

Citizenship curriculums should be broad, realistic, and practical. They should reflect global interdependence and the diversity of American society.

CRITERIA FOR JUDGING CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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After a considerable lapse of interest in citizenship education during the 1960s, extending into the 70s, concern for revitalizing citizenship education has grown among curriculum specialists, social scientists, foundation officials, state and federal policy makers, and the general public. A 1979 Gallup Poll of attitudes toward the public schools, for example, found that 89 percent of public school parents rated "civics/government" as an "essential" subject. Only two subjects—math and English—were rated as essential by a greater percentage of parents (Gallup, 1979).

As concern with education for citizenship continues to grow, administrators face the task of judging the merits of an increasing array of programs in this area. Making such judgments involves two interrelated tasks. First is the identification and justification of criteria. Second is the application of criteria to a given program. This involves determination of the ex-

tent to which any particular program or set of materials meet or fail to meet a given set of criteria.

Over the years I have developed a number of criteria to help guide my own thinking and curriculum development in citizenship education (Anderson and Remy, 1971; Remy, 1976; Anderson and others, 1977). While hardly exhaustive, the following questions may help call attention to several important aspects of citizenship education.

1. *Is the program based on a broad or narrow conception of citizenship?* There is no one right or superior way of conceptualizing political life. Rather, different ways of viewing citizenship can be "correct" and at the same time more or less useful for developing programs likely to promote citizenship competence.

A narrow view sees citizenship solely in terms of the individual's relation to formal institutions of government. This view has important disadvantages for developing educational programs. It treats politics as something only adults "do" or experience. The implication of such an "adult-centered" view is that politics is something students can study from a distance and for which they can

prepare, but in which they cannot participate until they reach the age of majority and take on such adult roles as voters, taxpayers, campaign workers, public officials, or candidates for electoral office.

It is far more useful to treat politics and governance as a universal feature of human social life. This implies that citizenship behavior occurs in relation to a school, a social club, or a labor union as well as in relation to a city or nation. This view makes it possible to develop instructional programs that draw upon the politics and governance of everyday life as well as upon issues associated with the formal institutions of government. In turn, this makes it possible to create programs connected to the experience of students so they can perceive instruction as personally meaningful.

2. *Does the program give some attention to developing competencies all people need in order to discharge their duties and responsibilities and protect their interests as citizens?*

There are seven types of basic citizenship competencies (Remy, 1980): (1) competence in acquiring and processing information about political situations; (2) competence in assessing one's involvement and stake in political situations, issues, decisions, and policies; (3) competence in making thoughtful decisions regarding group governance and problems of citizenship; (4) competence in developing and using standards such as justice, ethics, morality, and practicality to make judgments of people, institutions, policies, and decisions; (5) competence in communicating ideas to other citizens, decision makers, leaders, and officials; (6) competence in cooperating and working with others in groups and organizations to achieve mutual goals; and (7) competence in working with bureaucratically organized institutions in order to promote and protect one's interests and values.

Such a typology can help ensure that competencies individuals require as citizens in a democratic society are attended to in the curriculum.

3. *Does the program convey information about the realities of political life as well as democratic ideals?* Citizenship education should not breed despair, cynicism, or alienation toward the political life of our society. However, neither should it communi-

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cate to students highly unrealistic and romanticized images of human politics. The challenge is not to confuse what *is* with what *ought* to be.

Research shows that from a relatively early age, students are aware of many of the political realities of life in our complex society. This awareness comes from exposure to television; overheard adult conversations about such matters as inflation, corruption, and political candidates; explicit instruction by adults ("Politicians are crooks"), and first-hand encounters with political figures such as police and bureaucrats. From such experiences students readily learn about the existence of class and conflict, the failures and successes of public policies, inequalities in the distribution of power, and the like.

School-based citizenship education programs should develop students' cognitive understanding of the realities of political life in conjunction with an appreciation of basic democratic values.

4. *Does the program incorporate knowledge about practical politics and the political process as well as information about government institutions and legal structures?* Political literacy requires a basic knowledge of institutions of local, state, and national government. It also requires knowledge about the dynamics of social processes. These include an understanding of the ways in which people participate in politics, how opinions and information are communicated, how decisions are made, attitudes formed, conflicts managed, and how leadership is exercised.

Civic or political literacy has both an independent and dependent relationship to citizenship competencies. That is, at any age level, competence in the citizen's role implies that an individual will have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the political environment to act effectively. At the same time, competent participation in civic and public life can enhance factual knowledge directly, deepen understanding, and motivate the person to acquire additional knowledge.

5. *Does the program make an effort to reflect and accommodate the diversity of American society?* The enormous range of social and cultural variation in American life poses vexatious problems for citizenship edu-

cation. Uneasy consequences of pluralism are apparent in every domain of society. Embedded in this pluralism is one form that has particular relevance for citizenship education at this point in American history. This is the fact that the United States is a multiracial, multiethnic, and multicultural society—marked by severe conflicts and problems affecting the governance of such diverse institutions as schools, universities, business firms, and churches, as well as the political system of the society as a whole. In this context, the aspiration to provide a common preparation for citizenship that is realistic, practical, and effective while simultaneously responding to diversity in educational needs, opportunities, and interests is a complex task. But the task must be met head on.

So far as the content of citizenship education is concerned, pluralism is a fundamental political fact that must be realistically portrayed and its implication for freedom and democratic procedures thoroughly explored. At a minimum this clearly precludes an approach to citizenship education that does nothing more than simply reflect the political perceptions and preoccupations of any particular group or segment in the society (that is, the white middle class).

Racial, ethnic, social, and cultural variability is not only a content problem. It also affects the very institutional settings in which improved political education must occur. Any effort to improve political education—whether through research, development, service, or political activities—must be designed to accommodate suitable adaptations to a wide range of circumstances and settings.

6. *Does the program reflect the increasingly global context of citizenship?* Although some might wish otherwise, the effects of global interdependence have become inescapable for all citizens. Global interrelationships that substantially affect the lives of all U.S. residents have gone far beyond traditional diplomatic negotiations and distant military confrontations. Our proliferating ties to nations, communities, peoples, and events in other parts of the world affect the quality of our air and water; the price of sugar, coffee, and gasoline; the size of our armed forces; the amount of taxes we pay; and the levels of employment and inflation. Similarly,

how U.S. citizens behave affects the lives of others elsewhere.

Despite growing attention to global influences on the human condition, we are only beginning to appreciate the impact of this change on our lives as citizens and on the task of citizenship education.

Unfortunately, in large measure citizenship education and "global, international, world-order, foreign affairs" education in the schools have been isolated from one another. In the past, this state of affairs may have been both natural and tolerable. Today it is neither.

7. *Does the program reflect sound principles of instructional design?*

There are four principles of instructional design to keep in mind when appraising or developing programs: (1) good learning experiences incorporate reflection or debriefing by the learners; (2) good learning experiences are connected to learners' experiences so they perceive them as meaningful; (3) good learning experiences provide for cumulative reinforcement without boring repetition; and (4) good learning experiences are active; learners should apply knowledge and skills to the completion of competency-related tasks.

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