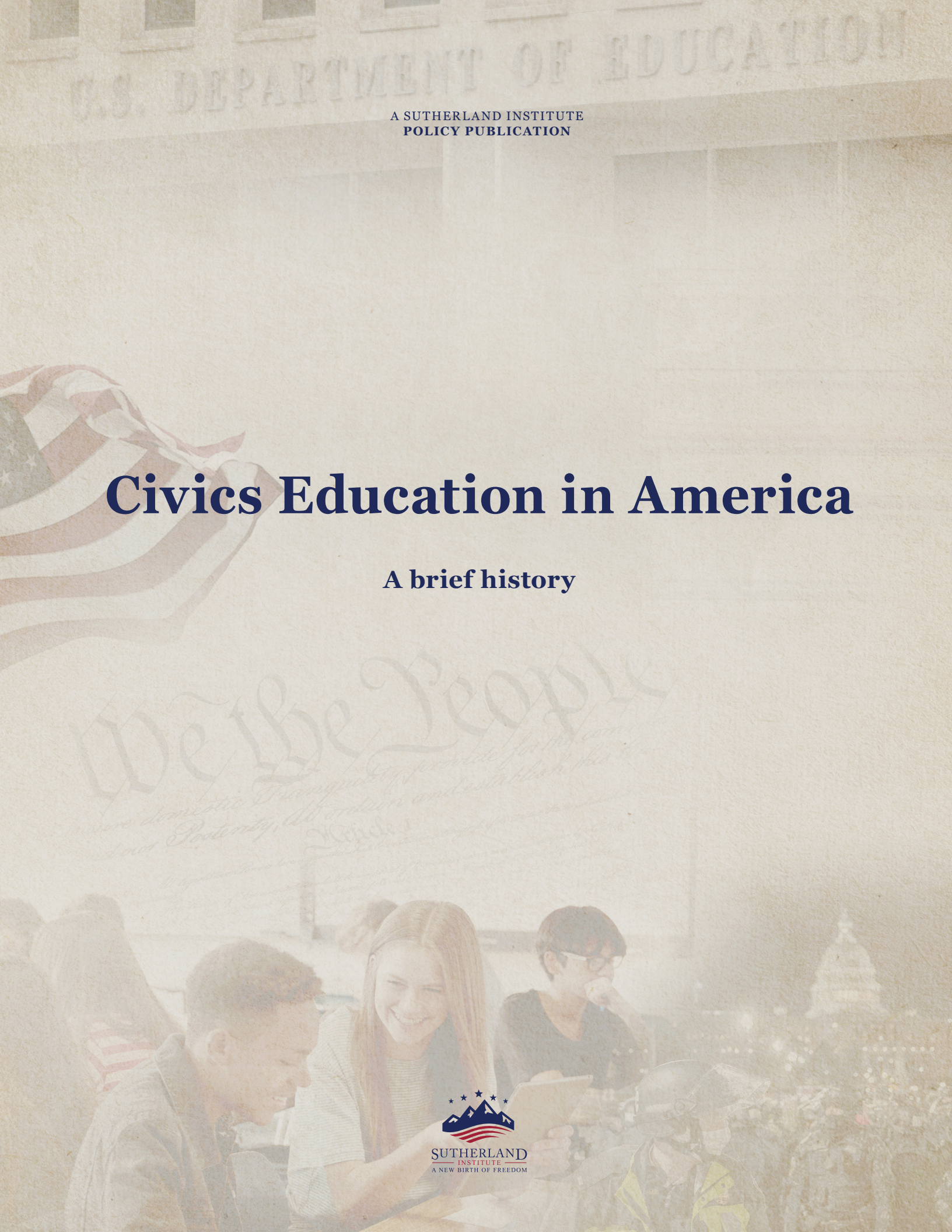
A SUTHERLAND INSTITUTE
POLICY PUBLICATION

Civics Education in America

A brief history



SUTHERLAND
INSTITUTE
A NEW BIRTH OF FREEDOM



For more information, visit SutherlandInstitute.org

A Sutherland Institute Policy Publication

Civics Education in America

A brief history

Written by Christine Cooke Fairbanks

Layout and design by Spencer Williams
© 2021 Sutherland Institute All Rights Reserved

A Letter From the President

Fellow Americans,

The Sutherland Institute Civics Initiative represents a significant convergence. After 25 years engaged in sound public policy, as well as the study of the state of freedom and civility in Utah and around the nation, we see and we know that something is wrong in America. It is divisive and troubling.

The challenge is, we do not all see the same wrongs. Instead, we see through our own lens of ideology and experience.

But a quarter-century in public policy is long enough to observe that the challenges we face as a nation today are not new.

What is new is our response as citizens.

We argue, debate and divide ourselves over freedoms – the conditions of which we no longer understand. This should not be surprising, because these freedoms have not been adequately studied in public education for at least the last 60 years.

The very definitions of America's once-common vocabulary – such as freedom, democracy, equality of opportunity and balance of power – have been hijacked and politicized in a way that creates ideologues rather than citizens. This loss of knowledge and critical thought is testing the limits of our Republic.

Sutherland Institute proposes an approach from a unique vantage point: one that understands the proper function of our political process, as well as its strengths and exploitable weaknesses. It is an approach that calls for local voices to sit down together and find common ground.

The ultimate solution is a return to non-politicized facts and truths about our history and form of government.

Getting to that solution must begin with the input and effort of communities – including parents and educators – and must end with the restoration of a complete, sequential and robust study of history and citizenship in America.

Sutherland is conducting research and building relationships and coalitions to shape and refine this approach. This publication is an essential part of that effort.

The sad truth is – we allowed this atrophy of understanding to happen. We ignored the gradual reduction of civics emphasis and accepted the erosion of content and context.

The good news is we can solve the problem.

We can change course.

And the solution is disarmingly simple.

Beginning with families and communities and moving outward, we can set aside partisan and ideologically driven approaches to civics education

– and demand the most comprehensive, accurate and sequential approach to history, civics and citizenship ever achieved.

This will require the commitment of parents, educators and community leaders. It will require a reprioritization of time and resources. But we have done this before. We did it in response to the "Sputnik moment" and, more recently, with STEM curriculum.

When Americans see and understand the importance of a moment, we respond.

This is such a moment.

Any number of current assaults on our freedoms and unity clearly highlight the need to begin now. And the strength of a comprehensive approach is that it can accommodate all views, theories and perspectives.

We know that the study of our past successes and mistakes – like racism and every other failure that has occurred as we have worked to perfect this Union – is more valuable to our learning and future when those mistakes are understood in their full context.

This is the only approach that can promise freedom to a future generation capable of critical thinking: the ability to assess, to learn from the past and create positive change within the architecture of the world's most ambitious experiment in self-governance. Their understanding of history and civics must be complete – it must unite rather than divide.

This is a vision worth pursuing.

Sutherland believes that all experiences, cultures, races, genders and ethnicities matter. We believe that all contribute to the vision, to the aspiration, that is America. E pluribus unum – out of many, one.

Sincerely,



Rick B. Larsen
President & CEO

Table of Contents

6 Introduction

9 Americans Lack Civic Understanding

10 Founders' Beliefs on the Role of Education in Preserving the Republic

12 Early Development of Civics-Related Subjects

15 The Shift Toward Public Education

17 Public School and the 'Social Studies'

21 The U.S. Department of Education (As We Know It) Is Born

28 Appendix: Utah's Civics Story

34 Endnotes

Introduction

Christine Cooke Fairbanks

America is experiencing a civics crisis. That much is clear.

Yuval Levin of the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) has said:

> *In a lot of ways this is a dark moment in American life, and it's easy to lose hope in our country's prospects. From everywhere you hear voices telling you that we're at the edge of an abyss, that things are falling apart. And of course, in some ways that's true.*
>
> *– Yuval Levin, Director of Social, Cultural, and Constitutional Studies at AEI*

News coverage for the past couple years has been a string of sorrows: a nation that has been battling over the power of government to combat a pandemic, engaging in violence over various perceived injustices, and clashing over America's origin story and soul.

