

## SUMMARY:

## TOP STRATEGIES AND ACTION STEPS

On December 4, 2003, the Consortium partnered with Communities in Schools, the Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University, N.C. Campus Compact, the N.C. Center for Public Policy Research, the N.C. Congress of Parents and Teachers, the N.C. Department of Public Instruction, the N.C. School Boards Association, the Office of the Governor, and the Public School Forum to host a Policy Summit on the Civic Mission of Schools, which was sponsored by State Farm Insurance. The main goals of the Summit were to convene policymakers, educators and others concerned about civic education to review the state of civic education in North Carolina and to develop K-12 policy recommendations to support the civic mission of schools.

Ninety-one participants attended the half-day Summit. The working session featured Howard Lee, chair of the State Board of Education, and workshops showcasing best practices in civic education. All Summit participants had the opportunity to recommend policy strategies. The most frequently suggested strategies became the focus of small group work. The top seven suggested strategies are listed below in bold, with action steps developed by small groups listed below the strategy.

**Adopt policies to hold schools accountable for the civic mission—beyond testing**

- Hold community forums locally to discuss civic performance of students and set goals for local students;
- Develop a local civic index; and
- Use project-based learning to engage students and showcase their learning.

**Provide professional development for teachers and administrators on how to use interactive strategies, such as service-learning**

- Convene a task force to identify and compile existing resources and create or propose a specific plan.

**Develop local or state curricula/strategies that encourage schools interaction with the community and the government (state or local)**

- Create shared best practices that are made easily accessible;
- Establish a central contact at the district level (in the school system or community) to get things rolling; and
- Get the message out to the community.

**Local boards should adopt mandatory service-learning in K-12**

- Develop uniform terminology—definitions are needed;
- Encourage the Civic Education Consortium, along with its allies and partners, to take a stance on mandatory or encouraged service-learning and make a recommendation; and
- Encourage and decide upon a “top-down” or “bottom-up” approach.

**Incorporate the promising practices from *The Civic Mission of Schools* report (a national report released in Feb. 2003) in state standards**

- Make the whole case for the civic mission of schools a priority.
  - Use a PR campaign, sound bites, and public service announcements
  - “No country ever went to war over math or science...civic education matters”
- Incorporate the promising practices into school measures (i.e. school report cards and incentives that measure involvement in the promising practices).
  - Incentives for students, not just teachers (i.e. scholarships)

### **Develop/promote funding for model programs that can be replicated**

- Develop meaningful teacher training—should be professional, “corporatize” in-service;
- Make the new end of course history test an analytical writing test instead of a test on facts and dates; and
- Market the need for more civics in the classroom.

### **Allow more time in the standard course of study for teachable moments/focus on current issues**

- Revise curriculum to include time for teachable moments in which current events are central—students learn about the event and then reflect on the events; not just learning from lectures. Use newspapers as an avenue for this;
- Encourage legislators to listen to teacher input;
- Allow for more creativity in the classroom by moving away from test driven curricula;
- Introduce a pilot program in which there is less emphasis on a prescribed program and more emphasis on integrating civic responsibility; and
- Reintroduce the social studies in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.

### **Summary of all strategies recommended on notecards:**

*Note:* some of the recommendations were received after the 12:30 deadline. Those that were received after the deadline were not included in the tabulations for the group’s top strategies.

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### **If I could change just one K-12 policy at the state level to enhance the civic mission of schools, it would be to:**

- The state curriculum objectives are too generic. It is not clear to the teachers what is important to teach for each objective that deals with civic education. Teachers need suggested lesson plans to then instruct students for the civic education goals.
- Implement a strong civic education strand in K-12. Do not allow “service-learning”, “character education”, and an emphasis on issues that reflect the self-interest of students to dilute the strand. Rather, each of them should be a means to an end.
- Develop methods to implement a more effective line of communication with elected officials, students, teachers and parents.
- Formalize the involvement of community/professional organization in this effort so that as the leadership of these groups change, the commitment to civic education doesn’t.
- For the state to recognize all schools, non-public and public schools in their discussions, dialogue, and curriculum development. Seems like school programs rule. D.P.I. is not all there is.
- The following suggestions are not policy changes, but vehicles for enhancing civic mission of schools:
  - Development of integrated curriculum for teachers
  - Use of afterschools and Gates High School “fund” to create innovative civic models. The key is to use existing strategies/vehicles right now to move this agenda.
- Have the state fund counselor positions regardless of school size for students in grades” PK-5; 6-8; 9-12.
- Implement an accountability component at grades 3-8.
- Assessments not being limited to high stakes testing.
- Re-examine state social studies and civic education standards to ensure they support the 6 promising practices.
- We need to clearly define civic mission of schools beyond curriculum boundaries and not just government.
- For D.P.I. – develop a more engaging meaningful civic education curriculum that includes interaction with state and local government officials, local projects and things that matter to and will excite students.

