



Connecting Veterans and Active Service Personnel to Social Studies Classrooms

Connections to Mason Curriculum

The most obvious connection for inviting a veteran or active service member into a social studies classroom is to speak to students about days of remembrance, a specific war or the life of a soldier. However, there are many places in our curriculum where local veterans can be an excellent resource. While Veterans' Day and Memorial Day are obvious classroom connections, we encourage teachers to consider opportunities like those listed below and to find and share additional connections to the curriculum;

1. American Government : local veteran organizations and the county Veterans Service Commission actively lobby legislators and the Governor's office on a variety of veterans issues. Leaders in these organizations can share the realities of lobbying and taking part in campaigns.
(12th grade Citizenship Benchmark A, #1 ; 12th Grade Government Benchmark C, #2)
2. In the 8th grade American History course, students study about patriotic symbols, the adoption and revisions to the American flag, and the adoption of The Star Spangled Banner. This provides an opportunity to invite the color guard from a veterans organization to speak with students about flag etiquette and conventions related to the flag, national anthem, memorials, days of remembrance and patriotic symbols. These are not formally in the curriculum after 2nd grade.
3. High school American History students could study the role of the U.S. military played in integrating races, providing opportunities for women, etc.
4. Often, students hear one story and generalize about many people's experiences from that. Consider inviting in a panel of veterans who represent different service branches, different service ranks, and different wars to provide a larger context for understanding the soldier's experience in American history. For instance, a veteran of the Vietnam War and a veteran of a post-Vietnam conflict could describe different public responses when they returned home.
5. Current Issues courses: veterans of modern conflicts find that part of the stated mission abroad is to "win the hearts and minds" of the people in the country(ies) where they served. Therefore, some veterans may have significant training in the culture, geography, and history of those countries or region.
6. Law and Criminal Justice: veterans who served as MP's may be able to share the similarities and differences between the UCMJ and the Ohio Revised Code.
7. Psychology: The Veteran's Service Commission and the regional Veteran's Hospitals may be able to provide professional trained in the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and traumatic brain injuries to discuss the treatment of those conditions. The psychological reconditioning of boot camp and "psy-ops" or psychological operations as a military tactic are also topics which trained veterans may be able to offer personal insights.
8. Your local Veteran's Memorial offers learning opportunities related to moderns wars, Veteran's Day, Memorial Day, and local history.

Tips for Working with Guest Speakers

The most successful guest presentations are a result of effective planning and communication. Consider the following suggestions:

TIPS FOR THE TEACHER

The teacher needs to effectively communicate the goals of the day's lesson with the speaker so s/he may prepare for the event. The speaker does not have the benefit of knowing what specific content preceded or will follow in the days after his/her talk, so it is important to communicate the context for the lesson.

Consider co-teaching the lesson with the veteran to introduce and provide context for the discussion, provide maps, timelines, etc. A brief meeting or a short series of e-mails may be all that is necessary to coordinate the components of the lesson and the timing/order of activities. This will allow you to draw from your professional strengths and frees the veteran up to focus on his/her discussion. We, as teachers, often forget that a classroom full of students can be intimidating for novice speakers.

When working with veterans who have classroom experience or who present professionally, try to provide additional latitude for the speaker to plan the activities that enhance his or her discussion.

When contacting guest speakers, be sure to anticipate the types of questions outlined below in the guest speaker section and be proactive by providing information. Several days prior to the lesson, contact the speaker and provide specific information about parking, entering the building, finding your classroom, class times, and when applicable, options for lunch. On the day of the lesson, provide a seating chart, or a better option may be to provide students with name tents or name tags to assist the guest speaker.

It is important for teachers to be aware of the cultural backgrounds of students in their classes, especially when addressing the subject of war. While the veteran will have a perspective on the conflict, students may have emigrated from those nations with whom American was at war and may also have perspectives and deep emotional responses to comments made in class. Students should have time to prepare for discussion of those topics and an outlet for expressing perspectives and feelings.

TIPS FOR THE GUEST SPEAKER

You bring to the classroom a valuable set of personal experiences that will help students understand a time and place and develop a personal connection (you) to what may seem distant in the history book. Depending on where your visit falls in a unit of study, the students may have some background on the events, or they may not have a significant background of the events. It is advisable to ask the teacher during your planning stage how your talk fits into the unit of study. It is always helpful to provide students a context for the discussion by referring to a timeline (which the teacher can provide), discussion of related major events of the time that students may recognize from their studies.