It is not surprising that statistics continue to roll in showing that Americans don't know the basics of their own country, its founding history and governmental functions, and that most of us lack trust in our institutions.

Nationally, this problem is easy to see. But what about the individual states? Is there a civics crisis in Utah?

The answer is yes.

Utah is not immune from conflict over the pandemic or the summer riots of 2020. And, according to Sutherland Institute research, conducted by Heart+Mind Strategies, many Utahns connect this civil unrest to a need for improved civics education. Utah parents and teachers said they still value highly productive civil debate, open-mindedness to multiple viewpoints, and compromise. But they see social studies and civics education as a less important subject in public schools, "filler" when compared with science, reading or math.

Which means there is hope.

The moment we start to see the problem – which undoubtedly is a need for a civics education renewal – we are already on our way to addressing it.

> *In a funny way, my hope right now begins from the fact that people are dissatisfied with how badly things have gone. Very few people think things are just going great and the status quo is the way to go. People know that things need to change, and that is the beginning of the kind of change we need.*
>
> *– Levin*

If you, too, are dissatisfied, we invite you to join the conversation. With this publication on the history of civics education as a start, we invite you to learn, ask questions, and speak up about the values you believe are most important in your

child's education. The nation's healing is dependent on our approach to civics education – today, right now. Hope is within reach.

> *Above all, the source of our hope is the rising generation, a rising generation of people, who like every generation of human beings, wants meaning in their lives, wants to find sources of confidence and solidarity and hope, wants ways of feeling like they belong together. I see that in my children. I see that in students. I see that in younger Americans. And I think that if we work to offer them answers … ways of understanding how we can advance both freedom and justice, how we can advance both the community and the individual in our society – then there is every reason to think that they will seize on that hope and make the kinds of efforts required for our country to heal itself.*
>
> *– Levin*



Americans Lack Civic Understanding

This past year was a civics lesson. In 2020, a pandemic forced Americans to weigh in[1] on whether federal or state government should take the lead on public health efforts. During the summer and into early 2021, desires to influence public policy or change electoral outcomes – in many cases fueled by social media or misinformation – led to protests-turned-riots in major cities across the country and in our nation's capital.

Some alarming statistics help illuminate one reason why civic engagement in America has turned combative and violent: Americans lack the civic understanding required to elect and influence government peacefully.

According to a 2019 report,[2] the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, also called the Nation's Report Card) has persistently shown that less than 25 percent of U.S. students since 1998 are proficient in the subject of U.S. civics. An annual Annenberg Constitution Day civics survey for 2017[3] reveals similar findings – only a quarter (26 percent) of Americans can name the three branches of government, and more than a third (37 percent) are unable to name any of the rights under the First Amendment. High school and college students in America today are less likely than 15 years ago[4] to volunteer in their community or give to a charity even though they express higher levels of interest in doing so than in the past half century. Likewise, data show there is a stark difference in civic knowledge between older and younger Americans: 74 percent of those over age 65 could answer six of the 10 citizenship test questions correctly, but only 19 percent of those under age 45 could do so.[5]

> **Whether based on survey statistics or people's behavior in 2020, it's clear that our country needs a renewal of civics education. This focus would include our broadly shared understanding of what citizenship and political leadership require in our democratic republic.**

Before it can be determined which direction a civics education renewal should take, we must understand how civics education got to its current state. That means understanding how civics education has evolved through the history of the United States.

Founders' Beliefs on the Role of Education in Preserving the Republic

Americans have long had an understanding that education has a civic purpose. In fact, the Founders understood that those who succeeded them would need to comprehend their newly formed government in order for it to survive. Having pledged "[their] lives, [their] fortunes and [their] sacred honor" to establish freedom through self-government, they still faced a world in which powerful European monarchies actively sought the failure of the American experiment out of concern that it might spread.

What the Founders confronted in the 1700s and 1800s has a parallel today. Just as authoritarian monarchies in Europe sought the failure of representative democracy back then, authoritarian regimes such as China and Russia seek the failure of American self-government today. And what was the bulwark upon which freedom was to stand against the concentrated might and power of authoritarianism? Education. The Founders believed education would fill the essential role of passing down to each American generation an understanding of the republic and a citizen's rights and responsibilities within it, and therefore preserve it against attempts to undermine or overthrow it.

The understanding of the purpose of civic education began long before the Revolution. In Benjamin Franklin's 1749 pamphlet on the purpose of education, titled *Proposals Related to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania*,[6] he wrote:

> *The good education of youth has been esteemed by wise men in all ages, as the surest foundation of the happiness of both private families and of commonwealths. Almost all governments have therefore made it a principal object of their attention, to establish and endow with proper revenues, such seminaries of learning, as might supply the succeeding age with men qualified to serve the publick with honour to themselves, and to their country.*

The victory of the Revolutionary War and the nation's early struggles under the Articles of Confederation did not change the Founders' view of the essential role that civic education played in our nation. In his 1786 essay "Thoughts Upon the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic,"[7] Benjamin Rush argued:

> *The business of education has acquired a new complexion by the independence of our country. The form of government we have assumed has created a new class of duties to every American. It becomes us, therefore, to examine our former habits upon this subject, and in laying the foundations for nurseries of wise and good men, to adapt our modes of teaching to the peculiar form of our government.*

The nation saw significant modification to its government with the ratification of the U.S. Constitution in 1789 and enactment of the Bill of

Rights in 1792, and yet the Founders' views on civic education remained steadfast. George Washington chose to address the role of education in his last public appearance[8] as president on December 7, 1796.

In that message to Congress, which was in large part to congratulate all Americans on the "success of the experiment," he said:

> *... a primary object of such a national institution should be the education of our youth in the science of government. In a republic what species of knowledge can be equally important and what duty more pressing on its legislature than to patronize a plan for communicating it to those who are to be the future guardians of the liberties of the country?*

Even the nation's progression into the early 1800s and the continued evolution of early American politics, government and culture did not shake the Founders' vision from the need for civic education in American life. Thomas Jefferson – who asked that his headstone note not his accomplishments as president, but the founding of an educational institution in Virginia – wrote in the 1818 "Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Fix the Site of the University of Virginia"[9] that the purpose of the primary school was to "instruct the mass of our citizens in their rights, interests, and duties, as men and citizens." In the same report he said the purpose of higher education was "[t]o form the statesmen, legislators, and judges, on whom public prosperity and individual happiness are so much to depend."

The hope of education as a tool to sustain the republic, like so many of the Founders' aspirations, remains a lofty goal.

The aspiration of civic education shared by the Founders creates a measuring stick for public school civics standards today. Ultimately, that goal is to promulgate the history, purpose, design and mechanisms of the American republic and cultivate devotion to them in the hearts and minds of Americans, so they can withstand both foreign and domestic threats.

Fortunately, early American education leaders stepped forward as trailblazers in many of the subject areas we associate today with social studies, the contemporary home for civics education.

Early Development of Civics-Related Subjects

Long before early 20th-century efforts to consolidate and standardize topics like geography and history into social studies, early reformers developed and taught these topics in ways that established them in American education broadly.

Geography education

For example, Jedidiah Morse[10] (1761-1826), an American minister and geographer, significantly influenced the study of geography in the nation. He published America's first geography textbook, titled *Geography Made Easy*, in 1784, followed by *The American Geography* in 1789 and *The American Universal Geography* in 1793.

His interest in the field started when he was young after growing tired of inaccurate accounts of America, which led him to feel that "very little knowledge of this country can be gained" through materials available at the time.[11] Because of his early textbooks, which were widely cited in the field of geography in the United States at that time, Morse became known as the "Father of American Geography."[12]

American English begets history education

Similarly, Noah Webster[13] (1758-1843), whose name is associated with the modern dictionary (Merriam-Webster), had a lasting impact on American education. In 1785, Webster published the *Grammatical Institute of the English Language*, which consisted of *The American Spelling Book* (the famous "blue backed speller" still in print today), a "grammar," and a "reader" – terms for collections of writings used for instruction.[14]

The reader included American writings that promoted democratic principles and appropriate political conduct. Notably, this was the first time[15] that an American reader included history as a specific topic for school instruction.

