

STATE-LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

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The Texas Legislature in 1969 enacted legislation specifically declaring that the primary objective for public school education in Texas is education for citizenship (Texas Education Code, 1969). Thus, education for citizenship became a mandate for the state's schools. Playing key roles to ensure that this mandate is met by the local school districts are the Texas State Board of Education and the social studies staff of the Texas Education Agency.

The State Board of Education has been instrumental in developing educational goals and accreditation policies, conducting assessments, and selecting appropriate textbooks to further citizenship education in Texas. Among the goals the Board of Education has established for Texas schools is "to help each student to develop personal knowledge, skills, and competence to maximum capacity, and to learn behavior patterns which will make each a responsible member of society. In terms of their individual ability, all students should achieve . . . citizenship and political understanding and competence" (Texas Education Agency, 1980c).

The Board of Education has included citizenship as an essential curriculum element in its accreditation policies. These policies and the Board's goals influence local districts to include citizenship education as a local priority when developing their own sets of goals to meet state accreditation guidelines.

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Texas has goals, guidelines, and policies to help school districts develop citizenship education programs.

In 1978 the Board of Education conducted a statewide assessment to measure student achievement in citizenship. Exercises developed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress were administered to a sampling of elementary, junior high, and high school students. The results, shared with all school districts, were used in revising the state curriculum framework, in determining priorities for Title IV-C project proposals and in describing content in social studies textbooks (Texas Education Agency, 1978).

The results of the assessment were also helpful in identifying areas of need in citizenship education in the schools. Because textbooks are a major determinant of what is taught in the classroom, the Board of Education included the areas of weakness when it sent its guidelines to textbook publishers submitting new texts in American government.

The activities of the Texas Education Agency's social studies staff closely parallel and relate to those of the Board of Education. The social studies staff develops publications and provides technical and staff development assistance to the local school districts. The social studies staff's "bible," *Framework for the Social Studies, Grades K-12*, (1980a), provides guidelines for local schools in planning local social studies programs

and serves as a basis for adoption of textbooks. Originally published in 1970, the *Framework* was thoroughly revised for republication and distribution to Texas schools last spring.

The revised *Framework* was explicitly designed to carry out the legislative mandate for citizenship and was keyed specifically to the Board of Education's goal for citizenship. The *Framework* has been used in a variety of ways to promote citizenship education: Title IV-C projects must be consistent with the *Framework*; textbook contents must follow its guidelines; and local districts have used it to plan their social studies programs. The *Framework's* basic theme for the K-12 social studies program is "The Individual as Citizen." This theme is carried out through the development of knowledge of social studies content, of values and attitudes related to human relationships and citizenship, and of the skills and processes for successful study and participatory citizenship. Local school district's social studies programs are evaluated for state accreditation partly on the basis of the *Framework's* criteria. The *Framework* is the key to content for citizenship programs in Texas; it is

also the basis for the social studies staff's workshops for teachers.

For the purpose of describing competencies, the staff also published *Social Studies Subgoals and Suggested Essential Student Objectives* (1980b). It suggests a set of essential citizenship objectives identified by a cross-section of Texas educators, citizens, and students. The competencies are designed to carry out the public school goals identified by the Board of Education, and they could be used as a base for a follow-up statewide assessment in citizenship education.

The social studies staff's technical assistance efforts and staff development activities also promote the citizenship mandate. Such activities include: evaluating local districts' social studies programs; assisting teachers in developing social studies content and skills; providing textbook publishers with curriculum information; offering advice on materials to instructional resource developers; or working as the "broker" between social studies educators, individuals, and groups who support citizenship education. In all of these activities

and others, the citizenship mandate is of priority and the *Framework* is the essential guidebook.

The functions of the Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency's social studies staff do not make Texas unique. What is unique is Texas' single-mindedness of purpose concerning social studies education. The efforts of the Texas legislature, the Board of Education, and the social studies staff have provided a foundation for local school districts to develop in their students the competencies desired of the citizens of Texas and of the nation.

References

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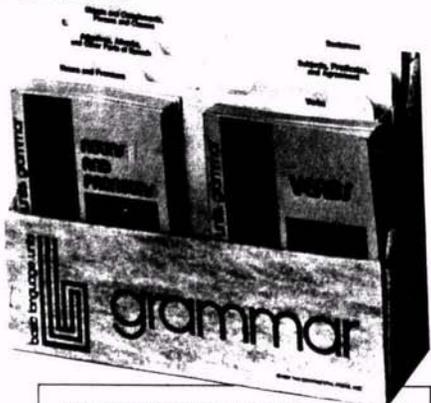
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