Often, speakers will ask students questions about historical events from the time period of their service and become frustrated that the students don't know answers or don't choose to answer. This may be a result of a typical reaction for students to remain quiet until a trust is built with the person presenting. Other times, it is a result of student not having the deep background in the topic, and still other times speakers forget that details etched into their memory by living the events or time period are not details which they have encountered in a survey course. Most of the courses required by the Ohio Department of Education are survey courses, meaning that students study a large period of time in one trimester and are not able to study individual events in great depth. Nearly every teacher you

encounter is not happy with that situation and would prefer to be able to engage students in more extensive look at key events.

Some useful tips when working with students in grade 7-12:

- Students may be very interested in your presentation but still have an outward appearance of being bored or tired. While not preferable, this is not atypical for teens and may have nothing to do with your presentation style. However, presentations that involve students beyond being passive listeners usually are most successful.
- Ask the teacher to provide a seating chart with clearly readable names. Being able to use student names helps build the connection between the speaker and the students.
- Students are often reluctant to answer factual questions (“Who can tell me the name of the Secretary of Defense during the Vietnam War”) with guest speakers. They all have been embarrassed in classroom situations before and most generally won’t risk answering if they have not had a chance to build trust with the presenter. Depending on whether you were asked to speak at the beginning of a unit of study or at the end, students may not have even read about the topic you are presenting. Many speakers find that they have more success with “open-ended” questions such as “What do you know about the way the Vietnam War was fought” than close-ended questions like “Tell me the term for the strategy the Viet Cong used in the war.”
- Recognize that teens are just now beginning to become politically aware and may not have a ready reference to even events that took place in their lifetime. For instance, unless the students watches the history Channel or the family has a personal connection, they may not even have a clear memory or understanding of the start of the War on Terror (2002) since they were only 7 or 8 years old at that time. The purpose of the course is to help them build an understanding and to think about those events as more than news stories they see in passing. When making references to concepts or events, understand that what has been a clear connection for you may not have meaning for them, yet.
- While students can learn about events and trends from a book or class, even those from 10 years ago seem as remote sometimes as the American Revolution. You bring an invaluable resource to the classroom as a guest speaker. You can convey the sights, smells, feelings, and understanding that only one who has lived the event can experience. Perhaps the greatest value of your classroom visit is the opportunity to personalize history and to help students see that the events and people were very real. This helps them build empathy which is core to taking history from something remote to something personal and real.
- Sample questions to ask the teacher when you are invited into the classroom:
 - Tell me more about this unit of study. How does this lesson fit into the unit?
 - What background will the students have about the historical events leading up to the topic of my talk? Can you send me a copy of the chapter or resources they are reading?
 - Will you be able to help locate and project maps or images that accompany my topic? (be specific) Would you be able to scan and project images that I have in hard copy? Would you be able to project a PowerPoint I create or play music clips and videoclips from the Internet?
 - Are you primarily looking for an account of personal experiences I had as a soldier and my return to civilian life, or would you like me to speak about specific military tactics and strategies during the war/conflict, veterans’ issues, or some other topics? Should I place my experiences in context of the larger war and events of the time, or focus primarily on my experience?
 - Tell me about the age level of the students and expectations for level of detail I share.
 - Are there any special situations about your classroom or students that I should consider?
 - Can you please provide me a seating chart, school map, instructions for parking, lunch (if applicable) and a note about the best time to arrive and enter the building?

Local Speaker's Bureau

Name	Service Branch	Service Rank	Topics which this veteran feels comfortable presenting
<i>John Doe</i>	<i>Army</i>	<i>Master Sergeant</i>	<i>Operation Desert Storm, veterans issues, life in the infantry</i>

Contact your local veterans organizations

Educational Programs and Resources

- **U.S. Veterans' Administration:** http://www1.va.gov/opa/publications/celebrate_american_freedom.asp
A variety of resources with information on official interpretations of ceremonies and procedures related to veterans, days of remembrance and the flag. Examples are the story of Taps, gun salutes, flag folding and flag display.
- **American Legion of Ohio:** http://www.ohiolegion.com/pages_other/programs.htm

Scholarship Program: Since 1971 The Ohio American Legion has awarded scholarships to deserving students to assist them with the ever increasing costs associated with higher education. Any accredited institution of higher learning with a program of education with a vocational objective qualifies. Awards of at least \$2,000 have been made by Selection Committees in the recent past, but the quantity and amount of awards is dependent upon annual fund earnings.