Webster fought in the American Revolution, and perhaps because of this, he became a tireless defender and promoter of things that were uniquely American – for example, American English, arguing its dignity and legitimacy, as well as promoting a distinctly American education.[16] All of this earned him the title of "Father of American Scholarship and Education."

History education

Although the first U.S. history textbook was published in 1787 by Philadelphia printer John McCulloch,[17] according to some scholars it wasn't until the 1840s – a couple decades before the Civil War – that history as a subject would become a distinct subject widely offered in schools. Even then, by 1860 only five states – Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Virginia – had passed laws requiring that it be taught.

Likewise, textbooks predating 1880 included explicitly "moral and patriotic values,"[18] offering a

sort of civics education. But a student's exposure to these textbooks and themes varied greatly based on region and access to school. All of this reveals the diverse and fragmented landscape for educating students in the areas that the Founders believed important, but it also shows that scholarship in these fields was developing.


JOHN DEWEY
UNITED
STATES
30 CENTS

The Shift Toward Public Education

Some scholars attribute the earliest foundations[19] of American "social studies" to the shift toward the free public education movement in America and its earlier sister education movement in Great Britain during the 1820s.

This education reform movement[20] in Great Britain was intended to promote social welfare by advocating that children attend school rather than work in factories, and likewise, American reformers would envision public education with similar benefits to society. Because public schools would encounter a large portion of the children in society, they were seen as institutions capable of creating citizens who could function in and preserve democracy.

When it comes to speaking of public education in the United States, it's impossible to ignore iconic American reformers like Horace Mann and John Dewey. Much like the Founders, these men well understood education's direct impact on our nation and society at large.

The social or civic purposes as envisioned by Mann and Dewey would provide the space and justification for the professionalization and standardization of public schools, including later the birth of social studies. Over time, various reforms within the social studies have had varying impacts on public schools' civic mission.

The Common School movement

Horace Mann (1796-1859), the American reformer credited with leading the Common School[21] movement, advocated for the type of public education that has been passed down to today – school that is provided by and funded through the state, free from sectarian or religious control, and universally accessible.[22]

It's easy to imagine how Mann's philosophy of education may have come from his childhood. He grew up in great poverty and had infrequent and poor opportunities to learn from teachers as a child.[23] A desire for public education, as he later envisioned it, would have been a natural response for someone in his situation. He also argued for explicitly patriotic objectives in public education, believing that the mission of public school was to turn children into citizens as well as to socialize immigrants into American life through education in American history, civics and geography.[24]

Mann became the first secretary of the Massachusetts State Board of Education.[25] During this time Mann published the *Common School Journal*, a publication that discussed a number of educational issues; one such issue was the idea that the American republic could not be ignorant and retain its freedom.[26]

Like the American Founders, Mann sincerely believed that education was a necessary component for continuing liberty in America. He believed the "common school" was one of the ultimate tools for doing so.

Public education and societal reform

Then there was John Dewey[27] (1859-1952) – an American education scholar, psychologist and reformer – who profoundly influenced American education with his own views of schooling as a tool for democracy and social reform.

Like the Founders and Mann before him, he championed the idea that school had a social mission. Dewey believed that school was a little slice of the real world and that a child's experience in school impacted how he/she would engage with society. In his 1899 published work, *The School and Society*, Dewey[28] said that school is:

> *An embryonic community life, active with types of occupations that reflect the life of the larger society and permeated throughout with the spirit of art, history and science. When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guarantee of a larger society which is worthy, lovely and harmonious.*

Dewey's views have continued to inform educational philosophy in college campuses, teacher training courses and the public schools, including how we approach social studies.[29]

Public School and the 'Social Studies'

The early 1900s set the stage for standardization in education, including a common definition and educational approach of a subject matter for social studies. In general, the development of American social studies shows an early intent to realize a noble civic mission for schools, but also how decades of reform and national events would start to morph the subject.

The creation of professional organizations

Professional organizations in specific subjects laid the groundwork for the social studies. For example, at the turn of the century, historians[30] had a substantial influence on education. At the same time momentum was building for the social sciences in public education. Subjects such as political science, sociology and economics were being developed on college campuses but were not yet in high schools.

By 1884, the American Historical Association had been founded by historians to preserve historical materials, promote historical studies, and support history education.[31] The association created committees to further cement the dominance and influence of history education.[32]

Social scientists[33] also wanted to establish and interject their disciplines into school curriculum. They attempted to do so, in part, by starting their own professional organizations. In 1903, the American Political Science Association was founded.[34] In 1905, the American Sociology Association was as well.[35] While many agreed that the subject of history was important, social scientists believed that history alone was inadequate to answer complex problems in our democracy.[36]

Reformers around this time and into the next few decades helped solidify the shift toward the social sciences in education. The combination of all these and related subject areas would become known as social studies.

The National Education Association 1916 Report

The National Education Association[37] (NEA) was founded in 1857 – originally as the National Teachers Association – which means it existed during these early discussions about history and social studies at the turn of the century. But the NEA would make a defining mark in standardizing the field of social studies with its 1916 report[38] created by its Committee on Social Studies.

> **The 1916 report – which has been called the "birth certificate of social studies" – offered a common definition of the term "social studies" for educators.[39]**

To create the report, the association partnered with the Bureau of Education, a small unit within the U.S. Department of the Interior (prior to the creation of the U.S. Department of Education)

that was tasked with restructuring the American education system.[40]

In part, the report recommended a scope and sequence – topics and an order for those topics – for social studies education. This groundwork played an important role in standardizing the field for educators and schools.

In 1921 the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) was founded in order to legitimize social studies and support the educators charged with teaching the subjects in schools. Much like the work of other organizations, NCSS helped to standardize the social studies in education policy and defined social studies as "the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence."[41] The NCSS continues today with affiliate organizations across the country.

The vocationalism shift

While the creation of organizations and standardization gave clearer directives on social studies, sometimes new emphases wound up shaping the mission of schools.

For example, according to scholars, the civic purposes of higher education began to be overshadowed around the turn of the century by the professionalization of higher education, an approach that sprang from the German research university model – Johns Hopkins University being an example.[42]

By the 1940s, and especially the end of World War II, this shift had led to higher education emphasizing vocations and professions, meaning schools began focusing on *economic* outcomes of education rather than *civic* ones.[43]

It was around this time that the topic of citizenship was separated from mainstream American education and was often consigned to the occasional civics course or lecture.[44] Scholars note that the change in emphasis took a toll on the civic mission of schools.[45]

Civics education during the 1960s

Still, notwithstanding a shift that was taking place in higher education, prior to the 1960s it was not uncommon for high schools to require three courses on civics and U.S. government.[46]

The 1960s brought significant changes to social studies and civics. In fact, the era brought what has been called an "anti-curriculum" movement in civics, which is to say it departed from the traditional content-based civics curriculum.[48] The traditional civics education had earned a bad reputation by the 1960s,[49] in part for promoting blind patriotism, and it was sometimes referred to pejoratively as "your grandmother's civics."[49]

What grew during this time was the New Social Studies movement, in part due to the contributions of reformers like Shirley Engle, who wrote the influential article "Decision Making: The Heart of Social Studies Instruction."[50] In an effort to revitalize social studies and make it more interesting, The New Social Studies movement focused on looking at traditional material critically and analytically with the goal of making decision-makers out of students.[51]

This reform ultimately disintegrated;[52] other reforms would follow close behind and also disappear when people considered them controversial or anti-American.[53]

While there may never have been a golden era of an ideal civics education in the United States, it's clear that the departure from traditional civics that began to take root in the 1960s has had effects on our civics education today.[54]

A fairly robust set of civics courses were usually part of the high school experience before the 1960s,[55] but since that time, civics has been routinely and systematically de-emphasized to the point that today most states only require something close to a semester civics course prior to high school graduation.[56]


Lyndon Baines Johnson Department of Education Building
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
U.S. Department of Education
Entrance on C Street, SW

The U.S. Department of Education (As We Know It) Is Born

The story of American social studies, history and civics education from the 1960s to the 2000s is seen more clearly against the backdrop of rising federal influence in education as well as the educational causes it has decided to champion or overlook.

