

# SOCIAL STUDIES AND THE GOOD CITIZEN: AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN SOCIAL STUDIES

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## *Historic Overview of Citizenship Education*

Historically since the time of the Greeks and Romans one of the key missions of education has always been the cultivation of the good citizen (Guttek 1972). In the United States the earliest argument for universal education was put forth by Thomas Jefferson. His "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge" was introduced in 1779 to the Virginia legislature. The bill was never passed but it set the justification for public education in a republic.

According to Jefferson, education had a dual function: civic and political. Whereas most educators of the day believed that education had a religious function, Jefferson proposed a civic function to educate a literate citizen. He believed that the government had a responsibility to educate all its citizens and the talented would continue through the university. His educational system would provide a core curriculum for all children and an advanced curriculum for the talented. These gifted few would go on to leadership roles in the government. Therefore, Jefferson's system was both egalitarian and hierarchical in that it called for an aristocracy of the intellect (Guttek, 1972).

George Washington articulated his sentiments about education in his Eighth Annual Message to Congress on December 7, 1796. President Washington stated it was vital for the republic to have its future leaders cognizant of the science of government (Cummins, 1948).

Citizenship education has always been a goal of social education. In 1892, Hannan Davison, a history teacher from California, stated:

Unless a considerable amount of civil government, politics, and diplomacy is combined with the study of history, its incidents, heroes, and wars may be very interesting and valuable, but they are only the material for the study of history. If the making of intelligent citizens is one chief aim of our schools, our national history and government ought to occupy no secondary place in our courses of study, and the candidate for admission to college should have

compassed all their elementary facts and principles (Davidson 1892, p. vii).

As early as 1800s, educators made a link between teaching national history and citizenship education. History gave students examples of good citizens such as the courage of the soldiers at Valley Forge or the brilliance of the founding fathers in framing the U.S. Constitution.

Citizenship education became the primary purpose of social education in 1916 with the publication of the National Education Association's Committee on Social Studies. Two capstone courses were created: *Community Civics* in eighth grade and *Problems of Democracy* in twelfth grade. These courses were concerned social issues and informal activities of daily life. These lessons challenged the students to take positive political action to solve modern local problems such as sanitation in large cities or charitable activities that involved helping neighbors in distress (Committee on Social Studies, 1916). The legacy of the report can be seen in the modern service learning paradigm which is similar to the projects outline in community civics curriculum documents (Dunn, 1915). Arthur William Dunn was a pioneer in the field of citizenship education and the developer of Community Civics which he put into practice as early as 1906 (Nieboer 2000). According to Dunn (1915):

Civics is training in habits of good citizenship, rather than merely a study of government forms and machinery. The broadening field of instruction in civics finds its limits only in the ever-widening content of the term "citizenship."

There are, in general four aims in teaching civics:

To help the child realize that he is a responsible and helpful member of several social groups. To awaken and stimulates motives that will lead to the establishment of habits of order, cleanliness, cheerful cooperation, sympathetic service, and obedience to law. To emphasize the intimate and reciprocal relation between the welfare of the individual and the welfare of home and society. To develop political intelligence and prepare the young citizen for its exercise" (Dunn 1915, p. 8).

Dunn (1915), believed that the best preparation for democracy was to experience it rather than read about it. Accordingly the curricula should be a microcosm of life in the society and not some words on a page to be memorized. He was suggesting an experiential course of study which would lead to positive citizen action in order to solve social and political problems at the grassroots level of democracy.

## *What are the Qualities of a Good Citizen?*

Frank Abbott Magruder (1917), the author of the leading American Government text which has been in print since 1917, suggested that a citizen was defined as all the men, women, and children living in a state (Magruder 1917). The 2003 edition of *Magruder's American Government* defined citizen as "...a member of a state or nation who owes allegiance to it by birth or naturalization and is entitled to civil rights" (McClenaglan 2003, p. 808). So a citizen has allegiance to a nation and certain rights as well as responsibilities.

According to a recently published American Civics text a citizen is an individual who is entitled to protection by the government in exchange for allegiance. That person also has privileges, responsibilities and rights that go along with citizenship (Barry, 2003). The duties of citizenship include paying taxes, serving on juries, defending the country, obeying all laws, and attending school. The responsibilities of citizenship are protecting each others rights, making a better society, and voting. Citizenship is the socio-legal link between the government and the individual. It necessitates duties and responsibilities to be met.

John Patrick (1999), a professor of social studies education, articulates that the responsibilities of good citizens include paying taxes, obeying laws, serving in the armed forces, showing loyalty to the state and community. In addition he also believes that criticism of certain policies, attempts to improve the quality of life, and political action when the ideals and realities of democracy are threatened. Patrick considers these dispositions qualities of proactive citizens (Patrick 1999). Aristotle suggested that a good citizen obeyed the laws, was patriotic and pursued their roles in society the best they could (Social Science Consortium, 1996).

## *Teaching Citizenship*

Students need a conceptual understanding of their role as citizens. However, they also need to develop civic skills through participatory examples of the democratic process- i.e. learning by doing. A great political leader once said that Democracy cannot be taught it must be experienced.