- Define civics—Is it voting? Is it government education? Is it participating? Is it functioning morally in a civic society (i.e. social capital)?
- Provide more financial resources to support service-learning in the classroom.
- Encourage K-12 policymakers to initiate active dialogue about how we can work together to transform the “school house”, which would encourage educators to pursue the civic missions of schooling.
- Change the focus of social studies and the U.S. History end of course test to include civic education or civic literacy.
- Teach civics in every grade, and in every course and every class at the appropriate grade level; 6-week refresher source ion being and effective citizen in the last semester of high school.
- Require a K-12 strand on the integration of strategies to develop civic attitudes and awareness at each grade level.
- Fund a method of sharing resources that currently exist (both in individual teacher’s classrooms and in groups like the CEC and NIE, etc.) and to fund a campaign to get teachers to that resource.
- Have the state Board of Education mandate the use of *We The People* and *Project Citizen* to teach civic education and public policy issues.
- Change the way children are treated when they are being punished for behavior in school as far as with police. Rules should apply to each individual not everybody the same way.
- U.S History should be divided into tow separate courses, based on periods (years). Too much material to be covered for students to understand especially regular level students. This will allow the civics/economics course to spend more time on current events, as well as U.S. History teachers.
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum should include more civics/government curriculum. Middle school emphasizes other subjects—not social studies, which is not tested.
- Include current events as a required state goal. On the old ELP course goal, I was to teach “current events”. It has now been replaced by a former U.S. History goal.
- Schools are teaching to what is being tested for that grade level. For this reason, students are coming to high schools very weak in civics.
- Last, on the state level, to keep good teachers in the schools, then lave that state that a teacher can see 150 students per day must change to ‘X’ number of student per year. Many systems have moved to the A/B schedules, this means that too many teachers are having class loads of 175-200 students.
- To provide a vehicle fore replication of successful civic education/character education projects.
- Promote a liberal/classical education that fosters good thinking and living.
- A student organization to give service-learning schools an idea of what students would like to accomplish though service-learning.
- Develop a Service-Learning Department that can serve the entire state school system (use the existing experts; contact Dr. Norman Camp).
- Empower children to become leaders and positive role models in their communities by asking legislators to find a way to require school districts to incorporate leadership/civic development into the curriculum either by way of social studies or by building in a separate component to the curriculum. Children who may not excel in core subjects could possible be excellent at leadership.
- Develop measures to move school districts to be held accountable for civic education.
- Give children more supervised free time.

**If I could change just one K-12 policy at the local level (school or school district) level to enhance the civic mission of schools, it would be to:**

- Provide resources (especially technology) to assist teachers with current events. This must include a list of encourages (or accepted) topics of discussion that promoter civic ed. This could be in an email form that is sent from the local or state leaders.

- Implement programs that teach the same curriculum (conceptually) to parents, guardians, and students simultaneously for a significant period of time.
- For the state to recognize all schools, non-public and public schools in their discussions, dialogue, and curriculum development. Seems like school programs rule. DPI is not all there is.
- High school "senior projects" as requirements for graduation that, at the least, include a "civic" component. Projects would occur/be completed throughout the senior year.
- Require for promotion a set number of volunteer/service hours for students beginning in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. This requirement would be for weekly service/volunteering. Ex 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> – 1 hour per week; 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> – 2 hours per week; 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> – 2.5 hours per week.
- Increase the use of simulation.
- Encourage classroom teachers to develop & establish civic education curricula that incorporate the 6 promising practices notes above in the K-12 curricula.
- More staff development on the civic mission of schools. Perhaps just meeting with community members.
- Increased accountability for civic education at the K-8 levels based upon an improved curriculum aligned with the 6 promising practices listed in *The Civic Mission of Schools*.
- Include government officials from the area in civic education classroom activities. Offer/invite all representatives representing the area to participate in school system activities.
- Applied exercise that promote participation among 14-17 year olds (non-voting individuals); e.g. attend council meetings, appointed board meetings, get appointed to a city board or committee.
- Offer more opportunities for teachers to help expand knowledge of the importance of service-learning curriculum.
- Initiate an active policy discussion about how a school system could truly "transform" and truly engage the community in the system's beliefs and understandings.
- Allow student politicians on campus.
- Set up monthly visits for community participants to be "civic" mentors" at grade level schools (elementary, middle, and high) and speak to the entire school community about a specific facet of civic life and challenge the audiences to follow-through in ONE way on a regular and consistent basis.
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg now makes our quarter tests and teachers must stay on such a pace that current events can no longer be given class time. This pace prevents the activities that students remember and learn from.
- Every class in every school should have at least one elected official some to the classroom.
- Provide in-service for teachers and administrators to incorporate the 6 Promising Practices from *The Civic Mission of Schools*.
- Have the local board adopt service-learning in K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 schools and develop leadership instruction.
- Offer more service-learning activities that would better support the growing interest in volunteering in teens.
- Increase involvement of administration and school boards in service-learning.
- Have a service-learning position in each school district to oversee the schools within each district.
- To replicate the excellent programs that have been done by teachers.
- Kids need to be able to learn on their own!