Though the 10th Amendment suggests there is little to no role for the federal government in education, the federal government often speaks and acts in this space.

Once the federal government carved out a foothold in this area, its preferences had tangible impacts at the school level. For instance, periodically the federal government has pushed a particular theme – STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics), or math and reading with No Child Left Behind – by committing financial and rhetorical support. At the same time, the federal government has done far less to support social studies and civics education.

Consider, for example, that there has been a decrease in federal civics education funding from $150 million annually in 2010 to only $5 million in 2019.[57] Whatever one may feel about the federal government in education, clearly its intervention has impact.

The 1960s and 1970s: Paving the way for the U.S. Department of Education

A federal Department of Education had once been created in 1867, but it was downgraded to an office within the Department of Interior in 1868. However, the federal government's role in education would expand through statutes and funding long before the creation of the department as we know it today at the federal level.

As part of his War on Poverty, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law the seminal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965. This law created a massive federal footprint in education still felt today, both in spending and regulations.

The initial ESEA's focus was on overcoming poverty. For example, Title I funding for schools with a high percentage of students in low-income households was established in this law. The ESEA has since been reauthorized (and modified) many times, but its broadest and most consistent feature has been influencing and directing state education policy through federal funding to states.

By the time Jimmy Carter was running for president in the mid-1970s, one of his campaign promises was to create a federal office of education.[58] This campaign promise so energized the national education community that it earned him the support of the NEA – the first time the association ever offered a presidential endorsement.[59]

When he was elected, President Carter made good on his promise. In 1979, the Carter administration oversaw the creation of the U.S. Department of Education, which officially began its work in 1980.

This rebirth of a federal Department of Education in 1980 set the stage for further influence – or encroachment, depending on how one viewed it. That influence included increasing federal funding to states, facilitating standardization, and not infrequently generating frustration at the state level.

The 1980s: 'A Nation at Risk' and the revival of history

The 1980s brought an interesting paradox: a renunciation by the Reagan administration of federal influence in education, and a federal report that would prompt a series of reform movements for decades afterward. This time period also saw a renewed interest in history education.

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan took office with the promise of abolishing the Department of Education. In the end, he succeeded in reducing regulations but never got rid of the department, which still exists today.

The Reagan administration's education legacy came in 1983, during America's Cold War with the Soviet Union. Secretary of Education Terrell H. Bell and the U.S. National Commission on Excellence in Education published a landmark report on the state of American public education, titled "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform."[60]

The report revealed dire inadequacies in America's public education and explicitly called for reform as a way to ensure the survival of our nation during the Cold War – harking back to the civic aspiration of the Founders for public education. It read: [61]

> *Our nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. … If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war.*

Though the Reagan administration sought to reduce the federal role in education, it was his U.S. Department of Education that sounded alarm bells in American public education. This opened the door for more critical reviews of education and the call for national public education reforms.[62]

The 1990s-2000s: The push for national standards

In the 1990s and 2000s, the federal government's role continued to expand as different administrations sought to reform America's dismal education outcomes – often at the expense of the more explicit civic mission of public schools.

Starting in 1990, President George H.W. Bush's administration pushed for the creation of "national goals" for all K-12 schools – a concept that was actually mentioned in "A Nation at Risk" in 1983. This effort further legitimized the management of education from the federal level.

In 1994, President Bill Clinton built on the Bush administration's work on national goals, signing into law the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. The objective of the law was to ensure education made measurable progress by the year 2000 using

outcomes-based education, a philosophy which intended to help students improve by holding them to specific outcomes or standards. Part of this effort included a push for a set of national history education standards.[63] The standards were seen as controversial by many for pushing political correctness and were ultimately rejected in the U.S. Senate.[64] Some school districts chose to adopt them anyway, and some argue that the whole series of events "didn't cause the collapse of American history and civics, but it did accelerate that collapse."[65]

Ultimately, both of these prior administrations' emphases on goals and outcomes laid the groundwork for the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) – a now infamous piece of federal education legislation that passed in 2001 and was signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002.

NCLB has a mixed legacy. On the one hand, it opened the door for more discussion about accountability in schools, which many see as a positive outcome. But NCLB's use of heavy-handed means to accomplish its goals made it a highly controversial policy among teacher groups and conservative groups alike, and it would ultimately be rejected.

In short, NCLB required states to create state standards in math and reading and then to test those subjects in grades 3-8 and once again in high school. States that didn't make "yearly adequate progress" in these areas were given punitive designations and consequences. These policy "carrots and sticks" became dreaded and resented tools among the education community.

Importantly, this federal policy also had detrimental effects on other subjects – including social studies. Because NCLB focused so acutely on math and reading – subjects that were easy to test – less time was given to subjects not tested, or deemed less important, because they didn't impact a school's public success.

In 2003, the National Council for Social Studies[66] published a letter written by several teachers expressing their concern that the heavy emphasis on reading and math under NCLB would crowd out social studies. And, at least according to several studies, this fear became reality. According to a 2006 study, 71% of the school districts[67] surveyed said they were spending less time on subjects like social studies, music and art in order to devote more time to NCLB-tested subjects. Likewise, 36% of departments[68] surveyed reported decreasing time for social studies between the years of 2002-07, when NCLB was in full force.

Some scholars argue[69] that schools had already abandoned their civic mission before NCLB in order to focus on vocational outcomes; however, there's little doubt that NCLB accelerated this de-emphasis on social studies and civics in the long run.

This is not to say that nothing was accomplished during this era to address topics related to social studies. For instance, in 2001, Congress established the Teaching American History program, which was essentially a grant program to increase professional development opportunities in this field, though no more grants were awarded beyond 2011.[70]

In 2003, Congress funded a national push for greater emphasis in civics education, leading to the creation of the National Congressional Conference on Civic Education,[71] which invited delegates from all 50 states to four annual convenings to discuss civic education. In 2004, Congress passed legislation that required any educational institution that received federal funds to hold a program about the U.S. Constitution for its students on Constitution Day.[72] Still, in general, positive impacts from these efforts were overwhelmed by the impacts of NCLB.

Civics education during the administrations of Presidents Obama, Trump and Biden

Like those of his predecessor, the policies of President Barack Obama's administration often overshadowed civics education. In 2009, the administration pushed Race to the Top,[73] a competitive grant program which made adoption of the Common Core State Standards an option in the application process. The standards did not offer discipline-specific social studies standards, but they touched on "literacy" in a number of areas including history, social studies, and science and technical subjects. The administration's implicit endorsement of the standards alarmed many parents and state leaders who feared federal micromanagement in education.

The Obama administration in 2013 championed Educate to Innovate,[74] a campaign that used public/private partnerships to beef up STEM education. Like other initiatives – including NCLB, A Nation at Risk, and the National Defense Act of 1958 (another federal response emphasizing education in science and math after the launch of the Soviet Union's satellite Sputnik) – the initiative focused the nation on a set of subjects, justified by the national economy or security. In fact, Obama referred to the renewed emphasis on STEM as the current-day "Sputnik moment," because once again it largely focused the nation on science and math.[75] Then, in 2015, the administration earned bipartisan victory with the Every Student Succeeds Act,[76] which attempted to restore flexibility to the states.

In January 2012, the administration published its road map for civics learning, "Advancing Civic Learning and Engagement in Democracy: A Road Map and Call to Action."[77] The administration also commissioned a report on improvements in civics learning for higher education, titled "A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future."[78] The goal was to make civics "pervasive" rather than "peripheral" in higher education.[79] Some analysis suggests that though it's aimed at higher education, it's also meant for elementary and secondary education,[80] and likewise, that its call for civics is really a call for civic engagement or action civics-type learning.[81] At the end of the Obama administration, there was still a lack of emphasis on civics education broadly and much work to be done.