ELIGIBILITY Once only available to high school seniors, The Ohio American Legion Scholarship awards are now also provided to Legionnaires, direct descendants of Legionnaires, direct descendants of deceased Legionnaires, and/or surviving spouses or children of deceased U. S. military persons who died on active duty or of injuries received on active duty.

Verification of death, disability, descendency, and Post affiliation are Ohio American Legion constitutional requirements. Application: <http://www.ohiolegion.com/scholarships/application.htm>

THE AMERICAN LEGION BUCKEYE BOYS STATE: A practical application of Ohio government conducted for 1200 young men who have just completed their junior year in high school. All participants are encouraged to run for elective office or seek appointed political positions during the nine-day mock government program. Issues and problems of today are discussed, debated, and voted upon during the governmental sessions.

THE AMERICANISM AND GOVERNMENT TEST PROGRAM: An opportunity for the high school student to evaluate himself, or herself, in American government and history through this statewide test program. Over 90,000 students participate annually in this project, which is jointly sponsored by The American Legion Auxiliary.

FLAG EDUCATION: A program in which The American Legion provides schools, institutions, civic and youth groups with information and flags for ceremonial, educational, and display purposes. Many publications regarding the proper display of the Flag of the United States are available upon request.

AMERICAN LEGION HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL CONTEST High School students from around Ohio are afforded the opportunity to gain financial awards for their education by participating in the American Legion High School Oratorical Contest, a public speaking contest which focuses on the United States Constitution.

Over \$2,000 in financial awards are presented to four (4) students in the state finals of the Oratorical Contest, which is held at Ohio Dominican College in Columbus.

The Ohio State winner advances into National Oratorical competition which is held in Indianapolis, Indiana for a chance at a \$18,000 scholarship for first place, \$16,000 second place and \$14,000 for third place.

Buckeye Girls State: <http://www.buckeyegirlsstate.com/about/>

Buckeye Girls State is the name given to Ohio's Girls State program, which was designed to educate Ohio's young women in the duties, privileges, rights and responsibilities of good citizenship. By getting involved in

the process, Delegates can learn more about City, County and State Government in one week than they will learn in an entire semester of high school.

The Ohio American Legion Auxiliary has been a proud sponsor of Buckeye Girls State for the past sixty-three years. The program has been honored by such organizations as Freedom's Foundation at Valley Forge and the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Other Veteran Organizations

- **Disabled American Veterans:** <http://www.dav.org/>

Annually, the DAV represents more than 200,000 veterans and their dependents with claims for benefits from the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) and [Department of Defense](#).

The DAV's [1.2 million members](#) provide grassroots advocacy and services in communities nationwide. From educating lawmakers and the public about important issues to supporting services and [legislation](#) to help disabled veterans — the DAV is there to promote its message of hope to all who have served and sacrificed.

- **Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)**

Resources for Educators <http://www.vfw.org/index.cfm?fa=cmtylevel&did=1826>

The VFW's citizenship education program arms teachers with school activities and resources designed to teach America's youth about patriotism and service and about the contributions of our nation's veterans in preserving peace. The VFW's Citizenship Education for School and Youth Groups Curriculum Guide has lesson plans on patriotism, the meaning of patriotic holidays such as Veterans Day and Memorial Day and U.S. flag history and customs. The VFW also works closely with the Library of Congress and local VFW Posts in encouraging participation in the library's Veterans' Oral History program in which veterans visit school classrooms and talk about their military experiences and educate young Americans on citizenship and patriotism

- **Honor Flight:** <http://www.honorflight.org/>

Honor Flight Network is a non-profit organization created solely to honor America's veterans for all their sacrifices. We transport our heroes to Washington, D.C. to visit and reflect at **their** memorials. Top priority is given to the senior veterans – World War II survivors, along with those other veterans who may be terminally ill.

- **Military Order of the Purple Heart -** <http://www.purpleheart.org/Search/zip.asp>

- **Veterans Service Commission of Warren County:** <http://www.warrencountyveterans.com/services.htm>

The Role of the Veterans Service Commission is to oversee the operation of the Veterans' Office; to provide temporary financial assistance to veterans, spouses, dependent children and surviving spouses; and to assist veterans in obtaining earned benefits from federal, state, and local levels of government.

