



***Bring it Home:* Engaging Families in Civic Teaching & Learning**

Utah PTA Advocacy Conference
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Presenter: Judi Hilman, Co-Facilitator
Utah Civic Learning Collaborative

An informal alliance of educators, nonprofits, policymakers, and academic partners dedicated to preparing youth for civic life.

UTAH CIVIC LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

FOCUS AREAS OR “BUCKETS”



**Constitutional
Literacy/Classroom
Instruction**



**Academic Service
Learning, Skill
Building, Simulations**



**Media Literacy &
Digital Citizenship**



**Character, School
Culture, Portrait of a
Graduate “Soft Skills”**



Check out the UEN's Constitution Hub!





PURPOSES of the UCLC



BUILD

Build on partnerships & innovations occurring in K-12.



SUPPORT

Help educators leverage research on best practices in civics & character education; curate curriculum content.



CONNECT

Connect nonprofits with classrooms to facilitate young peoples' lifelong engagement in civic life.

REPORT FINDINGS: A 3-WAY CONSENSUS ON ENGAGING PARENTS?



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Sutherland's Key Findings (June 2021)

Survey of Utahns 18 & >, including parents of children age 5-17 (n=600) + focus groups

- Civics education is a **top 3 priority** for subjects covered in K-12, along with math and English.
- A supermajority of teachers & parents want to restore “a robust civics education in our public schools.”
- Teachers & parents agree that the top 3 most important skills that graduates should have are: critical thinking, open-mindedness/acceptance, and responsibilities of being a citizen.
- Teachers & parents believe civics education should: begin in elementary school, last through high school, and be integrated into all academic subject areas.
- Testing is seen as less critical than transparency for parents in what is being taught in the educational system.

Laws and individual rights should be the focus of civics education, not activism.

Most Important Topics for Civics to Cover

		Notable Subgroup Differences
Laws and individual rights	48%	
Citizen responsibilities and expectations	37%	55+ (48%)
Tolerance, respect and acceptance of others	37%	
Historical events / context that shaped government	37%	55+ (40%), GOP (46%)
The powers and limits of government	37%	
Open-mindedness to different ideas and values	34%	Hisp (48%), Dems (43%), Female (41%)
Economics	32%	35-54 (40%)
History behind US system of government	32%	GOP (37%)
Objectively analyze issue and form judgement	30%	55+ (36%)
Diversity and culture	27%	Hisp/Black (40%), Dems (37%) 18-34 (34%)
Finding common ground and resolving differences	25%	
Constructive and productive civil debate	19%	
Comparing US system of government with other countries	18%	
Antiracism	17%	
Interpreting and analyzing information in the news	17%	
Carefully comparing and contrasting viewpoints	14%	
Activism	7%	Democrats (14%), 18-34 (10%)

BASE: ALL QUALIFIED RESPONDENTS (n=600)

Q300. Civics education can include many topics. Which of the following do you feel are most important for civics education to cover? Please choose up to 5 options.





Why the disconnect between educators' commitment to civics and Utahns' preparation for civic life? Theories:

1. Teachers overconfident about how well civics is taught?
2. Is there a retention problem?
3. Lack of emphasis in the dispositions that helps students care about civics?
4. Problem is not w/K-12: civics teaching is not reinforced in early adulthood?
5. Problem is not w/our education system at all, but with our civic culture...?