The Department of Education under the Trump administration attempted to brand itself as reducing federal intervention in education rather than expanding any particular initiative, which meant civics education received little attention. Prior to this, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos had spoken[82] about the concern over a lack of civics education, but her department had taken no

significant action to address it. The administration website hosted grants for teacher development and activities in history and civics education. [83] [84]

That is, until 2020, when civil unrest and a debate about our nation's narrative prompted the administration to create the 1776 Commission and champion "patriotic education." This official effort was short-lived, however, since just months later President Joe Biden eliminated the 1776 Commission.

Congressional bills continue to be introduced, including the Educating for Democracy Act in 2020.[85] Introduced again in 2021 as the Civics Secures Democracy Act, the bill proposes $1 billion of federal funding annually for six years to support and expand history and civics education.[86] There are concerns, however, that this education policy will become another federalism battle between the national government and the states (not unlike Common Core) and an ideological battle over issues of race and "action civics."[87]

Though the federal government has rarely made civics education – or related subjects – a key focus for the nation, the topic is gaining some recognition in recent years. Even if not from the federal government directly, there is certainly a growing national awareness in addition to state-based efforts.

For instance, there is some discussion[88] among scholars today about a national civics education curriculum. Likewise, there is discussion about creating standards in this area, notwithstanding the angst over controversial proposals of history standards and standards generally in the 1990s and beyond.[89]

Furthermore, 2021 brought the launch of a new initiative called Educating for American Democracy.[90] It is funded by a grant through the National Endowment for the Humanities and the U.S. Department of Education to iCivics in collaboration with Harvard University, Tufts University, CIRCLE, and Arizona State University. Together, these organizations convened a group of 300 scholars to create a roadmap, which includes educational strategies and policy recommendations.

Since it doesn't offer curriculum or standards, the roadmap is not intended to be prescriptive. However, to the concern of some education reformers, it does ask for more federal involvement in the area of civics education, and it champions action civics.

There is significant discussion at all levels regarding "action civics"[91] – sometimes called "new civics" or "project-based civics." This form of civics education seeks to teach students about civics by offering real-world experiences seeking political or governmental change. Its critics say that such an approach overlooks the need to inform and educate a child before sending them out into the world and instead pushes kids toward activism before they're sufficiently informed.

Other movements have grown nationally as well, especially in American history and the relationship between race and society. When it comes to history education, there has emerged a debate over the

nation's origin story, with efforts to reframe America's founding primarily on race.

Socially popular works include the *New York Times* 1619 Project, which asserts that America was founded in 1619 with the first slave in the area, rather than the traditionally taught year of 1776. Though it has received significant criticism from historians for its claims, it also won a Pulitzer Prize. The 1619 Project created a companion curriculum, which is in 4,500 schools nationwide.[92] Similarly, books like *How to Be an Anti-Racist* have created a push in many states for anti-racist trainings and curricula, which most naturally find their home in social studies.

Other education organizations, many of which have been around for years, also offer distinctive curriculum and resources for civics and history education. These include the Bill of Rights Institute,[93] iCivics,[94] Generation Citizen,[95] Ashbrook Center,[96] James Madison Institute,[97] and more.

The disparity in the tone and information among these groups reveals a growing divide in our nation's founding narrative – further fueling the polarization that is the hallmark of our current national politics. The aspiration for education to uphold the nation should transcend partisan or ideological divides, and its fulfillment should not be subject solely to the whims of those currently holding the White House and majorities in Congress.

Conclusion

> **People from all points on the political spectrum believe it is time to address civics and history.**

But unsurprisingly, there are disagreements over the direction that effort should take.

We should begin by acknowledging the common ground first: We need to address civics education before further division becomes irreconcilable. Then we should improve the robustness of resources, strive for accuracy of information, elevate critical thinking, and create space for dialogue. Whatever specific reforms come, the best ideas will develop as we study the issues together as local communities first.

Appendix: Utah's Civics Story

Education is the responsibility of state and local government. Thus, reforms to civics education properly belong to families and policymakers within the state.

A glance at state efforts in civics education shows a patchwork of commitment to the topic, not unlike the federal government's. As of 2016,[98] while all states addressed civics education in some way, the range of policy approaches varied widely. As of 2018,[99] only eight states had a yearlong civics or government class as a graduation requirement, and only 19 states required a civics-related exam for high school graduation – some of which are based on the naturalization test, a policy advocated for by the Joe Foss Institute. Utah currently has this requirement. In 2017, more than 15 states[100] required this test, though battles to remove or create this policy continue today.

National efforts have impacted state approaches. In 2013, 15 professional organizations and 20 states published The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards.[101] It offered states "fewer, clearer, and higher standards for instruction in civics, economics, geography, and history, kindergarten through high school." It includes a discussion of "apply[ing] knowledge and ideas in real world settings."

Utah's story of civics education

To understand Utah's approach to civics education over time – or even the civic mission of its schools – it is important to understand its history.

The story arc of education in the Territory of Utah is intertwined with the settlement of Mormon pioneers in the area (early members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). As a religious minority, these pioneers fled religious persecution in order to live the ideals of religious liberty that had been promised in America's founding, but which had not yet been realized. They would ultimately find that freedom in Utah.

The pioneers arrive in the Utah Territory and teach their children

After months of traveling across the country, pioneers first arrived in the Great Salt Lake valley on July 24, 1847. Because learning was an important element of their religion, the settlers sought to educate their children. Children were often taught by their parents or hired teachers, and instruction included Latter-day Saint religious teachings and scripture.[102] In the 1850s and 1860s, schools were largely organized around wards (geographical-based congregations), and during the week, church buildings were used for school. Church leadership believed that schooling had a spiritual purpose as much as the American Founders aspired to schooling with a civic purpose.[103]

Early on, settlers wanted to call the area the State of Deseret until the Utah Territory – named after the Ute Indian Tribe – was created in the Compromise of 1850. This explains why settlers established a school called the University of Deseret, now the University of Utah.

In 1851, the Territorial Legislature approved the first public school law in Utah, creating the office of the territorial superintendent.[104] It also called for local taxes to help pay for schooling (families still paid tuition) but not for teacher salaries.[105]

The push for free schools, and anti-Mormon education

Over time, a debate grew in the area about providing "free" schools for children paid for by taxes, as was seen in other places in the country. Many politicians and prominent Latter-day Saints advocated for free schools in the territory, but Latter-day Saint church leaders largely opposed the idea.

In 1865, Utah Governor Charles Durkee[106] championed free school, saying that the "territory should be taxed to defray all expenses of the education of its children." With so many pushing for tax-supported schools, Brigham Young[107] addressed the topic in 1877, at the St. George temple: "I am opposed to free education as much as I am opposed to taking away property from one man and giving it to another who knows not how to take care of it. … Would I encourage free education by taxation? No, that is not in keeping with our work."

In 1890, the Territorial Legislature created publicly supported territorial district schools with the passage of Utah's first Free Public School Act.[108]

After the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, migrants[109] to the area who were not members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sought to change the church's influence in the territory's schools. Many of the migrants were members of the Protestant and Methodist faith, who sought to build "mission" schools[110] with the purpose of developing an education for their own children and to "teach and convert young Mormon children." Most of these mission schools disappeared after a public school system was put in place, but their legacy highlights the tension felt between different groups.

Ultimately, conflicts over education in the territory were settled in the Utah Constitution[111] as drafted in 1895 (there are seven iterations of the state constitution). The Utah Constitution was heavily influenced by the federal government's preferences for mainstream American culture and heated political/legal battles over the practice of polygamy.

One of the key ways the federal government tried to reduce the Latter-day Saint church influence was through state constitutional provisions dealing with education. According to the Utah Constitution,[112] schools had to be free of sectarian (religious) control, "free" or tax- supported, and void of religious or political tests for teacher employment or student admission in public schools.

