

Essential Learning Prep to Year 10 Civics and Citizenship Curriculum Area

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Victorian Essential Learning Standards



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Why should Civics and Citizenship education be included as a cross-curriculum domain in a framework of essential learning?

Why Civics and Citizenship?

Central to the role of a school is the facilitation of students to be good citizens. In an increasingly complex world where dislocation and change are accelerating, a strong sense of personal identity is a sound basis from which to connect with the world. Civics and Citizenship Education (CCE) strengthens understanding and valuing of self. It teaches why citizens need a sense of personal identity, how citizens can belong and contribute to communities and the celebration and evolution of national identity. Cross-curriculum development in CCE for a framework of essential learning offers opportunities to investigate why, in a democratic tradition, informed and diverse contributions and participation by citizens is important. CCE is a forum in which to learn about and live out the values that one's community nominates as important. It provides a vehicle for students (citizens already in their own right) to engage in higher order thinking, to contest and challenge ideas about society, and to formally participate in democratic decision making and activities.

Students need to practise democratic behaviours. This may involve exploring ideas, forming and articulating opinions, taking risks in speaking out and contesting opinions and, ultimately, contributing through participation to the nation's democratic processes. Awareness of global issues – social, historical, environmental, demographic, political, geographic and economic issues – is the responsibility of global citizens. Rights, responsibilities, compassion, and a sense of social justice and fairness are notions that are best reinforced across a curriculum.

A sustainable democracy

A sustainable democracy requires its citizens to have a deep knowledge and understanding of civic institutions, and the skills and disposition to actively participate in society. CCE provides knowledge and understanding of political and legal systems and processes, and the history that underpins them, in order to achieve civic understanding. CCE facilitates the practice of citizenship skills, the exploration and development of appropriate and relevant attitudes, values and dispositions, and the empowerment of informed decision making. Teaching of civics must be tied to opportunities to engage in active citizenship. The Civics Expert Group in its 1994 paper, *Whereas the people* (p. 5) defines civic virtues as:

Our system of government relies for its efficacy and legitimacy on an informed citizenry. Without active and knowledgeable citizens, the forms of democratic representation remain empty; without vigilant and skilled citizens able to act through our democratic institutions, there is no check on potential tyranny.

Citizenship recognises the equal worth of every individual. No one, no matter how rich or powerful, can evade the responsibilities of citizenship or usurp its entitlements. Our democratic values require that every citizen is able to participate in the exercise of these rights and responsibilities.

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 1999) continued the broadening of discussions about the 'good citizen' by focusing on the rights and responsibilities of living in a democratic society, and specifically states that students should:

1.3 have the capacity to exercise judgement and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice, and the capacity to make sense of their world, to think about how things got to be the way they are, to make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and to accept responsibility for their own actions.

1.4 be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life.

A constructivist approach

CCE can assist in developing an understanding of complex social issues. Many ideas, values and attitudes are contestable. This is important to recognise. CCE offers scope to allow constructivist learning. Students can build meaningful responses as their understanding, knowledge and experience increases.

The constructivist approach can also strengthen school effectiveness. One of the fundamental aims of each school needs to be to teach students how to be engaged citizens. If a whole-school approach is taken to constructing civic values that are relevant to the school community, and articulating and embedding them through active participation in CCE, then this aim can be well on the way to being achieved. The values should permeate the School Charter, school vision statements and the essential learning approach, embedding CCE and forming a strongly documented reference point for it by noting the need for active and productive citizens.

CCE actively engages students as members of their community and fosters knowledge, understanding and behaviours with the scope to have resonance from the personal to the global. We live in dynamic times and students need to continue to develop the skills to interpret changes and to equip them with the resources to integrate future changes in their lives. CCE may be included comprehensively across the curriculum by linking it directly to the values being espoused and, more importantly, enacted by all members of the school community. It would be hoped that these values are based on democratic principles and that an open disposition to adopt them throughout the school is promoted.

