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Suzanne Schmitz

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The Simon Review

HOW LOCAL SCHOOLS CAN PROMOTE CIVICS EDUCATION

SUZANNE SCHMITZ

Professor of Law, Emeritus

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HOW LOCAL SCHOOLS CAN PROMOTE CIVICS EDUCATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and Congressman Lee Hamilton have called on schools to bring high-quality civic education to every American student. Local schools and administrators must "change how civic learning is taught from the dry facts of history and the structure of government to an emphasis on how citizens can and must participate in civic life."

Civics education should consist of six components. A recent survey of Illinois high schools shows that some of these components are in place, but greater implementation of these components would help to produce effective citizens.

1. **Formal instruction** in U.S. Government, history, law and democracy using interactive methods and opportunities to apply learning to "real life" situations and primary source documents such as the Constitution and Declaration of Independence.

   The vast majority of Illinois high schools teach these concepts, though it appears schools teach more about the federal system than about the state and even less about local government. Schools should work harder to connect formal instruction with students' lives.

2. **Discussion** of current local, national and international **events** important to students' lives and of controversial social and political issues in a classroom atmosphere where discussion is balanced, relevant information is used logically to support positions, each voice is welcomed, and questions are open-ended.

   Illinois high schools do ask questions and invite student discussion, though this is an area for improvement.

3. **Service-learning** linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction; e.g., serving in a non-profit organization, engaging in seminars with community leaders, serving as election judges and preparing a report on their experiences.

   Only 38% of Illinois high schools surveyed reported use of service-learning activities.

4. **Extracurricular activities** that encourage greater involvement and connection to school and community; e.g., school clubs, newspapers, or governance. Other examples include the Illinois State Bar Association's high school mock trial program and the Mikva challenge.

   Although student government boards, school newspapers and yearbooks are frequently produced in Illinois high schools; political clubs, debate teams and community organizations such as Big Brothers Big Sisters are not.

5. **Authentic voice** in school governance; e.g., student governance, peer mediation, school organizations.

   Nearly all Illinois high schools social studies classes encourage students to voice their opinions and respect those of others. More than two thirds have school procedures for students to voice grievances.

6. Participations in **simulations** of democratic structures and processes; classroom simulations, and extra-curricular activities such as YMCA Youth and Government or Model UN.

   Although 74% of schools report using simulations, they do so only occasionally. Greater use of simulations and visits from experts or other community resources could enhance the curriculum.

School boards and local school administrators can support the effort to effectuate high quality civics education in their schools through the fourteen best practices discussed in this report. These consist primarily of:

- Educating themselves and school administrators about the state of civics education, especially CREATING A CIVIC BLUEPRINT FOR ILLINOIS HIGH SCHOOLS.
- Educating community, civic and business leaders on the need to improve civics education and soliciting their support.
- Supporting educators willing to implement these types of programs by providing them with professional development opportunities and moral support and ensuring that they are aware of the many opportunities for classroom programs and continuing education.
- While realizing the importance of science, math and language arts, ensuring that civics education has a place in the schools and is supported. Language arts, math and science teachers should work with social studies teachers to integrate the teaching of civics throughout the curriculum.

HOW LOCAL SCHOOLS CAN PROMOTE CIVICS EDUCATION

Imagine that your students have identified a local issue of community concern, have consulted experts on possible solutions, invited local, state and federal legislators and other public officials to a summit to consider solutions. These students then raised public awareness and helped local officials obtain $100,000 toward a solution. Would you expect that these students will be effective and responsible citizens when they graduate? You do not have to imagine because this sort of civics education is alive and real at a school in Southern Illinois (www.shawneedistrict84.com). These students are living and learning *action civics.*

Why should you care about civics education?

Why should you – a regional or district superintendent of schools, a school board member, a school principal, or a responsible citizen – care about civics education? Answer: You want local citizens who vote for bond issues, understand the relationship between property taxes and quality schools, volunteer for school committees, and become leaders in the community. You understand that one of the traditional missions of the public schools is to produce citizens who have the skills, knowledge and attitudes to be competent and responsible citizens (Gould 15). And you realize that civics education produces workers with the qualities desired by 21st century employers (Gould 6 and Torney-Purta 4). Speaking at the *Putting Action in Civic Education* conference October 26, 2011 at the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute, Gery Chico, Chair of the Illinois State Board of Education, put it this way, "you understand that democracy depends on an educated citizenry."

