

Recommendations to Citizenship Curriculum Task Force January 2009

Respectfully submitted by:

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The organizations involved believe that the development of curriculum addressing citizenship should, in the spirit of democratic practice, be transparent, involving public consultation and ongoing input from the educators and students whom the curricular decisions will most affect.

Citizenship education at school should be intimately connected to participation in civic life outside of the classroom. To maximize continuity of learning, the school curriculum should also take into consideration the years prior to¹ and after school.

Pedagogical devices that elicit student voice² and actively engage learners and educators in critical and reflective processes should be employed. For example, case studies, role-play and simulations, and action research

The objective of this teaching should be informed citizens who have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to deliberate upon issues, participate in ongoing dialogue, and take individual and collective civic action.

Recommendations with regards to curriculum content and other programs are divided into the following five areas:

- Service Learning
- Civics and Political Literacy
- World Issues
- History
- Character Education

Service Learning

(This area might be better termed *community participation and contribution* or *active citizenship*.)

Recommendation 1:

Provide an opportunity for students of all ages to receive recognition and course credit for community involvement (e.g., volunteerism, organizing/working at community events),

¹ See, for example, the values and Goal 4 of The New Brunswick Curriculum for Early Learning and Childcare, Department of Social Development, Province of New Brunswick.

² See, for example, the Government of Ontario, <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/students/speakup/index.html> accessed Jan 2009.

and require that students reflect on their experience so that civic duty, volunteerism, and altruism are connected to critical reflection about social policy and the acquisition of skills to exert influence on public affairs. This can be accomplished by involving learners in action-oriented community projects or action research projects of their own design³.

Recommendation 2:

Teach students to think critically about their community and other issues and apply this thinking to real-life situations. A focus should be made on *criticality* – applied critical thinking with regards to social justice. Students should be taught to raise questions about their communities and design ways to answer these questions (e.g., Why is our community like this? Does it have to be this way? How could it be different?).

Recommendation 3:

Where possible, link the Community Schools Program with local organizations and events, such as:

- environmental and social justice NGOs;
- federal, provincial, and municipal elections;
- service clubs/YMCAs;
- school greening and school gardening activities.

Civics and Political Literacy

Recommendation 1:

Graduate “systems thinkers,” who recognize the interconnectedness of all living things and understand how local policies, actions, and changes can influence the ecosystem and other communities, both locally and globally.

Recommendation 2:

Foster students’ ability to look critically at all levels of government, ensure that they are aware of their right to dissent, and empower them to do so.

Recommendation 3:

Teach students about how social change occurs and the role of civil society in bringing about that change.

Recommendation 4:

Teach students the historical context for, and encourage critique of how, the Canadian government works.

Recommendation 5:

Teach the following topics:

³ See, for example, Harding, J. Craig and Alan Sears (2008) *Take action – Make a Difference: A social studies handbook*, Pearson: Don Mills, Ontario.

- Connections between national, regional, and global politics and governance structures;
- Social justice;
- Consumer responsibility;
- Links between environment, society, and economy;
- Participatory democracy (through activities such as children's parliaments, student councils, children's participation in making the decisions that affect them, etc.);
- Perspective consciousness (awareness that not everyone shares the same world view/perspective).

World Issues

Recommendation 1:

Teach about world issues and current events through the lens of sustainability. Encourage students to make links between world issues, their local contexts, and their personal actions and lifestyles.

Recommendation 2:

Teach the following topics:

- Climate change;
- Over-population;
- Resource extraction and over-consumption;
- Human rights;
- Security (personal security, food security) and war and peace;
- Equality & equity (poverty, social equity, gender equality, etc);
- Sustainability and survival of indigenous cultures and traditional knowledge.

History

Recommendation 1:

Teach about previous societies, how they were organized, and theories of their collapse; draw lessons learned from those societies and compare and contrast those societies with our own.

Recommendation 2:

Teach about colonialism and indigenous history, taking into account the perspectives of all groups involved.

Character Education

Recommendation 1:

Teach students to reason and think critically about historical accounts and historical methods, taking ethics and morals into consideration.

Recommendation 2:

Teach students a deep respect for the Earth, humans, and other living things.

Recommendation 3:

Teach students their rights and responsibilities as members of Canadian society.

References:

The Critical Thinking Consortium (Roland Case, Executive Director) – www.tc2.ca

Government of Ontario <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/students/speakup/index.html>

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