Students are citizens

School students are already citizens, and explicit teaching about the functions, rights and roles of citizens affirms those rights and roles. However, young people are often uncertain about their own identities and the roles they might and/or can play in the school community. A starting point for CCE is to assist young people to explore the concept of identity, both their own and that of others. A person who is uncertain, confused, angry or ambivalent about their own identity is unlikely to want to belong, or contribute, to a community.

CCE can enhance students' understandings, skills and dispositions to actively engage as citizens if they feel they can make a difference and that those with power will listen to them. CCE will empower students to explore and develop leadership skills and behaviours for a lifetime of participation in civic life.

To encourage and sustain a democratic society we need to teach and practise both civic understandings and processes AND positive citizenship dispositions, and link into the local community to form meaningful connections to the school. In the school and classroom contexts students need to be able to take appropriate risks, to practise civil behaviours, to witness the modelling of appropriate behaviours, and to develop a sense of efficacy. A real relationship to the school community and to local communities shows students that they belong to a community. It is learning for life, and the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes fostered are valuable beyond the classroom. Students have an opportunity to make a difference and, through experience, also understand the limitations to effecting change and/or the consequences of change.

CCE can involve learning beyond the classroom and offers opportunities to engage with issues of relevance to students' lives on a variety of scales, from the personal to the global. However, opportunities for debating and contesting some of the values, paradigms, behaviours and values espoused by society can also be provided in a structured environment across the curriculum.

The *Victorian Curriculum Reform 2004 Consultation Paper* endorses the need for students to develop:

skills to enable them to become active, responsible and productive members of the community. (p. 9)

It nominates civic understanding as a generic skill to be developed under the umbrella of cultural skills, values and attributes. It espouses that one of the purposes of education is to equip students with the knowledge, skills and attributes to:

be informed citizens who understand and contribute to civil and community relations on a local, national and global level. (p. 5)

CCE does not belong in one key learning area or core discipline area. Rather it should be included as a cross-curriculum domain within a framework of essential learning because it provides a vehicle to achieve these goals.

What are the key knowledge, skills and behaviours that students need to develop?

Knowledge

Understanding of and skills in interpreting, political, legal, cultural and historical literacy informs the understanding of civic life in a democracy. Knowledge of systems of government (both historical and current), legal systems and civic institutions is integral to CCE. Understanding how these processes operate in and on a school is essential for students. This understanding can then parallel the broader decision-making arenas, including those with different civic traditions.

There are identifiable characteristics of healthy democracies, for example, human rights, social justice, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, rights in voting, a free media, rights and responsibilities, and fairness and equality.

Specifically, an informed Australian citizen needs to understand the Australian political and legal systems underpinned by history and the development and traditions of Australian democracy. Knowledge of Indigenous peoples and the changes in cultural practices that have taken place since 1788 is essential. The contribution of women to the evolution of democratic traditions needs to be reinforced. Australia is a pluralistic and multicultural society and knowledge of the political and cultural heritage of the many nations represented in Australia would form a useful context for reflecting on, comparing and contrasting other democratic and non-democratic traditions with those of Australia. This analysis of comparative systems would allow for deeper levels of understanding in the later years of schooling. Knowledge is enhanced through practical application. It is essential to make links between civic knowledge and active citizenship otherwise there is a risk of providing knowledge for knowledge's sake.

A major approach to developing civic understandings is to place them within a moral or ethical values framework. A fundamental understanding about the 'good citizen' is that beliefs and actions are framed by a set of values. Students will need to have opportunities to explore values options, to place values within individual and cultural contexts, and to consider contestable issues surrounding the notion of 'Australian' values.

Skills

Students need to know the characteristics outlined above; however, active citizenship is about practising them. Critical reflection and consequent action has the potential to range in scope from the personal to the global. Reflection on the lack of democratic rights, its effect on citizens, and the conflicts that have occurred as a result of disputes over political systems is also an effective learning tool.

If active citizenship is about living and working harmoniously with others, then students will need to develop a range of social skills. These skills might include effective communication, developing relationships, working collaboratively and listening to a range of ideas.

