



CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

TOM TORLAKSON

STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

August 6, 2014

Dear County and District Superintendents and Charter School Administrators:

K–12 CIVIC LEARNING IN CALIFORNIA BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

I am pleased to announce the release of *Revitalizing K–12 Civic Learning in California: A Blueprint for Action*. This report, prepared by the California Task Force on K–12 Civic Learning following a year of deliberations and conversations around the state, offers recommendations to revitalize civic education in California schools.

As Benjamin Franklin said, “Democracy must be learned by each generation.” California’s schools play a key role in imparting the necessary civic skills and knowledge to prepare our students for effective citizenship and secure our democracy.

Civic literacy is also one of the 21st century interdisciplinary themes promoted by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21). In 2013, the California Department of Education joined this national network of 18 states, designed to teach every student real-world skills to meet the needs of a competitive global economy.

In order to help California’s schools improve civic education, I joined California Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye to establish the California Task Force on K–12 Civic Learning. The task force included leaders of statewide advocacy groups for parents, teachers, school administrators, school boards, labor, and business. Sacramento County Superintendent David Gordon and Justice Judith McConnell, the Administrative Presiding Justice, Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, served as the task force’s co-chairs. An advisory panel of civic education experts and classroom teachers also assisted the task force.

The task force was charged with three goals. First, assess the civic learning landscape in California. Second, bring definition to the knowledge, skills, and dispositions students need to be informed and involved citizens and community members. Third, prepare a blueprint that addresses recommendations in four areas (Curriculum, Instructional Practices, and Resources; Professional Learning; Community and Business Partnerships; and Student Assessment and School Accountability) to ensure that all California students gain the civic skills needed to succeed in college, career, and civic life.

The *Blueprint* presents the task force’s findings in these areas. The recommendations are designed to ensure that schools integrate high-quality civic learning practices starting in elementary school. Because civics provides opportunities for students to

August 6, 2014
Page 2

analyze a problem, evaluate evidence, and communicate conclusions both orally and in writing, it plays an important role in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Integrating civic learning ensures all students—including those from low-income families, under-served ethnicities, English language learners, and children with special needs—are prepared for college, career, and participation in civic life.

Involvement can take many forms and there are numerous ways in which students, families, and communities can make a difference. The health of our democracy depends on our schools producing informed voters and community members who value the importance of civic life.

As voting is one of our key rights and responsibilities, I am pleased to see that more than 300 schools have already signed up for the free [MyVote California Student Mock Election](#), co-sponsored by Secretary of State Debra Bowen and me, on October 28, 2014. I encourage all California schools to register.

This report was not written to sit on a shelf. I encourage you to review the report and consider both its findings and its recommendations to improve the quality and level of civic education in California public schools. We need to do so for the future of our students and our democracy.

If you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact Stacey Greer, Education Programs Consultant, Literacy, History, and Arts Leadership Office, by phone at 916-323-5818 or by e-mail at sgreer@cde.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Tom Torlakson