This paper explores the state of civics education, discusses several success stories, describes the characteristics of model civics programs, and identifies the best practices that local school boards and administrators can adopt, especially in an atmosphere of decreased funding and increased attention to math, science and language arts. Implementing those practices will lead to action civics programs to produce responsible citizens.

What is civics education?

Civics education has as its goal "informed, responsible participation in political life by competent citizens committed to the fundamental values and principles of American constitutional democracy" (Center for Civic Education, NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CIVICS AND GOVERNMENTS). That participation requires knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will be further discussed. Civics education should be interdisciplinary and should permeate the curriculum from early elementary grades through high school. It should encompass all of the social studies – history, geography, government, economics, world cultures and social systems. It should include but not be limited to a course entitled "civics" or "American government."

Civics education is essential to an effective democracy but it also is career preparation. Such education is critical preparation for the student's "role as a productive and ethical worker … grounded in positive attitudes toward work and the law" (Gould 21). Skills identified by employers as critical to the success of 21st century employees include: knowledge of economic and political processes, skills in understanding presentations in a range of media, ability to work cooperatively with others, especially those from diverse backgrounds, positive work ethic and attitude toward obeying the law, and engaging in discussions leading to effective civic action in the community (Gould 20). Some of the very skills and dispositions desired in 21st century workers are also some of those that prepare competent citizens.

Additionally, civics education leads to a positive school climate. "High-quality civic learning teaches the importance of community (both within the school and more broadly), respectful dialogues about controversial issues, creative problem solving, collaboration, teamwork and the importance of diversity" are values "foundational to a positive school climate" (Gould 23). Thus, civics education has both short-term and long-term values.

How bad is it?

Numerous studies and many anecdotes attest to the lack of civic information as well as civic participation. Here are a few:

- In 2008, despite the highest voter turnout in years, only 56.8% of eligible voters voted (Gould 14). In Illinois, despite having an Illinois resident at the head of the ticket, 37% of eligible voters did not vote (McCormick 2010 6). Nationally, 39% of those with less than high school education voted, while 55% of high school graduates voted; 72% of those with some college and 83% of college graduates voted (Gould 14).
- Illinois citizens demonstrate poor civic health when participation in society is measured. Twenty-eight per cent of respondents in a survey reported volunteering at a religious, education, and social or community program, suggesting that 72% do not volunteer. Twenty-six percent of Illinois respondents engaged in some political act other than voting (attend a public meeting, support a party or candidate, etc.), meaning that almost three-quarters do not. Less than 10% attended a public meeting or served as an officer or on a committee of any group in the twelve months prior to the survey (McCormick 2010 9-13).
- Less than 33% of 8th graders could identify the purpose of the Declaration of Independence in a National Assessment of Civic Progress (NAEP) civics assessment (Gould 14).
- In 2006 in the midst of the Iraq war, only 40% of youth aged 18-24 could find Iraq on a map (Gould 14).
- In a nation-wide study of basic civic knowledge, only 5% of students were competent in economics, 11% in domestic issues, 14% in foreign affairs, 25% in history and 10% in geography (Gould 14).
- In 2004, the last year Illinois students were tested on the ISAT for their knowledge in the social studies, 40% of 11th graders, 41% of 7th graders, and 39% of all 4th graders performed below standard (Illinois State Board of Education, eReport Card Public Site).

Some believe schools urgently need to improve civics education because "our bonds are strained, our civility worn thin and our common sense of purpose has weakened, just as the need for cooperation on large challenges has grown urgent" (Gould 9). Because Americans are

a diverse people, not linked by a common religion or devotion to a royal family, what they share are the common values described in the Declaration of Independence, Constitution and Bill of Rights (Gould 9). Such a shared bond requires that citizens know and understand those principles. Because America is a democracy, its effectiveness requires that we citizens participate.

In a study on Illinois civic health, the authors note that Illinois citizens face a number of crises: one of the worst financial deficits in the nation, high unemployment, a series of governors convicted of crimes, a feeling of corruption in the state generally. Surveys of those who do not register to vote or do not vote indicate that the reasons are lack of time, lack of interest in the election, and a sense that their vote would not matter (McCormick 2010 4-6). The authors conclude that Illinois residents "simply cannot afford to be civilly disengaged from Illinois' political system" (McCormick 2010 2).

Further complicating the need for excellence in civics education are reports that "low income, African-American, Hispanic, and rural students score lower on tests of civic knowledge and have less optimistic views of their civic potential" (Gould 13) than others. Students from all of those categories attend Illinois schools.