Across the curriculum, the skills for CCE include: thinking, listening, empathising, communicating; forming and presenting a point of view; using Information Communication Technology; inquiring, critical analysis and reflection; identifying problems; justifying; predicting consequences; evaluating; researching and interpreting, for example, examining contestable assertions about historical events. CCE across the curriculum should engage students in discussion, debate, and conflict resolution. Other skills include; goal setting, organisation of self and others, cooperative learning, negotiation and collaboration. Applying knowledge by transferring it to action or to participation is another important skill for students to develop.

Problem solving, making judgments based on evidence, and identifying options can lead students to consider the level of effectiveness in participating in civic processes. A part of the learning can arise from trying, but not succeeding, to achieve a desired outcome. Developing strategies to improve on the participation process might be part of the learning. Scaffolding – such as the PDSA (plan, do, study, act) model may be useful for such an approach.

Behaviours

CCE needs to be seen as a curriculum continuum. Key behaviours for students to develop include: valuing self; respect of self and others; efficacy; empathy; compassion; social justice; caring for the environment; use of initiative; self confidence; resilience; effective communication, such as listening, speaking, reading and writing; and a desire to act ethically. Engaging in explicit discussion and activities related to the key knowledge and skills identified for CCE should develop behaviours around the rights and responsibilities citizenship and lead to student action. However, in a democracy it is equally valid to assert that an informed citizen has the right not to act. Students need real-life applications to engage with; issues relevant to their lives are likely to be the catalyst to generate informed behavioural responses.

What are learning dispositions of active citizens?

The learning dispositions of active citizens are: confidence; open-mindedness; curiosity; scepticism; sensitivity, empathy and compassion; a sense of human rights and social justice; the inclination to do something; critical thinking, analytical thinking, including thinking beyond oneself at times; understanding and accepting difference and the link to social cohesion in a democratic society; collaboration; community-mindedness; reflection.

Some of these dispositions are captured in the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) Performance Measurement and Report Writing Taskforce paper, *National Year 6 and 10 Civics and Citizenship Sample Assessment for Principals and Teachers*.

How should the key knowledge, skills and behaviours be organised to enable the writing of standards?

Table 1, Components of Civics and Citizenship (see Appendix pages 11–12), outlines an approach to organising knowledge, skills and behaviours to enable the writing of standards. They can be organised in to components of democratic knowledge and processes, participation and skills in personal, local, national and global categories. Underpinning these components are democratic values.

Democratic values are the principles and practices that underlie the civic institutions and civic life in democratic societies; for example freedom of speech and assembly, social justice, equality, fairness, compassion, rights and responsibilities. Values can be inherited from families and communities and over time can be renegotiated. Values can reflect the heritage, diversity and complexity of cultures. Commonly understood and/or accepted values can promote social cohesion and strengthen personal, local, national and global values. Knowledge and understanding of Australia’s democratic values allows the exploration of comparative values. Democratic values span from local to global jurisdictions; however, there are also many different values held throughout the world that students would benefit from examining.

At what levels should the key knowledge, skills and behaviours be introduced?

CCE is important from Early years through life. Students begin school with a set of CCE understandings, developed mainly from their home. The role of the school is therefore to more systematically enhance and broaden these understandings, skills and dispositions. CCE should be seen as a continuum of this initial learning and should reflect the broader aspirations of the community. The CCE can begin on the micro level and broaden into the macro level with higher order skills reflecting the increasing sophistication of the concepts being taught.

How will Civics and Citizenship education contribute to the overall development of students in the Early years, Middle years and Later years?

CCE will introduce, teach and affirm the knowledge, understanding, skills and values of Australia’s democratic society. CCE should be taught as a continuum and reflected in democratic approaches in the classroom and school governance, and in relationships with the community. School communities need to model democratic processes. If students are given opportunities to practise decision making and to take risks, then their overall development will be greatly enhanced.