- **Ohio Office of Veterans' Affairs:** <http://dvs.ohio.gov/>

- **Defense POW/MIA Office:** <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/>

- **The Virtual Wall Vietnam Veterans Memorial:** <http://www.virtualwall.org/>

Teaching Resources related to Civic Education, Flag Etiquette and Veterans in the Classroom

- **Flag Etiquette:** <http://www.cvsflags.com/etiquette.cfm>
- **VA Clarifies Policy on Flag-Folding Recitations:** <http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1406>
- A key clarification is that volunteer honor guards may, upon request, read the “13 folds” recitation which includes religious references in 6 of the 13 statements, but volunteer honor guards will accept requests for recitations that reflect any or no religious traditions, on an equal basis. The recitation(s) must be provided by the family requesting the recitation.
- **History Channel Resources for “Bring a Vet To School Day”-** <http://www.history.com/topics/take-a-vet>
This web site offers suggestions for working with veterans in the classroom, forms, etc.
- **Veterans History Project:** <http://www.loc.gov/vets/>
The Veterans History Project of the American Folklife Center collects, preserves, and makes accessible the personal accounts of American war veterans so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand the realities of war.
- **Veterans Day and memorial Day FAQ- Source: U.S. Veteran’s Administration**
http://www1.va.gov/opa/vetsday/vetday_faq.asp
- **Publications of the American Legion**
The American Legion publishes flag literature and makes it available through the Emblem Sales Division, PO Box 1050, Indianapolis, IN 46206 or through its Web site at <http://emblem.legion.org>.

Let’s Be Right on Flag Etiquette (755.200) – Contains Flag Code and American Legion interpretations of proper flag etiquette in situations not specifically covered by the law. Cost is \$1 per copy or \$80 per 100 copies, plus shipping.

Flag Code (755.201) – Illustrates and describes the correct way to display our country’s flag. Cost is 20 cents each or \$18 per 100 copies, or \$150 per 1,000 copies, plus shipping.

For Which It Stands DVD (755.400) – A 20-minute video with interactive programs and a teacher’s guide designed to help grades 5-9 meet state mandates for required flag education. Cost is \$9.95 each, plus shipping.

- **Vietnam: Echoes from the Wall** – Teacher’s Guide. Located at MMS library...PRO 959.704 VIE
- **Patriotism in a Post-9/11 World** – NCSS: <http://www.socialstudies.org/resources/moments>
- **Article: Should Social Studies Be Patriotic?** Social Education, v73 n7 p316-320 Nov-Dec 2009
http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=EJ864090&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EJ864090In November of 2001, less than two months after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, Nebraska's state board of education approved a patriotism bill specifying content for the high school social studies curriculum in accordance with the state's 1949 statute--the Nebraska Americanism law. Nebraska was not alone. Within a few months, more than two dozen state legislatures introduced new bills or resurrected old ones aimed at either encouraging or mandating patriotic exercises for all students in schools. Seventeen states enacted new pledge laws or amended policies in the 2002-2003 legislative sessions alone. Since then more than a dozen additional states have signed

on as well. Thirty-five states now require the pledge to be recited daily during the school day. Across the country, state legislatures and even the federal Department of Education have aimed policies at recapturing what many citizens see as a lost sense of pride in America. What it means to be patriotic, however, is a matter of considerable debate. Some believe that patriotism requires near-absolute loyalty to government leaders and policies. Others see patriotism as commitment not to the government, but rather to "ideals": democratic ideals such as equality, compassion, and justice. Still others advocate a healthy skepticism toward governmental actions in general, but prefer to close the ranks during times of war or national crisis. Indeed, there are as many ways to express commitment to country as there are ways to show commitment to loved ones or friends. Nowhere are the debates around the various visions of patriotism more pointed, more protracted, and more consequential than in schools. In this article, the author discusses whether and how to teach patriotism as part of social studies education. (Contains 1 table and 12 notes.)

Source: ERIC – Educational Resources Information Center:

http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=EJ864090&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EJ864090

- **NCSS Position Statement: Creating Effective Citizens :**

<http://www.socialstudies.org/positions/effectivecitizens>

- Includes: Learning activities extend beyond the school and invite parents and the community to participate and work with students.
- Civic knowledge, skills, and values are taught explicitly and systematically at every grade level. School and classroom management and culture exemplify and demonstrate core democratic values.
- All students are provided with instruction on the people, history, and traditions that have shaped our local communities, our nation, and the world.

- **NCSS Position Statement: Preparing Citizens for a Global Community:**

<http://www.socialstudies.org/positions/global>

- **NCSS Position Statement: Service-Learning: An Essential Component of Citizenship Education:**

<http://www.socialstudies.org/positions/servicelearning>

Veterans Administration Guidelines for Display, Disposal, and Folding of the American Flag

Source: U.S. Veterans' Administration: <http://www1.va.gov>

Folding the Flag

(a) Fold the lower striped section of the flag over the blue field.