How did it get this bad?

There are many theories about the decreased attention in schools to civics education. Some blame No Child Left Behind's emphasis on reading and math or its failure to test social studies. Others point to the renewed emphasis on math and science. There is some concern that as Illinois focuses on teacher evaluation as part of the "Race to the Top," testing in math, language arts and science will demand even more attention of teachers. Still others blame the emphasis on dry facts that permeated too many civics classes and were unattractive to students and teachers alike. Educators can bemoan the causes or can work on solutions – solutions that can be implemented at the local level, regardless of what the federal or state government is doing.

Are there success stories?

Many schools in Illinois have implemented the very types of programs recommended. A few examples follow.

Shawnee High School, headquartered in Union County, lies in far Southern Illinois, in an area with high unemployment in the state (www.ides.illinois.gov/default.aspx). The high school has 160 students, 65% of whom are low income (Illinois Interactive Report Card) and one teacher, Jamie Nash-Mayberry, for all its social studies courses. During the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years, the teacher made the students aware of potential flooding of homes, farm land and other properties due to the deteriorating levees surrounding their communities.

The students devoted about one class day per week to this study during which they consulted local officials and experts from the Corps of Engineers and from Southern Illinois University Carbondale, including one Dutch professor visiting at SIUC familiar with levees and dikes. They invited their state and federal legislators to hold a summit in the community and when the summit seemed delayed, they wrote Oprah Winfrey asking for her help. While Oprah did not respond, the press reported the story and soon the legislators set the summit date. The Corps of Engineers invited the students to come to St. Louis to learn more from the Corps. Eventually the summit produced some potential solutions. When the local levee commissioners needed help securing funding for a new drainage system, they asked the students to help. The students tapped into the resources they had developed and were able to help the levee district secure the needed funding.

The students also designed T-shirts that they sold to support three levee districts that border the school district. This social studies teacher involved language arts and art teachers in these projects, making it an interdisciplinary. The school district recently honored the students and their teacher for their contributions to the community.

These students learned:

- The difference that can be made by local citizens who inform public officials of local problems and the willingness of public officials to respond when informed.

- The action that can result from citizen advocacy.
- The need for research and information.
- The interplay among local, state and federal officials and among the legislative and executive branches of government.
- The power of the media to educate and call attention to problems and the limits of the media when they get the facts wrong.

To execute this project, the students learned to do primary research, gather and process information, listen, speak and write persuasively, and collaborate and work as a team. They understood the power of collective action and experienced the value of "giving back" to their communities. These students possess much of the knowledge, skills, and civic dispositions necessary for effective citizens. The school received great publicity and contributed to the community by raising public awareness and assisting in locating the needed $100,000. The cost to the school was the cost of bus fare for one field trip.

This school is fulfilling its mission "that all students acquire and use knowledge, skills and behaviors necessary to become productive and successful members of society" (www.shawneedistrict84.com). This teacher implemented the recommended teaching methodologies discussed below.

A number of schools in Southern Illinois have integrated the Project Citizen program into their curriculum (Center for Civic Education: Project Citizen www.civiced.org). Project Citizen is one of several civics programs sponsored by the Center for Civic Education. In the Project Citizen program, students identify an issue in the community, investigate it, examine alternative policies to address the problem, propose a public policy and develop an action plan to implement it. In Waterloo, as part of an elementary school environmental studies class, the teacher helped the students learn about radon gas and its effect on their health. Using the Project Citizen program and thanks to a small EPA grant, the students' surveyed homes in the community for radon gas and proposed a policy that led to new laws governing construction and radon detection. This is an example of an interdisciplinary approach to civics education in which the students lived action civics. These students also learned to do primary research,

learned the relationship between economics, science and public policy, and learned to advocate for change.

Students in a Project Citizen program in the Coulterville School District convinced officials to enact changes in traffic flow around their school to improve safety and convinced school officials to improve the gymnasium for accessibility by persons with disabilities. Project Citizen programs are in place in schools with small enrollments and limited budgets. Typically, these programs cost the district nothing, yet some of these schools have been among the top Project Citizen programs in the nation.

Students in a gifted program at the Lewis elementary school in Carbondale study business; students conceive, design, market and sell a product. They also invest a simulated $2500 and follow its progress in the stock market. These 4th and 5th graders will be better informed citizens and consumers. Students at Carbondale Middle School have enjoyed great success in performance at the state and national history fair in which the students make history come alive. In preparing for the competition, the students conduct primary research and write a performance to illustrate the history lesson. This volunteer program involves 25% of the students for an entire year.