Early years

From the Early years CCE will contribute to students' understanding and knowledge of self, of rights and responsibilities, fairness, equality, the exploration of commonalities and differences in society, rules and laws, and an appreciation of the complexity of society. Elements that contribute to this are personal identity, self respect and self esteem, belonging to families, belonging to groups and learning how a range of groups work. Other areas for exploration include the role of communities and feelings of being connected to a number of communities. From the Early to Later years, student knowledge, skills and levels of participation will evolve.

Middle years

In the Middle years students can be given an opportunity to investigate a range of senses of belonging and exploration of shifting allegiances – for example in rule making. As CCE contributes to more sophisticated understanding and knowledge, the inquiry, action and experiential learning can sustain more in-depth study to again increase the knowledge base. This should result in student empowerment and efficacy. Students in the Middle years will appreciate the complexities, contradictions and sometimes unfairness of rules and laws. By exploring the processes of decision making in a range of contexts, including school, peer group and family, students develop appreciation of the possibilities of making a difference through engagement.

It is expected that knowledge of political, legal and democratic systems and events will be taught progressively across the year levels. Critical analysis and reflection, opportunities to investigate and contest ideas, to debate, to engage in projects, and to form opinions on issues ranging from personal to global will contribute to developing informed, active, engaged citizens capable of participating in family, community, national and global dialogue.

Later years

By the Later years of schooling students will be able to identify and enact democratic values, evaluate the effectiveness of different political systems, including democracy, engage in civic events, and articulate ethical and moral behaviours linked to sound decision-making processes.

Students should be more able to understand personal power, freedom, rights and responsibilities and their limitations. Students should be able to understand that there is a balance between their own rights and those of others on a local, national and a global scale. Engaging students in issues relevant to them and negotiating a variety of opportunities for active participation in exploring them should contribute to the multi-faceted development of relevant and useful knowledge, skills and behaviours. It may develop empathy, compassion, a sense of social justice and an understanding of difference too. A higher order of skills is expected by the Later years and it can be expected that in facilitating students to gain appreciation of 'big picture concepts' CCE can be a bridge between Year 10 and the Victorian Certificate of Education. By Year 10 student are also ready to participate in more formal civic activities.

To develop knowledge of one's identity, to explore ideas, and form opinions necessitates an environment where students feel 'safe' to take the risk to do so and such a context needs to be created. It is then possible for students to investigate different perspectives and, if required, change their initial opinions. The teacher and school can facilitate this 'safe' context. The opportunity to problem solve, share ideas with peers and to seek out others to form teams and learning relationships should be paramount. This may create a platform for taking on leadership roles and participating in the myriad school and community activities that are available. Such activities might include: volunteer work; Duke of Edinburgh Awards; Outward Bound; Water Watch; Surf Life Saving; tree planting; litter collection; mural painting, playing music at a local event, performing dance, drama or poetry, knitting clubs; peer tutoring; homework clubs; sport; attendance at war commemorations or anniversaries; making meals for new mums or bereaved families or old people in the neighbourhood.

Students need to be able to transfer and apply civic knowledge, understandings and skills to action. Action reinforces the learning when students are given time for focused reflection and encouraged to communicate their experience. In engaging in community learning, students come to know what it is to belong to a family, school and local community, and integrate those into active national and global citizenship. The framework and construct of those communities is dynamic. Students' ability to establish connections with them is what we need to be developing in CCE.

Issues for consideration in developing performance standards

The contentious nature of what are the attributes of a 'good citizen' creates difficulties for determining what's worth knowing (and therefore what's worth assessing) in CCE.

The assessment of civic understandings and skills are relatively easy – that is, easy once the decision is made about what learning is essential. The issue of dispositions and values is much more complex. However, the experience so far of the test items from the national benchmarking in CCE clearly indicates that dispositions can be assessed using creative measurement instruments.

It needs to be acknowledged that at a national level MCEETYA has already set up Performance Measurement with the Civics and Citizenship Sample Assessment of students at Year 6 and Year 10. It begins in 2004 and is to be held every three years. Consideration should be given to linking the key performance indicators for the National Assessment Domains and a framework of essential learning.