(b) Folded edge is then folded over to meet the open edge.

(c) A triangular fold is then started by bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to the open edge.

(d) Outer point is then turned inward parallel with the open edge to form a second triangle.

(e) Triangular folding is continued until the entire length of the flag is folded in the triangular shape with only the blue field visible.

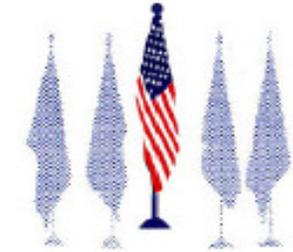
When the U.S. flag is no longer in suitable condition for display, it should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning. Many Veterans groups perform this service with dignified, respectful flag retirement ceremonies.

"Honoring all who served"

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Source: U.S. Veterans' Administration

- **Flag Etiquette:** <http://www.cvsflags.com/etiquette.cfm>
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- A key clarification is that volunteer honor guards may, upon request, read the “13 folds” recitation which includes religious references in 6 of the 13 statements, but volunteer honor guards will accept requests for recitations that reflect any or no religious traditions, on an equal basis. The recitation(s) must be provided by the family requesting the recitation.

	<p>When carried in procession with other flags, the U.S. flag should be either on the marching right (the flag's right) or to the front and center of the flag line. When displayed on a float in a parade, the flag should be hung from a staff or suspended so it falls free. It should not be draped over a vehicle.</p>
	<p>When displayed with another flag against a wall from crossed staffs, the U.S. flag should be on its own right (left to a person facing the wall) and its staff should be in front of the other flag's staff.</p>
	<p>In a group of flags displayed from staffs, the U.S. flag should be at the center and the highest point.</p>
	<p>When the U.S. flag is displayed other than from a staff, it should be displayed flat, or suspended so that its folds fall free. When displayed over a street, place the union so it faces north or east, depending upon the direction of the street.</p>
	<p>When the U.S. flag is displayed from a staff projecting from a building, the union of the flag should be placed at the peak of the staff unless the flag is at half staff. When suspended from a rope extending from the building on a pole, the flag should be hoisted out, union first from the building.</p>
	<p>When flags of states, cities or organizations are flown on the same staff, the U.S. flag must be at the top (except during church services conducted at sea by Navy chaplains).</p>

Source: U.S. Veterans' Administration



HOW TO CONTACT VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Veterans service organizations are groups of Veterans that come together to promote and support Veterans' issues. Many organizations consist of members that share a common experience, such as those that served in the same military unit or period of war. The following is a list of organizations that serve on the Veterans Day National Committee. Many of these groups have chapters throughout the country with Veterans who can share their experiences with younger generations.



The Paralyzed Veterans of America: 801 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006; (202) 872-1300; www.pva.org.



Legion of Valor of the USA, Inc: 4706 Calle Reina, Santa Barbara, CA 93110-2018; (805) 692-2244; www.legionofvalor.com/.



The Military Order of the World Wars: 435 North Lee St., Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 683-4911; www.militaryorder.net/.



The Retired Enlisted Association: 1111 S. Abilene Court, Aurora, CO 80012; 1-800-338-9337; www.trea.org/.



Congressional Medal of Honor Society: 40 Patriots Point Rd, Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464; (843) 884-8862; www.cmohs.org/.



Disabled American Veterans: 3725 Alexandria Pike, Cold Springs, KY 41076; (859) 441-7300; www.dav.org/.



Military Officers Association of America: 201 N. Washington St., Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 549-2311; www.moaa.org/.



Polish Legion of American Veterans: P.O. Box 42024, Washington, DC 20015; www.plav.org/.



Korean War Veterans Association: 8452 Marys Creek Dr. Benbrook, TX 76116-7600; (817) 244-0706; www.kwva.org/.



American G.I. Forum: 2870 N. Speer Blvd., Suite 102, Denver, CO 80211; (303) 458-1700; www.agif.us/.



Jewish War Veterans of the USA: 1811 R St., NW, Washington, DC 20009; 202-265-6280; www.jwv.org/.



American Ex-Prisoners of War:
3201 East Pioneer Pky, #40, Ar-
lington, TX 76010; (817) 649-2979;
www.axpow.org/.