The state's Constitution also included a type of Blaine Amendment, which said that public funds could not go to schools controlled by a religious organization. Today, many states still have a Blaine Amendment in their state constitutions. These amendments are a vestige of a failed federal amendment rooted in anti-Catholic sentiment; in

the Utah Constitution the provision served a similar purpose but for Mormons rather than Catholics. With these provisions – or protections, as the federal government would see them – statehood was finally granted in 1896.

Utah schools during the progressive era and mid-20th century

During the next several decades, Utah education policy in many ways followed the national trajectory.[113]

In the 20th century,[114] Latter-day Saint church leaders created and later phased out private secondary schools, while Utah on the whole adopted some features of the education system seen across the nation, including the centralization of education and increased funding.[115]

National voices continued to influence Utah education policy during the mid-20th century. This was the case for teachers as well.[116] In the 1960s, teachers in Utah joined national calls for increased compensation. In the 1980s, Utah schools started to adopt other widespread reforms like improving graduation requirements or making new decisions about curriculum.[117]

The federal government began a serious focus on standards and outcomes in education in the 1990s, which would lead to the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2001, requiring standards and statewide testing in math and reading in order to meet "annual yearly progress." This impacted Utah policy as well. National groups expressed concern that these emphases over the years had reduced time for the social studies – to the detriment of schools' civic mission.

The early 2000s brings a Utah-specific effort in civics and character education

In the early 2000s, Utah sought to promote civics education. In 2000, the Utah State Legislature enacted a new law[118] that required teaching the importance and history of the American flag and mandating the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in elementary schools (only encouraging it at the secondary level).

In 2003, Congress funded a national push for greater emphasis in civics education, leading to the creation of the National Congressional Conference on Civic Education,[119] which invited delegates from all 50 states to four annual convenings to discuss civics education. That same year, the Utah Legislature created The Utah Coalition for Civic, Character and Service Learning,[120] which consisted of groups and universities who sought to help Utah K-12 and higher education focus on the basics of civics through events, lessons and training.

The following year, the Utah Legislature passed HB 22 (Civic and Character Education in Schools),[121] which says the "legislature recognizes that civic and character education are fundamental elements of the public education system's core mission" and that "civic and character education are fundamental elements of the constitutional responsibilities of public education and shall be a continuing emphasis and focus in public schools."

This law says that students should be taught through an "integrated curriculum" – alongside

regular schoolwork – "respect for and an understanding of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitutions of the United States and of the State of Utah." But the law lacks an enforcement mechanism, so in practice it can easily be overlooked.

Two years later, in 2006, the Utah Legislature created a civics education commission[122] led by the lieutenant governor. The commission was charged with leading the state's focus on civics and character education and making policy recommendations. Each school district, as well as the State Charter School Board, was required to submit a report on civics education efforts to the lieutenant governor and the commission. In 2019, the state discontinued this civics commission, but the law still requires the Utah State Board of Education to give a report to the Education Interim Committee.

The Utah State Board of Education and the Utah Legislature during the 2010s

Both the Utah State Board of Education and the Utah Legislature have education policymaking power.

The Legislature is usually seen as the "wallet," and it passes laws that direct the board to make "rules" on those issues. Additionally, the USBE creates academic standards, statewide assessments, graduation requirements, and the process for teacher licensure. Thus, pursuant to a law passed in 2000,[123] the USBE was charged with creating a core curriculum. In 2012, the board adopted a version of the Common Core state standards[124] (called Utah Core Standards) as incentivized by a federal grant program.[125]

The board updates academic standards roughly every five years. The last social studies standards[126] revision process – which includes the United States Government and Citizenship course – was completed in Utah in 2016. The United States Government and Citizenship course is a one-semester civics course required for high school graduation.

The Legislature has periodically passed civics education reform too. In 2011, the Legislature passed a law[127] that instructed the USBE and local school boards to review whether curricula had effective instruction in American history and government, including different forms of government, like a republic versus a monarchy, as well as economic instruction about capitalism.

Knowing that historical site visits can have an important impact on students, during the 2013 general session, the Legislature established funding[128] for field trips to the state Capitol. Resources now flow to the Capitol Preservation Board,[129] which hosts tours. As of 2018, this fund amounted to more than $250,000 annually.[130]

The American Civics Education Initiative,[131] which passed the Utah Legislature in 2015, requires high school students to pass a basic civics test in order to receive their diploma. The civics test uses 50 questions from the United States Customs and Immigration Services citizenship test, part of the naturalization process for immigrants. Utah legislators during the 2020 legislative session debated whether to eliminate the test


ZIONS BANK

requirement, but the effort failed. Instead, that year the Legislature created a pilot program for civic engagement projects based on the concept of "action civics."[132]

The legislative session in 2021 brought movement in civics education, most notably the passage of a joint resolution, "Emphasizing the Importance of Civics Education," which acknowledges the civics crisis apparent in 2021 and calls for an informal working group to study and make recommendations for civics education in the state.[133]

Likewise, a 2021 bill passed that requires Utah Valley University (UVU) to create the Civic Thought and Leadership Initiative (within its Center for Constitutional Studies).[134] In short, this initiative aims to create space for political discussion and civics education by providing classes in "philosophy, history, economics, and political science," along with resources in civic affairs, to foster thoughtful civic engagement.

The private sphere has also stepped into this area, with a focus on Utah history. A local effort called Better Days 2020[135] has created a public awareness campaign on Utah women's history and created a companion curriculum for teachers.

Conclusion

Early Founders and reformers believed that education had a vital role to play in preserving our nation. As states awaken to the crisis of inadequate civic understanding, state policymakers will inevitably seek reform. We recommend any policymaking in civics education starts with a deep-dive study of the state-specific landscape and looks first to the parents and teachers rather than Washington.

> **Whatever choices we make, let us remember that we are still writing the story of education in America. Hopefully we are making the best of our moment in history.**

Endnotes

[1] Carroll Doherty et al. "Most Americans Say Federal Government Has Primary Responsibility for COVID-19 Testing," *Pew Research*, May 12, 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/05/12/most-americans-say-federal-government-has-primary-responsibility-for-covid-19-testing/.

[2] Ashley Jeffrey, and Scott Sargrad, "Strengthening Democracy With a Modern Civics Education," Center for American Progress, Dec. 14, 2019, https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2019/12/14/478750/strengthening-democracy-modern-civics-education/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter_axiosdeepdives&stream=top.

[3] "Americans Are Poorly Informed About Basic Constitutional Provisions," *Annenberg Public Policy Center*, last modified Sept. 16, 2017, https://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/americans-are-poorly-informed-about-basic-constitutional-provisions/.

[4] Sarah D. Sparks, "Volunteerism Declined Among Young People," *EducationWeek*, July 17, 2018, https://www.edweek.org/leadership/volunteerism-declined-among-young-people/2018/07.

[5] David Davenport, "Commonsense Solutions to Our Civics Crisis," *Hatch Center*, Oct. 2020, https://www.flipsnack.com/six40/civics-report-final-d132uch6rh/full-view.html.

[6] Nancy Kober, "Why We Still Need Public Schools," Center on Education Policy, 2007, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED503799.pdf.

[7] Benjamin Rush, "Thoughts Upon the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic," *Explore PA history*, 1786, https://explorepahistory.com/odocument.php?docId=1-4-218.

[8] "December 7, 1796: Eighth Annual Message to Congress," *The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library*, Dec. 7, 1796, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washs08.asp.

[9] "Epilogue: Securing the Republic," *The Founders' Constitution*, The University of Chicago Press, 1856,

https://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/print_documents/v1ch18s33.html.

[10] "Jedidiah Morse," *Britannica*, last modified Aug. 19, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jedidiah-Morse.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ben A. Smith, J. Jesse Palmer and Stephen T. Correia, "Social Studies and the Birth of NCSS: 1783-1921," *National Council for the Social Studies*, accessed Mar. 11, 2021, https://www.socialstudies.org/social-education/59/7/social-studies-and-birth-ncss-1783-1921.