Schools work with the Girls and Boys State, the YMCA, and the Illinois State Bar Association so that students can learn about the legislative and judicial processes through simulations. They hold mock elections and register seniors to vote. They encourage students to write essays or prepare art projects, often for contests, on issues of the day. Schools send students to Washington D.C. or Springfield, Illinois to experience the legislative and other governmental processes.

There is a wealth of resources available to educators. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's iCivics (www.icivics.org) offers on-line resources that can enhance other classroom materials. Project Citizen (www.centerforactioncivics.org) and the Mikva program (www.civiced.org) offer "classroom-ready" curricular materials that are available for all grade levels. Many government agencies, including the Library of Congress and the National Archives, offer lesson plans and primary sources to accompany other classroom materials. These materials have the value of

being used in the classroom for all students. In addition, the Illinois State Bar Association's mock trial program (www.isba.org) offers a competition for selected students as does the Illinois History Fair (illinoishistory.gov/illinoishistoryfair) and many other programs. These are just a few examples of the many resources available. Teachers can find many resources available at the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute (www.paulsimoninstitute.org).

What are the solutions?

Numerous studies and reports have offered solutions, most of which involve minimal financial costs to schools. The Civic Mission of Schools, a national coalition of educators, lawyers, and concerned citizens, issued a report entitled "Guardian of Democracy: the Civic Mission of Schools." Its co-chairs, Justice O'Connor and Congressman Lee Hamilton, called on schools to bring *high-quality civic education* to every American student. They urged local schools and administrators to "change how civic learning is taught from the dry facts of history and the structure of government to an emphasis on how citizens can and must participate in civic life" (Gould 7). They challenged educators to "treat civic learning as an interdisciplinary subject to be employed across the curriculum" (Gould 7).

The report proposes "three pillars" of good citizenship and offers data substantiating the benefits of these three:

1. Civic knowledge: "fundamental understanding of the structure of government and the processes by which government passes laws and makes policy." Students should understand how history shapes the present; how geography affects our understanding of the U.S. and the world, and the economics "necessary to assess public policy options "(Gould 16).

   Not surprisingly, students who have taken civics courses score better on civic knowledge tests than do those who have not taken the courses (Gould, p. 16). *High quality civic learning programs also encouraged civic action and even increased discussions at home* (Gould 16).

2. Civic skills, "abilities necessary to participate as active and responsible citizens in a democracy": critical thinking, collective action, speaking, listening, collaboration,

community organizing, public advocacy, and gathering and processing information (Gould 16).

Gaining civic skills leads to improved student understanding and analytical abilities and actual civic participation (Gould 16-17).

3. Civic dispositions and participation. Dispositions refer to concern for others' rights and welfare, reasonable levels of trust, fairness, and a sense of public duty. Participation refers to voting, participating in community meetings, volunteering, communicating with elected and appointed officials, and signing petitions, among other activities (Gould 17).

   Civic dispositions lead to a commitment to participation in community affairs and a sense of self-efficacy, or a sense that a citizen, alone or with others, can make a difference (Gould 16-17).

In a similar vein, Chair Chico described the four traits of civics education as being informed and thoughtful, focused on participation in the community, acting politically, and possessing moral and civic virtues that serve the betterment of humankind.

Consistent with the national Civic Mission effort, a group of Illinois educators, students, and elected officials, under the banner Illinois Civic Mission, identified the six characteristics of citizen competency and responsibility similar to those outlined above (McCormick 2009).

Assuming agreement on these outcomes, the next question is how schools *deliver* this type of civics education. Both reports agree on six proven practices. In 2010, the McCormick Foundation surveyed Illinois high school faculty as to their adoption of these six methodologies and the results are listed after each item (Healy).

1. **Formal instruction** in U.S. Government, history, law and democracy using interactive methods and opportunities to apply learning to "real life" situations. Key components are the emphasis on the real-life connection and the use of primary source materials.

a. *According to the McCormick Foundation survey of Illinois high schools, the vast majority of Illinois high schools teach these concepts, though it appears schools teach more about the federal system than about the state and even less about local government* (Healy 4). *Schools can improve in making real life connections between formal instruction and concrete actions in students' lives* (Healy 6). *Currently, only 46% of high schools report making these connections on a weekly basis. Another area for improvement is in the use of visits from community and other experts with 34% of high schools reporting no visits or one per year* (Healy 7).