Catholic War Veterans: 441
North Lee St., Alexandria, VA
22314; (703) 549-3622;
<http://cww.org/>.



Vietnam Veterans of America:
8605 Cameron Street, Suite 400,
Silver Spring, MD 20910; (301)
585-4000; www.vva.org/.



Veterans of Foreign Wars of
the United States: 406 West 34th
Street, Kansas City, MO 64111;
(816) 756-3390; www.vfw.org/.



AMVETS: 4647 Forbes Boule-
vard, Lanham, MD 20706-4380;
(301) 459-9600; www.amvets.org/.



Blinded Veterans Association:
477 H Street, NW, Washington,
DC 20001-2694; (202) 371-8880;
www.bva.org/.



Army and Navy Union: 107
Fulton St., Niles, OH 44446; (330)
349-4724; www.armynavy.net/.



Non Commissioned Officers
Association: 10635 IH 35 North,
San Antonio, TX 78233; (210) 653-
6161; www.ncoausa.org/.



The American Legion: P.O. Box
1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206;
(317) 630-1200; www.legion.org/.



Military Order of the Purple
Heart of the USA, Inc.: 5413-C
Backlick Rd., Springfield, VA 22151;
(703) 354-2140;
www.purpleheart.org/.



Pearl Harbor Survivors Associa-
tion: P.O. Box 1816, Carlsbad,
CA 92016-1816; (760) 727-9027;
www.pearlharborsurvivor.net/



Fleet Reserve Association:
125 N. West St., Alexandria, VA
22314-2754; 1-800-FRA-1924;
www.fra.org



The Marine Corps League:
8626 Lee Hwy, Suite 201, Fairfax,
VA 22031; (703) 207-9588/89;
www.mcleague.org.



The Military Chaplains
Association: P.O. Box 7056,
Arlington, VA 22207-7056; (703)
533-5890; www.mca-usa.org.

In addition, the Veterans Day National
Committee is comprised of the following Associate
Members:

American Gold Star Mothers
Gold Star Wives of America
Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc.
Blue Star Mothers of America
Air Force Association
Navy Seabee Veterans of America
Air Force Sergeants Association
Help Hospitalized Veterans
American Red Cross
American Defenders of Bataan & Corregidor
National Association of State Veterans Homes
Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge
National Association for Uniformed Services
Japanese American Veterans Association
National Association of State Directors of
Veterans Affairs
Bowlers to Veterans Link
The Women's Army Corps Veteran's
Association

For an online directory of Veterans organiza-
tions, please visit www.va.gov/vso/.

Standard 

CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic.

An understanding of civic ideals and practices is critical to full participation in society and is an essential component of education for citizenship, which is the central purpose of social studies. All people have a stake in examining civic ideals and practices across time and in different societies. Through an understanding of both ideals and practices, it becomes possible to identify gaps between them, and study efforts to close the gaps in our democratic republic and worldwide.

Learning how to apply civic ideals as part of citizen action is essential to the exercise of democratic freedoms and the pursuit of the common good. Through social studies programs, students acquire a historical and contemporary understanding of the basic freedoms and rights of citizens in a democracy, and learn about the institutions and practices that support and protect these freedoms and rights, as well as the important historical documents that articulate them. Students also need to become familiar with civic ideals and practices in countries other than our democratic republic.

Questions faced by students studying this theme might be: What are the democratic ideals and practices of a constitutional democracy? What is the balance between rights and responsibilities? What is civic participation? How do citizens become involved? What is the role of the citizen in the community and the nation, and as a member of the world community? Students will explore how individuals and institutions interact. They will also recognize and respect different points of view. Students learn by experience how to participate in community service and political activities and how to use democratic processes to influence public policy.

In schools, this theme typically appears in units or courses dealing with civics, history, political science, cultural anthropology, and fields such as global studies and law-related education, while also drawing upon content from the humanities. In the early grades, students are introduced to civic ideals and practices through activities such as helping to set classroom expectations, examining experiences in relation to ideals, participating in mock elections, and determining how to balance the needs of individuals and the group. During these years, children also experience views of citizenship in other times and places through stories and drama. By the middle grades, students expand their knowledge of democratic ideals and practices, along with their ability to analyze and evaluate the relationships between these ideals and practices. They are able to see themselves taking civic roles in their communities. High school students increasingly recognize the rights and responsibilities of citizens in identifying societal needs, setting directions for public policies, and working to support both individual dignity and the common good. They become familiar with methods of analyzing important public issues and evaluating different recommendations for dealing with these issues.