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Center for the Constitution at James Madison's Montpelier
Virginia Commission on Civics Education
Center for Civic Education

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON CIVICS EDUCATION

Evaluating Civics as a Subject

- Rebrand the whole subject of civics.
- Commission position paper on the urgency of the message "Commonwealth at Risk"

Improving Civics Curriculum Standards and Opportunities for Simulation Programs

- Reevaluate the 12th grade government curriculum.
- Work with the Virginia Department of Education (DOE) to develop an AP caliber civics course with a serious state component. Ensure VDOE has the resources for fee-based testing.
- Create a governor's school in civics that links to the new AP caliber civics course.
- Pilot school-based innovative programs including interdisciplinary, technological, and team-oriented (school, teachers & students) approaches.
- Find venues and means to support experimental programming (in partnership with local partner institutions).
- Create portfolio opportunities for simulation programs like mock trial/UN, We the People, Project Citizen, service-learning:
 - Showcase the Commission website
 - Identify and support local champions

Dealing with Complex (Controversial) Topics in the Civics Classroom

- Get the legislature to work the VDOE to develop appropriate standards for instruction around the discussion of controversial issues.
- Encourage thoughtful consideration of controversial/complex issues:
 - State-wide policy/GA Resolution
 - Superintendent Resolution

Linking Civics and Technology

- Look at current online games and encourage the development of more games.
- Follow up with the VDOE on a developmental database.

Improving Assessment

- Get greater investment in assessment to improve:
 - Higher-level thinking
 - Portfolio-based performance
 - Instruction (being reflective about the craft of teaching)

Improving Professional Development for Civics Teachers

- Work with the Virginia Board of Education to create a continuing education program for teachers focusing on Virginia.
- Explore incentives/funding for meaningful professional development opportunities for social studies teachers.
- Get state support for training teachers effectively in:
 - Student assessment including portfolio/authentic
 - Complex issues and ideas that have multiple and diverse perspectives

Creating Opportunities for Youth to Engage in Politics

- Hold a youth leadership summit for student government leaders.
- Bring politicians into the classroom.
- Civics Day Showcase (Sept.17)
 - Contest/competition
 - Scholarship

Full Recommendations Ungrouped

1. Rebrand the whole subject of civics.
2. Work with the Virginia Board of Education to create a continuing education program for teachers focusing on Virginia.
3. Reevaluate the 12th grade government curriculum.
4. Hold a youth leadership summit for student government leaders.
5. Work with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to develop an AP caliber civics course with a serious state component. Ensure VDOE has resources to do testing for fee-based testing.
6. Get the legislature that instructs the VDOE to develop appropriate standards for instruction around the discussion of controversial issues.
7. Bring politicians into the classroom.
8. Civics should be fun and we should look at current online games and encourage the development of more games.
9. Follow up with the VDOE on a developmental database.
10. Explore incentives/funding for meaningful professional development opportunities for social studies teachers.
11. Create a governor's school in civics that link to the new course.
12. Piloting of school-based innovative programs including interdisciplinary, technological, and team-oriented (school, teachers & students) approaches
13. Get state support for training teachers effectively in:
 - a. Student assessment including portfolio/authentic
 - b. Complex issues and ideas that have multiple and diverse perspectives
14. Get greater investment in assessment to improve:
 - a. Higher-level thinking
 - b. Portfolio-based performance
 - c. Instruction ("be"-ing reflective about the craft of teaching)
15. Encouragement of thoughtful consideration of controversial/complex issues:
 - a. State-wide policy/GA Resolution
 - b. Superintendent Resolution
 - c. Civics Day Showcase (Sept.17)
 - i. Contest/competition
 - ii. Scholarship
16. Find venues and means to support experimental programming (in partnership with local partner institutions)
17. Commission position paper on urgency of message "Commonwealth at Risk"
18. Create portfolio opportunities for simulation programs like mock trial/UN, We the People, Project Citizen, service-learning
 - a. Showcase on Commission website
 - b. Identify and support local champions