[13] Raven I. McDavid, "Noah Webster," *Britannica*, last modified Oct. 12, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Noah-Webster-American-lexicographer.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Smith, Palmer and Correia, "Social Studies and the Birth of NCSS."

[16] McDavid, "Noah Webster."

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] "Elementary education in the 19th century," *UK Parliament*, accessed Mar. 11 2021, https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/school/overview/in19thcentury/.

[21] "Horace Mann (1796-1859)," *PBS*, accessed Mar. 11, 2021, https://www.pbs.org/onlyateacher/horace.html.

[22] Lawrence A. Cremin, "Horace Mann," last modified Dec. 17, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Horace-Mann.

[23] Ibid.

[24] John J. Cogan, "Social Studies: Past, Present, Future," *Association For Supervision And Curriculum Development*, Jan. 1976, http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el_197601_cogan.pdf.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] James S. Gouinlock, "John Dewey," *Britannica*, last modified Dec. 17, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Dewey.

[28] John Dewey, *The School and Society.* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1915), https://archive.org/details/schoolsociety00dewerich.

[29] Thomas Fallace, "John Dewey's Influence on the Origins of the Social Studies: An Analysis of the Historiography and New Interpretation," *Review of Educational Research* 79, no. 2 (2009): 601-24, accessed March 26, 2021, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40469050.

[30] Smith, Palmer and Correia, "Social Studies and the Birth of NCSS."

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] "National Education Association," National Education Association, accessed Mar. 11, 2021, https://www.nea.org/.

[38] Arthur William Dunn, *The Social Studies in Secondary Education: A Six-Year Program Adapted Both to the 6-3-3 and the 8-4 Plans of Organization* (Washington D.C., Bureau of Education, 1916), https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED542444.

[39] Fallace, 601.

[40] Arthur William Dunn, *The Social Studies in Secondary Education: A Six-Year Program Adapted Both to the 6-3-3 and the 8-4 Plans of Organization* (Washington D.C., Bureau of Education, 1916), https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED542444.

[41] "National Council for the Social Studies," https://www.socialstudies.org/about, accessed Mar 22, 2021.

[42] John Goodlad and Timothy J. McMannon, *The Public Purpose of Education and Schooling*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 1997), p. 27-28.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Thomas K. Lindsay, PhD, "'Action Civics,' 'New Civics,' 'Civic Engagement,' and 'Project-Based Civics': Advances in Civic Education," *Texas Public Policy Foundation*, Sept. 2020, https://files.texaspolicy.com/uploads/2020/09/01100711/Lindsay-Meckler-Action-Civics.pdf.

[47] Lindsay, "'Action Civics.'"

[48] Molly Farmer, "Public education system needs to get back to basics, educate kids on civics, character," *Deseret News*, Aug. 5, 2011, https://www.deseret.com/2011/8/5/20386255/public-education-system-needs-to-get-back-to-basics-educate-kids-on-civics-character#adela-valdez-says-the-pledge-of-allegiance-in-mrs-helen-binghams-2nd-and-3rd-grade-joint-class-at-the-woodrow-wilson-school-in-salt-lake-city-on-friday-aug-5-2011.

[49] Lindsay, "'Action Civics.'"

[50] Byron G. Massialas, "The 'New Social Studies' – Retrospect and Prospect," The Social Studies, 100:6, 246-250, DOI: 10.1080/00377990903351424; Shirley H. Engle (1907-94) was an important reformer in the social studies for several decades. Importantly, he drafted an introduction to the NEA's famous 1916 report that influenced social studies for decades. In 1970 he served as president of NCSS. And by 1988, even after his retirement, he wrote "Education for Democratic Citizenship," a text about how to teach public issues in schools. In 1960, Engle wrote one of the most widely quoted and influential articles in the field of social studies, called "Decision Making: The Heart of Social Studies Instruction." His article supported the philosophies of the New Social Studies movement of the 1950s and '60s (see https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00377990903351424?scroll=top&needAccess=true&journalCode=vtss20).

[51] Massialas, "The 'New Social Studies.'"

[52] Ibid.

[53] The 1970s also saw the rejection of yet another attempt at teaching social sciences in the classroom. "Man: A Course of Study" found its way into many American classrooms. It garnered attention for its new "spiral curriculum" approach, meaning a concept would be repeated at multiple levels within a course. However, this social science curriculum reform was ultimately rejected in the U.S. because many people believed the content taught anti-American ideas.

[54] Lindsay, "'Action Civics.'"

[55] Ibid.

[56] Sarah Shapiro and Catherine Brown, "The State of Civics Education," Center for American Progress, Feb. 21, 2018, https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2018/02/21/446857/state-civics-education.

[57] "Inspired to Service: The Final Report of the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service" (Arlington: National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, 2020), https://inspire2serve.gov/reports/final-report.

[58] Anthony Fisher, "Why Do We Have a Department of Education? Jimmy Carter's Debt to a Teachers Union," *Reason*, https://reason.com/2017/02/07/department-of-education-jimmy-carter/.

[59] Ibid.

[60] *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (Washington D.C.: National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), https://edreform.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/A_Nation_At_Risk_1983.pdf.

[61] Ibid.

[62] In the late 1980s two teachers and two professors presented an idea to the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation to fund a study on the state of history knowledge and education among young Americans. At the time there was widespread national concern over history education, what students knew about their country, and how schools were teaching it. If measuring what students actually knew or felt about their country was difficult to discern, it was at least clear that there had been a gradual decline in history as a core course in schools for decades. In 1987 The Bradley Commission on History in Schools (https://ncheteach.org/) was created, in which many distinguished historians and history teachers produced a 32-page report finding that history education in the U.S. was inadequate. One of its major recommendations was to beef up history education from one year to two in both U.S. History and World History. The report was criticized for a number of reasons, including not addressing teacher training, but its long-term effect was to generate a serious discussion about the sad state of history education in the nation. Eventually this report led to the creation of the National Council for History Education (add website in parentheses), which to this day provides professional leadership in the space of history education.

[63] Karen Diegmueller, "Playing Games with History," *EducationWeek*, Nov. 15, 1995, https://www.edweek.org/education/playing-games-with-history/1995/11.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Stanley Kurtz, "Beware: The new civics mandates will be woke," *National Review*, December 28, 2020, https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/beware-new-civics-mandates-will-be-woke/.

[66] National Council for The Social Studies, accessed Mar. 12, 2021, https://www.socialstudies.org/.

[67] Mark Hansen, "Flunking Civics: Why America's Kids Know So Little," *American Bar Association Journal*, May 11, 2011, https://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/civics.

[68] Kristina Rizga, "Why Teaching Civics in America's Classrooms Must Be a Trump-Era Priority," *Mother Jones*, accessed Mar. 12, 2021, https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2017/02/civics-education-trump-bullying/.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Phyllis Weinstock, Fannie Tang, Daniel Humphrey, Marilyn Gillespie, Kailey Yee, "Teaching American History Evaluation Final Report," U.S. Department of Education, Aug. 2011, https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/teaching/us-history/tah-report-9-9-11.pdf.

[71] *Congressional Conference on Civic Education* (Calabasas: Center For Civic Education, 2007), https://www.civiced.org/images/stories/Resources/Publications/Brochures/Brochure-RDACongresionalConference.pdf.

[72] "Constitution Day and Citizenship Day," Library of Congress, last updated Dec. 30, 2020, https://www.loc.gov/law/help/commemorative-observations/constitution-day.php.

[73] *Race to the Top* (Washington D.C.: Obama Administration, 2012), https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/issues/education/k-12/race-to-the-top.

[74] *Educate to Innovate* (Washington D.C.: Obama Administration, 2009), https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/issues/education/k-12/educate-innovate.