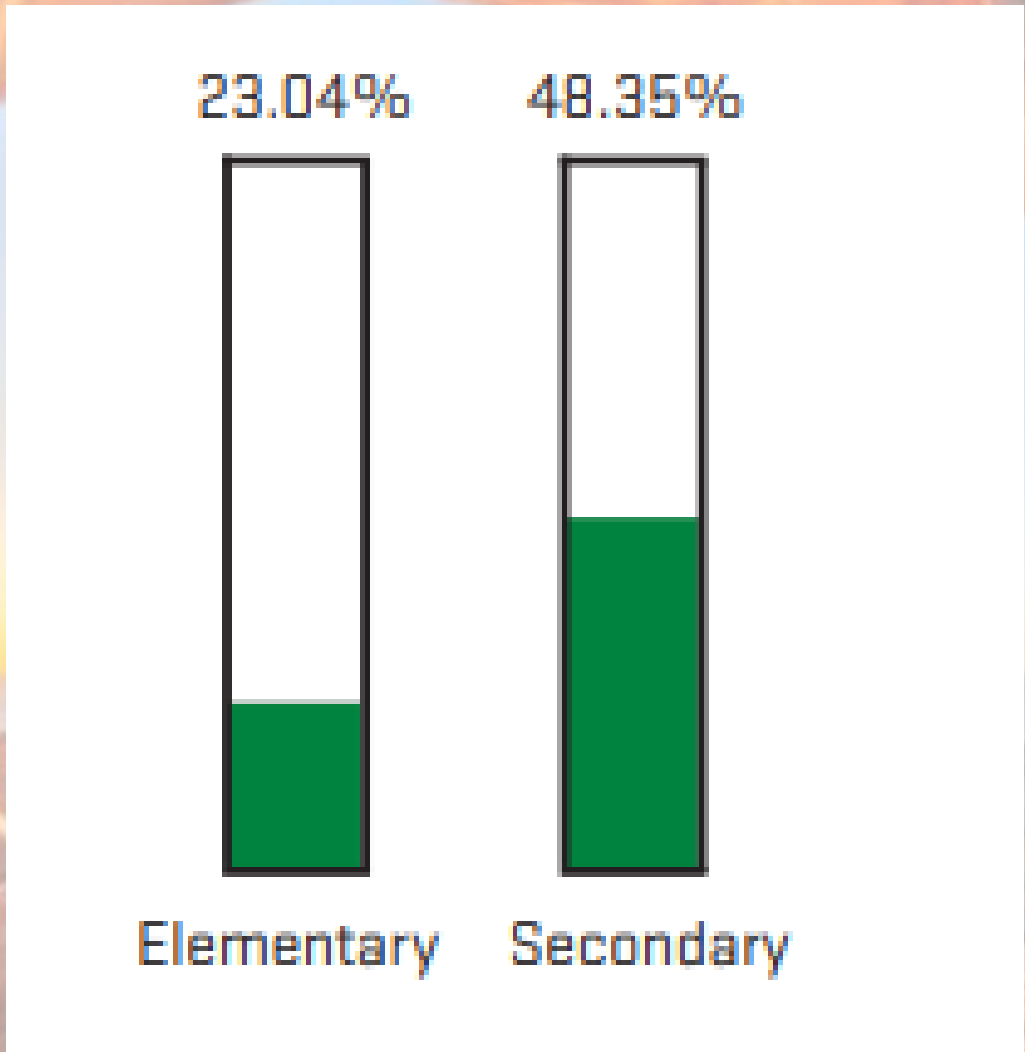


If commitment to civic life has no place at the dinner table or if partisan polarization sours citizens on the public square, it may be that no amount of civic instruction will save us.

...The solution lies not only with K-12 teachers but with the commitment each of us has to civil engagement.



Portion of Instructional Time Spent on Civics Education





Which Civic Skills & Dispositions...do you teach or facilitate?

	Elementary
Top Three	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Encouraging self-control and responsibility2. Encouraging truthfulness3. Engaging civilly with others, across differences
Bottom Three	<ol style="list-style-type: none">14. Deliberating on difficult topics15. Avoiding presentism (the tendency to judge the past by modern values and perspectives)*16. Diplomacy and working with adversaries

	Secondary
Top Three	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Thinking critically about information students encounter2. Distinguishing between reliable and unreliable sources3. Engaging civilly with others across differences, race, religion, political perspective, etc.
Bottom Three	<ol style="list-style-type: none">15. Diplomacy and working with adversaries16. Collaborating with others to bring about change17. Social justice and activism**



What most incentivizes you to include civics in your teaching?