Measuring values needs to be considered carefully. How are values measured? How do we recognize the 'active participation' in a meaningful way? How do we measure – gather evidence – in the form of teacher judgment?

It may be easier to develop assessment in primary school for cross-curriculum assessment in a solo teacher classroom, than in secondary school where several teachers may be contributing to the one assessment goal.

It is desirable to give clarity to teachers in regard to the assessment of both civics and citizenship, as teachers may find it more challenging to assess students in the latter.

Professional Development for teachers needs to be provided around the knowledge, understandings, participation activities, assessment procedures and the management of changes to incorporate CCE across the curriculum.

UK-based evidence shows that schools effective in CCE have the dominant characteristic of leaders in the school showing leadership of CCE and being respected. Consideration therefore needs to be given to working with senior management at a school to promote the need to formulate and articulate with the school community, agreement about civic values. The agreement can be affirmed through the school charter, vision, mission statement and marketing brochures and, most importantly, enacted and affirmed through the whole school community approach to CCE.

There is already a large body of assessment material available in schools through the Discovering Democracy materials that could assist teachers to achieve key targets set by the (yet to be developed) Standards.

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Appendix

Table 1: Components of Civics and Citizenship

	Personal	Local	National	Global
<p>Civic knowledge and processes:</p> <p>Is the understanding, development and processes of our political and legal system:</p> <p>the concepts of democracy</p> <p>the key features of Australian and other democracies</p> <p>the key features of the Australian political and legal system</p> <p>democracy and its contribution to a nation's history and national identity</p>	<p>Understanding self</p> <p>Understanding rules, laws and decision-making in the family, school, community and in relationships</p> <p>Recognition of difference and commonalities and their link to social cohesion</p> <p>Understanding points of connection with others</p>	<p>Knowledge of community groups, local history, traditions, identities, environment and community groups and institutions</p> <p>Knowledge of neighbourhoods local government, shires and councils</p>	<p>Knowledge of national Identity, recognising social, demographic, geographic and environmental features of Australia</p> <p>Knowledge of national icons, symbols, significant people</p> <p>Knowledge of democracy, processes, institutions, voting systems, state and federal constitutions the courts and legal systems</p> <p>Knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of citizens</p> <p>Understanding of the increasing uncertainties and transitions occurring in our societies</p>	<p>Understanding of global organisations and globalisation</p> <p>Knowledge of comparative systems of government</p> <p>Understanding of the interrelatedness of social, economic and environmental issues</p> <p>Understanding of the possibilities and consequences of a range of forms of global social organisation</p>

	Personal	Local	National	Global
<p>Participation and skills:</p> <p>Students actively participate in Civics and Citizenship, applying critical and ethical thinking processes across a range of settings and issues. Settings and issues can be personal, local, national or global.</p>	<p>Setting goals</p> <p>Respect being fair</p> <p>Risk taking</p> <p>Getting involved</p> <p>Doing your best</p> <p>Reflecting on strengths and weaknesses</p>	<p>Participation – being an active member of a group</p> <p>Joining a community organisation</p> <p>Volunteer work</p> <p>Planning and reflecting</p> <p>Being aware and informed</p>	<p>Being aware and informed from a range of sources</p> <p>Questioning, discussing and debating issues</p> <p>Volunteer work</p> <p>Contribute to national events and forums</p> <p>Seek and take opportunities to form and express opinions</p> <p>Enacting democratic processes</p> <p>Having empathy with different perspectives thus facilitating social cohesion</p> <p>Reflect on the consequences of strategies and approaches to problem solving</p>	<p>Being aware and informed from a range of sources</p> <p>Questioning, discussing and debating issues</p> <p>Volunteer work</p> <p>Join global organisations</p> <p>Taking action on a social, historical, economic environmental, political issue</p> <p>Reflect on the global implications for individuals, communities and nations in regard to global topics</p> <p>Reflect on the consequences of various strategies and approaches to global problem solving</p>