Arthur William Dunn in his Civic Education Report in 1915 first applied experiential education to civics in his Indianapolis program, and documented in his report to the federal government . In that document Dunn related the Civic education program in the Indianapolis elementary

schools and concluded that:

The growth of the qualities and habits which it is the chief purpose of civic education to cultivate relations is observable. The growing interest of children in their community relations; the assumption of an increasing measure of responsibility for welfare of the community-home, school, neighborhood, or city; the power to interpret knowledge in terms of community interest; the development of civic initiative and of judgment; the growth of effective cooperation; the increasing respect for law which is the expression of a common interest-such as traits and habits as these are being developed more or less obviously under the eyes of teachers and parents. Teachers not only observe the change in conduct in the school, but say that it is no uncommon thing for parents to inquire what is being done in schools to cause the transformation observable in the conduct of the children at home (Dunn 1915, p. 34-35).

Dunn's students went into the community to make the neighborhoods better. They cleaned up litter and beautified vacant lots. One class even had a campaign against tobacco because they believed it was unhealthy (Dunn, 1915). His ideas are a powerful reminder of civic action for community improvement. It might be said that his ideas of community involvement were the forerunner of service learning. Dunn advocated a experiential curriculum in civic education. He believed that good citizenship was cultivated, not by instruction, lectures or discussions but by action. It is by doing that interest is inspired, judgment developed, and initiative stimulated (Nieboer, 2000).

## *Classroom Activities for Participation*

### *Mock Trials*

One of the most important duties of a citizen is serving on a jury. Yet most individuals do not to serve and learn little about the court procedures until they are called upon to be part of the process. One way to counter this negative attitude is to have students experience the courtroom in the classroom by means of a mock trial.

The development of a mock trail can be very difficult and controversial if an actual case is used. The most expedient way to start is to utilize a fairy tale. Most children's stories in their original context actually contain a large amount of crimes and most students are familiar with the stories.

A good case for a mock trial would be "Jack and the Beanstock." It is a very simple story which all students know. The teachers could read the

story to the class or show a video or cartoon on the story. This is good because then the class could discuss the crimes committed in the tale such as “Breaking and Entering,” and “Murder.” Students should be assigned roles from the story. Prior to the start of the activity the students should study court procedures from their textbooks. Most government, and civics books have a chapter or two on courtroom procedures (see Appendix: Judicial Procedure Worksheet). Also school media libraries contain some excellent videos which could augment the lessons.

After the judicial procedures are studied the trial can begin. The first thing to do is to assign parts to students. They are usually eager to have a major role in the drama. It is a good idea to let the students who think they might want to be lawyers to take those roles. Someone who is a real actor should be selected as the defendant. Students who are absent or seem disinterested could be jury members.

The room can be configured to look like a courtroom, and all legal actions can be taken. The suspect can be mirandized and placed under arrest by school security. The trial can take about five class periods.

Day One: the trial begins with the opening statements and the beginning of the prosecutions.

Day Two: the prosecution continues until finished.

Day Three: the defense begins its’ case.

Day Four: the defense finishes and closing statements.

Day Five: the jury reaches a verdict.

To add an element of realism, two students can be assigned as reporter, and the trial could be written up like an actual case in the school newspaper thus having a cross-curriculum connection with the Language Arts class. After the trial is over the students could write a paper which addresses their thoughts about judicial procedures, and the role of citizens. Most students will develop a sense of the importance of being part of the system (Mraz 2000, 1-2).

### *Developing a Society*

Since the advent of reality television shows such as “Survivor,” this activity seems popular with students. The object of the exercise is to develop a survival strategy for the class. The exercise begins by assuming

that the class transported to an Island in the Pacific Ocean. The rules are simple: how do we survive and all we have are the clothes on our backs and what is in the class room. Allow the students to develop a primitive "Lord of the Flies" Society. After some argument they will select a leader and write down some rules. This is the beginnings of the development of a government. Within a short while they will see the difficulty in framing an ordered society with the rule of law.

## *Conclusions*

A wise political leader once said: "You cannot teach democracy it must be experienced!" Indeed that seems to be the case, by developing interactive strategies students will not only learn democracy they will experience it. One of the primary goals of social studies is to help students comprehend the means, modes, and processes of representative government. It is imperative that social studies educators provide their students with these processes in an activity rich environment.

## Appendix

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### Judicial Procedure Worksheet

*Directions: Use your text or internet to define terms.*

1. Officers of the Court
  - a. Baliff
  - b. Court Clerk
  - c. Court Recorder
  - d. Attorneys
  - e. Judge
2. Plaintiff
3. Defendant
4. Jury Trial
  - a. Jury
  - b. Jury Selection
  - c. Voir Dire
5. Trial Procedure
  - a. Opening Statements (Prosecution/Defense)
    - i. Witnesses for the Prosecution
      1. Evidence
        - a. Testimony
        - b. Direct Testimony
        - c. Physical Evidence
        - d. Cross Examination
        - e. Redirect
        - f. Recross
      - ii. Witness for the Defense
        1. Evidence
          - g. Testimony
          - h. Direct Testimony
          - i. Physical Evidence
          - j. Cross Examination
          - k. Redirect
          - l. Recross
6. Closing Arguments
7. Jury Deliberation
8. Verdict
9. Sentencing (Mraz 2)

### II. Jack and the Beanstock Roles

Court Reporter	Prosecution Attorney
Baliff	Gaint's wife
Judge	Sheriff
Jack	Jury Foreman
Jack's Mother	Defense Team
Court Clerk	Prosecution Team
Expert Witnesses	Reporters
Defense Attorney	Jury Members (Mraz 3)

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