the neediest students missing out on the best education. However, through the recommendations laid out in this report, teachers would receive compensation based on the high-need status of the schools in which they work.

Other implementation recommendations include skilled leadership, including a program evaluation and monitoring system, and

integrating and aligning other systems to the compensation system.

This report seems to capture the problems with the current compensation system for teachers, and outlines important steps that need to be taken in order to improve conditions for both teachers and students. It is important to show teachers that their performance in the classroom is both appreciated and worthy of reward. ■

For the full report, visit www.talentedteachers.org.

It is important to show teachers that their performance in the classroom is both appreciated and worthy of reward.

Robbing the Cradle

Is Pre-K Schooling an Irresistible Force?

By David Kirkpatrick

The public school establishment likes to talk reform. Remember Competency Based Teacher Education? Outcome Based Education? The Open Classroom? Once all the rage, although lacking support from research or practical experience, they are rarely mentioned today.

There is a similar emerging push to introduce schooling at earlier ages without justifying evidence.

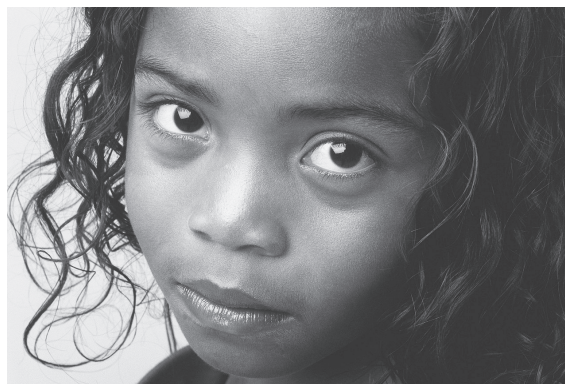
This movement is based on the sound premise that a child's first five years are extremely important. During this time, with rare exceptions, children learn to walk, talk, perhaps read and write, develop social skills, and otherwise develop a personality and skills base that may heavily determine their path through life.

What Research Says

The problem comes with taking a quantum jump from that premise to assuming earlier schooling is the way to overcome any deficiencies in the child's private life.

In 1985, Raymond Moore wrote in *Phi Delta Kappan*, an educational fraternity publication, that "reviews by the Hewitt Research Foundation of more than 8,000 studies have failed to turn up any replicable research suggesting that normal children should be schooled before age 8...."

That same article noted that "studies by Urie Bronfenbrenner, a professor at Cornell University, suggest that, at least until



grade 5 or 6, children who spend more time with their peers than with their parents become peer-dependent...they lose their sense of self-worth, their optimism, their respect for parents, and even their trust in peers."

In 1989, *U.S. News & World Report*, citing Professor of Education James Uphoff of Wright State University in Ohio, said "Studies show that children who started kindergarten before age 5½ are far more likely to flunk a grade, need special tutoring and emotional counseling, be socially ill at ease and later be diagnosed as learning disabled."

In 1998, the Family Research Council recalled a 1992 study at the City University of New York, that "showed that the average IQ scores of low-income preschoolers rose nearly 7 percentage points for each day of the week that their mother read to them" while a subsequent study concluded "that preschoolers who stay home with their parents perform better academically than their peers in preschool."

More recently, in 2004, Yale Professor Edward F. Zigler, known as "the Father of Headstart" and is thus hardly an opponent of meaningful early education experiences, said "Those who argue in favor of universal preschool education ignore evidence that indicates early schooling is inappropriate for many 4-year-olds, and

that it may even be harmful to their development."

Despite this, 2005 found eight states, including Georgia, offering universal preschool. Darcy Olsen, Executive Director of the Goldwater Institute, after researching early education, noted that Georgia's 10-year-old preschool program had "served over 300,000 children at a cost of \$1.15 billion and children's test scores are unchanged."

Nor is Georgia alone. After Oklahoma began universal preschool in 1998, student test scores fell. A review of preschooling in California "found no measured gain in educational improvement..." In the 40-year-period from 1965 to 2004 enrollments in preschool programs grew from 16 to 66 percent. A survey of Oklahoma teachers found 86 percent object to introducing a voluntary early childhood program for 3-year-olds.

The same *School Reform News* article that reported on Olsen's work included an oddity on this topic. The American Legislative Council (ALEC), which represents more than 2,500 state legislators, concluded "There are better ways to educate children without expanding the state education monopoly, such as tax credits for early education."

Although ALEC represents about a third of all state legislators, to date its views haven't persuaded their colleagues. ■



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