2. **Discussion** of current local, national and international **events** important to students' lives and of controversial social and political issues. Critical is a classroom atmosphere where discussion is balanced, relevant information is used logically to support positions, each voice is welcomed, and questions are open-ended.
    a. *Most Illinois high schools do ask questions and invite student discussion* (Healy 7).
3. **Service-learning** linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction; e.g., serving in a non-profit organization, engaging in seminars with community leaders, serving as election judges and preparing a report on their experiences.
    a. *Only 31% of Illinois high schools reported use of service-learning activities to focus student learning on the community and only 21% helped students engage in nonpartisan political activities* (Healy 10).
4. **Extracurricular activities** that encourage greater involvement and connection to school and community; e.g., school clubs, newspapers, or governance. Other examples include the Illinois State Bar Association high school mock trial program and the Mikva challenge.
    a. *Although student government, school newspapers and yearbooks are frequently produced in Illinois high schools, political clubs, debate teams and community organizations such as Big Brothers are not widely available* (Healy 11*).*

5. **Authentic voice** in school governance; e.g., student governance, peer mediation, school organizations.
    a. *Nearly all Illinois high schools social studies classes encourage students to voice their opinions and respect those of others. More than two thirds have school procedures for students to voice grievances* (Healy 7-8).
6. Participation in **simulations** of democratic structures and processes; classroom simulations, and extra-curricular activities such as YMCA Youth and Government or Model UN.
    a. *Another area for improvement is the use of simulations. While 90% of high schools report using simulations, most do so only occasionally* (Healy 6).

Empirical testing supports the use of these six methods. For example, Illinois middle and high school students who participated in service-learning improved their academic competence, acquisition of 21st century skills, civic dispositions, and support for their schools (Gould 29). Students report being more interested in and learning from civics classes where they engage in controversial issues than in classes where they do not (Gould 28). These methods should be implemented throughout the schools, not just in high school

The Civic Mission report stresses the need for *quality* in these civics educational programs. It encourages the use of assessment methods that include multiple-choice and short-answer tests but also performance tests and portfolio assessments (Gould 36). To prepare educators to teach and assess using these methods, the Civic Mission also endorses high quality professional development for social studies teachers. It notes that teachers' effectiveness in using issues discussions is enhanced when teachers are well-prepared (Gould 28, 37-38).

Does Illinois require this recommended approach?

Illinois has recently endorsed the Common Core Standards, a national project to identify standards for students (www.corestandards.org). Currently, Standards are available for math and language arts, and at some later time, for social studies. The Common Core Standards for "English Language Arts and Literacy in History, Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects" emphasize such skills as distinguishing fact from opinion, making reasoned arguments,

comparing points of view, integrating quantitative data with qualitative analysis, researching to solve a problem, drawing evidence from informational tests, and writing coherently and for an audience. These are some of the many skills necessary for effective citizens. These Standards also underscore the interdisciplinary nature of civics education that builds on the skills learned in math, reading, and writing classes. While these Common Core Standards do not address all of the goals and methods described above as essential to high quality civics education, these Standards also do not prohibit schools from pursuing those goals and adopting those methods.

For some time before development of the Common Core Standards, Illinois defined five goals for social studies education in the public schools. These goals addressed topics in economics, geography, history, and world culture all of which contribute to forming good citizens and all of which are part of civics education (www.isbe.state.us/ils/social_science/standards.htm). In particular, Goal 14 states that students will understand political systems, with an emphasis on the United States. That goal is further defined as expecting students to understand and explain the basic principles of the government of the U.S., Illinois, and other nations; election processes and the responsibilities of citizens; the roles and influences of individuals and interests groups in political systems; U.S. foreign policy; and the development of U.S. political ideas and traditions.

These five Illinois goals for social studies focus on one aspect of the best practices, that of understanding and knowledge with some emphasis on civic skills. The Illinois goals do not focus on civic dispositions or on many of the skills discussed here. However, there is nothing in the goals that prevents Illinois educators from pursuing these other goals and using the methods discussed here.

Students graduating from an Illinois high school must complete two years of social studies, one of which must be history of the U.S. or a combination of history of the U.S. and American government (Illinois School Code, 105 ILCS 5/27-22). Consumer education is also a state requirement for students in public schools in grades 9-12 (Illinois School Code, 105 ILCS 5/27-12.1). At one time, Illinois tested students on their knowledge of social studies as part of the

Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT), but that is no longer true. Schools may test their students, using their own materials.