[75] Jennifer Gunn, "The Evolution of STEM and STEAM in the U.S.," Resilient Educator, accessed Mar. 12, 2021, https://resilienteducator.com/classroom-resources/evolution-of-stem-and-steam-in-the-united-states/.

[76] Every Student Succeeds Act, Pub.L. 114–95, 20 U.S.C. (2015), https://www.ed.gov/essa?src=rn.

[77] Civic Learning and Engagement in Democracy (Washington D.C.: Department of Education, 2011), https://www.ed.gov/civic-learning.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Lindsay, "'Action Civics.'"

[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Daniel Moritz-Rabson, "Betsy DeVos, Who Wants to Slash Education, Thinks Young Adults Support Socialism Because Education is Inadequate," *Newsweek*, https://www.newsweek.com/betsy-devos-youth-support-socialism-education-failures-1176380 (accessed Mar. 12, 2021).

[83] *American History and Civics Academies* (Washington D.C.: Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021), https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/effective-educator-development-programs/american-history-and-civics-academies/.

[84] *American History and Civics-National Activities Grants* (Washington D.C.: Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021), https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/effective-educator-development-programs/national-activities-grant/.

[85] Educating for Democracy Act of 2020, H.R.8295, 116th Congress (2019-2020), https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/8295/text.

[86] "Civics Secures Democracy Act of 2021," https://delauro.house.gov/sites/delauro.house.gov/files/documents/Civics%20Secures%20Democracy%20Act.pdf.

[87] Stanley Kurtz, "The Greatest Education Battle of our Lifetime," Mar. 15, 2021, https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/the-greatest-education-battle-of-our-lifetimes/.

[88] Lindsey Burke and Angela Sailor, "Don't Give Civics the Common Core Treatment," accessed Mar. 12, 2021, The Daily Signal, https://www.dailysignal.com/2020/06/17/dont-give-civics-the-common-core-treatment/.

[89] Kurtz, "Beware: New Civics Mandates Will Be Woke."

[90] Educating for American Democracy, accessed Mar 23, 2021, https://www.educatingforamericandemocracy.org/.

[91] Lindsay, "'Action Civics.'"

[92] Lucas Morel, "A Review of the 1619 Curriculum," The Heritage Foundation, Dec. 15, 2020, https://www.heritage.org/progressivism/report/review-the-1619-project-curriculum.

[93] *Bill of Rights Institute* (Arlington, VA: Bill of Rights Institute, 2021), https://billofrightsinstitute.org/.

[94] *iCivics* (Cambridge, MA: iCivics, 2020), https://www.icivics.org/.

[95] *Generation Citizen* (New York, NY: Generation Citizen, 2021), https://generationcitizen.org/.

[96] Ashbrook Center at Ashland University, accessed Mar. 15, 2021, https://ashbrook.org/.

[97] The James Madison Institute, accessed Mar. 15, 2021, https://www.jamesmadison.org/.

[98] Hunter Railey and Jan Brennan, *50-State Comparison: Civic Education* (Education Commission of the States, Dec. 2016), https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/Companion_Report_-_50-State_Comparison_-_Civic_Education.pdf.

[99] "Data: Most States Require History, But Not Civics," *EducationWeek*, accessed Mar. 12, 2021, https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/data-most-states-require-history-but-not-civics.

[100] Sarah D. Sparks, "How Many High School Students Can Pass the U.S. Citizenship Test? States Begin to Find Out," *EducationWeek*, accessed Mar. 15, 2021, https://www.edweek.org/leadership/how-many-high-school-students-can-pass-the-u-s-citizenship-test-states-begin-to-find-out/2017/09.

[101] Kathy Swan, T*he College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History* (National Council for the Social Studies, August 2013), https://www.socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/2017/Jun/c3-framework-for-social-studies-rev0617.pdf.

[102] Frederick S. Buchanan, *Education In Utah* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1994), https://www.uen.org/utah_history_encyclopedia/e/EDUCATION.shtml.

[103] Christine Cooke Fairbanks, *U.S. History of Civics part 1: The Founders' vision — 'What species of knowledge can be equally important?'* (Salt Lake City, UT: Sutherland Institute, May 8, 2020), https://sutherlandinstitute.org/the-founders-vision-what-species-of-knowledge-can-be-equally-important/.

[104] Buchanan, *Education in Utah*.

[105] Scott Clair Esplin, *Education in Transition: Church and State Relationships in Utah Education, 1888-1933* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2006), https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1406&context=etd.

[106] Jack Monnett, "Frontier Education: Money, Teachers, and Books," in *Revealed Educational Principles & The Public Schools* (Heber City, UT: Archive Publishers, 2000), https://josephsmithfoundation.org/frontier-education-money-teachers-and-books/#easy-footnote-12-8613.

[107] Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-Day Saints' Book Depot, 1977), https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/9613.

[108] Buchanan, *Education in Utah*.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Esplin, *Education in Transition: Church and State Relationships in Utah Education, 1888-1933*.

[111] "Utah Constitution," Utah State Legislature, accessed Mar. 16, 2021, https://le.utah.gov/xcode/constitution.html.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Buchanan, *Education in Utah*.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Patriotic Education, SB 21, 53rd Utah Legislature (2000).

[119] Center For Civic Education, accessed Mar. 16, 2021, https://www.civiced.org/promote-program/conferences#:~:text=The%20Congressional%20Conference%20on%20Civic%20Education%20convened%20annually,civic%20education%20at%20the%20state%20and%20local%20levels.

[120] Jennifer Toomer-Cook, "Coalition promotes civics," *Deseret News*, May 23, 2007, https://www.deseret.com/2007/5/23/20020333/coalition-promotes-civics.

[121] Civic and Character Education in Schools, HB 22, 55th Utah Legislature (2004).

[122] Commission on Civic and Character Education, HB 339, 56th Utah Legislature (2006).

[123] Focus On Core Curriculum, SB 68, 53rd Utah Legislature (2000).

[124] Common Core State Standards Initiative, accessed Mar. 16, 2021, http://www.corestandards.org/.

[125] Race to the Top (Washington, D.C.: Obama Administration, 2012), https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/issues/education/k-12/race-to-the-top.

[126] *Utah Core Standards: 7-12 Social Studies*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Utah State Board of Education, 2016), http://www.schools.utah.gov/CURR/socialstudies/Core/Grades712.aspx.

[127] Civics Education Amendments, HB 220, 59th Utah Legislature (2011).

[128] Public Education State Capitol Visit Funding, HB 363, 60th Utah Legislature (2013).

[129] *COBI FY20-21* (Salt Lake City, UT: Capitol Preservation Board, 2021), https://cobi.utah.gov/2020/100/background.

[130] Ibid.

[131] American Civics Education Initiative, SB 60, 61st Utah State Legislature (2015).

[132] Christine Cooke Fairbanks, *Action civics: advocates, opponents and a chance for unity?* (Salt Lake City, UT: Sutherland Institute, July 14, 2020), https://sutherlandinstitute.org/action-civics-advocates-opponents-and-a-chance-for-unity/.

[133] HCR 15, "Emphasizing the Importance of Civics Education," 2021.

[134] HB 327 "Civic Thought and Leadership Initiative," 2021.

[135] Better Days 2020, accessed Mar. 16, 2021, https://www.betterdays2020.com/.



Founded in 1995, Sutherland Institute is a nonpartisan policy and educational institution – a think tank. Our mission is to advance principled public policy that promotes the values of faith, family and free markets. Our research informs the public and policymakers alike – true to the belief that this and every generation must recommit to the principles that make us free. Sutherland Institute does not seek or accept government funding.

This will require the commitment of parents, educators and community leaders. It will require a reprioritization of time and resources. But we have done this before. We did it in response to the "Sputnik moment" and, more recently, with STEM curriculum.

When Americans see and understand the importance of a moment – we respond.

This is such a moment.

Sutherland Institute
15 West South Temple Street
Suite 200
Salt Lake City, UT 84101

Office – 801.355.1272
si@sifreedom.org
sutherlandinstitute.org