Rank	4th & 5th Grade Teachers
1	I have a responsibility to prepare future voters
2	Required state or district standards
3	I enjoy teaching civics topics
4	My personal experience in civic activities
5	Teaching for standardized tests other than the required civics graduation test
6	My school asks me to prioritize civics education
7	My personal political values

Rank	Secondary Social Studies Teachers
1	I have a responsibility to prepare future voters
2	I enjoy teaching civics topics
3	Required state or district standards
4	My personal experience in civic activities
5	Required civics graduation test (this option not given to the elementary teachers)
6	My personal political values
7	My school asks me to prioritize civics education
8	Teaching for standardized tests other than the required civics graduation test



Utah Civic Learning Collaborative Key Findings

Survey of >400 teachers and administrators

- Teachers need support and guidance when it comes to addressing contentious issues facing their students and community.
- Teachers need help establishing trust and transparency with parents about what they are teaching and why.
- Elementary teachers struggle to find enough time to cover civics.
- Teachers want to adopt interdisciplinary approaches to teaching civics, but they need time and practical support to sustain these efforts.
- Media literacy and digital citizenship should be cultivated across all disciplines.
- Civic teaching needs to accommodate different learning needs and backgrounds. Civic teaching needs to adapt to different learning contexts.
- Teachers admit they need their own training in civic life.



UCLC: RECOMMENDATIONS by PROBLEM

PROBLEM	RECOMMENDED SOLUTION
Time constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage interdisciplinary approaches (ex: “Citizen Math”).• Civics-in-All: ALL grade levels and ALL academic subjects• Leverage HB273 Local Innovation Grants
Civics is controversial...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bring parents and families into the conversation re-how to teach civil dialogue• Support transparency with parents about what’s being taught and why• Professional development on how to facilitate discussion re-current events & sensitive topics
Academic Service Learning needs structural support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build on UCLC’s Directory of Academic Service Learning opportunities• Curate opportunities• Tie opportunities to core academic standards
How do we teach patriotism & respect for our Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address the “crisis of faith” in American institutions (Yuval Levin)• We already aim for a lifelong love of reading...why not a lifelong love of liberty?
Hone in on character, P of G	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highlight models of effective approaches to realizing the vision in Portrait of a Graduate.• Leverage Utah’s new Ethnic Studies requirement



GROWING THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN CIVICS EDUCATION

An informal alliance of educators, nonprofits, policymakers, and academic partners dedicated to preparing youth for civic life.

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BACK TO OUR BUCKETS...



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**Media Literacy &
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**Character, School
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Constitutional Literacy & Classroom Instruction

- Make use of NEW PARENTS GUIDES!



- Take advantage of transparency around what's being taught

Academic Service Learning & Civic Skill Building



- Watch for the new **DIRECTORY of ACADEMIC SERVICE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES** (see student/parent interface)
- Push for Whole-Classroom approaches



Media Literacy & Digital Citizenship



Media Literacy & Digital Citizenship



- Say NO to this.
- Keep eye out for more digital wellness training
- Check out [#UseTech4Good](#)

Character, School Culture, Portrait of a Graduate “Soft Skills”

The 5 Es for Families

EXPECT

Communicate and support high expectations.

Guide your child in learning new knowledge and skills while nurturing their interests, future plans, goals, growth opportunities, and resilience.

ESTABLISH

Set goals and make plans.

Support your child's education by leading conversations about their future goals and planning for how to attain those goals.

ENGAGE

Provide feedback and monitor progress towards goals.

Discuss your child's ongoing progress towards achieving their goals and help them generate ideas of how to overcome challenges as needed.

EMPOWER

Build upon strengths to advance learning.

Assist your child in using their strengths to become a self-directed learner who is able to navigate and solve problems independently.

ENCOURAGE

Bring awareness of needs and ask for support.

Help your child to express their educational needs and wants by expressing when and how they need additional support.





Resources for the 5 Es





Portrait of a Graduate “Soft Skills” Start, and never end, at home...

- Seek to model civil dialogue and discussion about sensitive or divisive topics at the dinner table

- **Resources**

BridgeUSA.org: high school chapters focus on teaching students how to engage in political discussion and have productive conversations on hard topics through empathy and open-discussion.



Startswithus.org: a movement to foster curiosity, compassion, and courage as daily habits to overcome the polarization, blind tribalism, and dehumanization threatening the social fabric of our communities.





DISCUSSION



JOIN THE UCLC

Parents are warmly
welcome!