Nothing in the state goals or requirements prevents educators from adopting these best practices. However, nothing requires that they do. That is where local administrators can make a difference.

What they want from board and administrators?

In speaking with teachers involved in action civics programs in Southern Illinois, we learn that they need one thing from their administrators and school boards and that is support. Occasionally, it is financial support for professional conferences, field trips, technology or materials. More often, it is support to pursue simulations and programs that engage students in action civics in the community. It is support when the teachers try new teaching methods or assessments. It is support when the students' activities arouse community interest or, even questioning. Administrators and school board members who understand the need for informed and responsible citizens will educate themselves about action civics programs and be prepared to offer that support to their teachers. This paper concludes with 14 activities for board members and administrators that will make that support concrete.

BEST PRACTICES FOR LOCAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

AND MEMBERS OF LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS

1. Read the materials prepared by the Civic Mission, including the GOULD FOR DEMOCRACY report which can be found at www.civicmissionofschools.org/site.Gouldofdemocracy and the McCormick Foundation's creating a CIVIC BLUE PRINT FOR ILLINOIS HIGH SCHOOLS which can be found at www.mccormickfoundation.org/publications. Familiarize yourself with the goals and best practices of civics education.
2. Encourage administrators, curriculum specialists, department chairs, and teachers to become familiar with these goals and practices.
3. Educate community leaders, including members of civic organizations, such as Rotary or Kiwanis, and business leaders about these goals and practices and about their relationship to preparing the workforce. Encourage community organizations and businesses to provide financial and other support to the school for civics activities as they do for sports. For example, they might underwrite the cost of transportation for field trips or shirts for the debate club, etc.
4. Encourage administrators and teachers to adopt some of these best practices for civics education throughout the social sciences from K-12 at age appropriate levels.
5. Encourage your administrators to view social studies as an interdisciplinary subject and encourage reading, math and science teachers to cooperate with social studies teachers at all grade levels. So long as schools must test reading, math and science, there will be an understandable emphasis on these subjects but these teachers can work with the social science teachers.
6. Encourage administrators to choose textbooks and other materials that support teachers in adopting these best practices. Encourage them to provide technology that links students with primary sources at such websites as the National Archives (www.archives.gov) and the Library of Congress (www.loc.gov).
7. Support teachers who request time off and funding to gain professional development in these best practices, especially those presented by public or quasi-public entities such as

the Library of Congress (www.loc.gov), National Archives (www.archives.gov), former Congressman Lee Hamilton's Center on Congress at Indiana University (congress.indiana.edu), or Justice O'Connor's interactive civics education program that includes teachers' resources (www.icivics.org).

8. Ask administrators to make social studies teachers aware of the many on-line resources for civics education, including those posted on the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute available at www.paulsimoninstitute.org.
9. Encourage administrators and teachers to consider the Project Citizen programs available at www.civiced.org or the Mikva Challenge programs available at www.centerforactioncivics.org.
10. Invite teachers who produce high quality civics education to share their work at school board meetings and before parents and civic groups. For example, students who engage in Project Citizen competitions, mock trials or history fairs might present their work at a school board meeting or at a local Kiwanis luncheon.
11. Support social studies teachers who experiment in assessing student progress, using performance tests and portfolios. Support the teachers who do so by helping them prepare through professional development so they will produce good quality assessments.
12. Support social studies teachers who experiment with discussing controversial issues or using service-learning activities.
13. Because in many schools, the social studies department will consist of one or a few teachers, encourage administrators to seek out nearby districts and develop a mentorship program for teachers engaging in good quality civics education.
14. Provide a small fund for reimbursing teachers for costs associated with high quality civics programs such as reimbursing them for transportation costs or funding field trips or for substitute teachers while they attend professional development programs.

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A Biographical Note on the Author

Suzanne J. Schmitz is a Professor Emeritus at Southern Illinois University School of Law, having served as the coordinator for SIU School of Law's Academic Success Program and coordinator of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Clinic. She is a graduate of St. Xavier College in Chicago, with a B.A. in Philosophy. She also earned an M.S. Ed. from Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, and a J.D. (Magna cum Laude) from St. Louis University School of Law. She serves as a member of the Illinois State Bar Association Law-Related Education Committee, which promotes education about the law for youth.