

## Civic Education Opportunities and Resources

**Purpose:** The purpose of this document is to provide educators and civic leaders with an annotated list of civics-focused learning opportunities and resources for their own use, and to be shared with students. Several student-focused opportunities, both state and national, are highlighted.

### Civic Education Opportunities for Educators and Leaders

[We the People: A Leadership Summit on Civic Education](#), a roundtable discussion of the present and future state of civic education with key leaders and speakers from the Center for Civic Education, the Bill of Rights Institute, the Constitutional Rights Foundation, iCivics, Generation Citizen, Facing History and Ourselves, and the National Constitution Center. Most of all, we want to hear from you; the Leadership Summit will feature a live Q&A with audience members. The event is free and open to the public, but space is limited; Friday, April 23, at 7:30 p.m. (EST).

[Project Citizen Professional Development](#) - The [Project Citizen Research Program](#), a research grant from the U.S. Department of Education, has given the Center for Civic Education and its partners the opportunity to offer free professional development for middle and high school teachers new to the [Project Citizen](#) curriculum, in August 2021. Applications are due June 1, with participants receiving a stipend and classroom set of Project Citizen texts and resources to engage their students in the Project Citizen curriculum and assist their students with the development of a portfolio to be submitted to a regional showcase.

[American History and Civics Academies](#) - The Center for Civic Education's American History and Civic Academies provide teachers and students with high-quality educational engagement. The Presidential Academy for secondary school **teachers** and the Congressional Academy for high-need **students** immerse participants in the study of constitutional history and principles following the intellectual framework of the [We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution](#) curriculum. The experience significantly enhances students' civic dispositions related to political interest and attention, political discussion, community engagement, government service, civic duty, and trust in government. In 2021, they are offering this immersive experience in a virtual setting. Applications are due May 1, 2021.

### Contact Information:

If you have questions about this document or would like additional information, please contact: Martha Deiss, Student Pathways Division, at [martha.deiss@vermont.gov](mailto:martha.deiss@vermont.gov)

[Gilder Lehrman 2021 Teacher Seminars](#) - This is the 27th year that the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History is offering teachers the opportunity to study in seminars with eminent American history professors and dive deep into primary sources with master teachers. GL will be offering 21 different seminars online this summer from June 14 to August 5, 2021, and for the first time ever, and educators register for as many seminars as they like. These webinars are free for educators after the school is [registered](#) as an affiliate of Gilder Lehrman (also free), with varied topics ranging from African American History since Emancipation, History of American Protest, and Race and Rights in America.

### [Power to the People: Seven Weekly Webinars](#)

Power resides in the people living in a democratic republic and exercising that power is an immense responsibility. As James Madison wrote in *Federalist 51*, “A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government;...” This free, seven-week series (taped), presented by the [Center for Civic Education](#), is designed for teachers and anyone interested in civics, government, U.S. history, and those who want to better understand the topics such as The Power of the Courts, The Power of Indian Sovereignty, The Power of Movements, and The Power of Symbols.

### **Student Opportunities**

[Vermont Virtual Youth Summit 2021](#) - In an effort to provide an outlet for Vermont youth to share their pandemic experiences, Governor Phil Scott, the Vermont Department of Mental Health and Vermont Afterschool held a Virtual Youth Summit on March 25, 2021. The event asked students from across the state to share their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, giving the Governor and his team the opportunity to learn more about their needs and concerns as the state moves forward on student recovery efforts. The [Vermont Youth Declaration of Rights](#) was created by youth ages 9-26 who attended the Vermont Youth Rights Summit in 2017. It is 100% their own words and phrasing and is an evolving document that aims to capture what matters to youth across Vermont.

[Vermont History Day](#) - Vermont students in grades 5 through 12 and homeschool students ages 10 to 18 can compete in Vermont History Day. Students exercise their voice and choice by selecting a topic related to the annual theme and presenting their research as an exhibit, website, documentary, performance or paper. Working individually or in small groups (up to 5), students can explore a topic related to Vermont history, US history or world history. Vermont History Day is a great venue for personalized learning.

[Vermont State Board of Education Student Membership](#) - The Vermont State Board of Education has two student member positions on the Vermont State Board of Education.

A notice will be posted when a student member position opens. **Information for future candidates:** The State Board of Education usually meets on the third Wednesday of every month and establishes policies, regulations, and rules related to education in Vermont and in keeping with statutes passed by the Legislature. Candidates may apply using the [Application for Gubernatorial Appointment](#).

[Vermont Legislative Page Program](#) - Suspended for 2021 session due to Covid-19. Vermont 8<sup>th</sup> grade students can apply to be a legislative page in the Vermont State House.

[Third Thursdays](#) - Noontime lecture series features speakers from a diverse cross-section of Vermont scholarship. Offered virtually or in-person; upcoming talks this Spring feature an exploration of how decisions to protect and preserve the landscape have affected Vermont for homeschoolers, and a cooking series focused on immigrant communities in Vermont.

[Vermont Youth Lobby](#) - The Vermont Youth Lobby is a grassroots coalition of young people and adult allies from across the state who are working together in partnership with legislators, community members, nonprofit organizations, and the local business community to affect the changes younger generations are demanding. The Vermont Youth Lobby is committed to nonviolence and inclusivity of ideas from across the political spectrum, as long as they are for the betterment of our collective future, and not the profit of a few.

[We the People](#) - *The We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution Program* promotes civic competence and responsibility among the nation's upper elementary and secondary students. The curriculum is an innovative course of instruction on the history and principles of the United States constitutional democratic republic, culminating at the secondary level in a simulated Congressional hearing. The program enjoys active support from state bar associations and foundations, and other educational, professional, business, and community organizations across the nation. Since its inception in 1987, more than 30 million students and 75,000 educators have participated in the We the People program. In 2020, three Vermont high schools competed in the program.

[Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Student Poster-Essay Contest](#) - Vermont Middle School students are invited yearly to celebrate the life and message of Martin Luther King, Jr. by participating in a poster-essay contest addressing a particular statement determined by the Vermont Bar Association's Diversity Section and the Young Lawyers Division. Students may submit their own entry or may produce a partner-created submission.

[Governor's Institutes of Vermont](#) - The Governor's Institutes of Vermont creates fun, accelerated learning residencies on college campuses for Vermont teenagers and high schoolers. The Global Issues and Youth Action Institute focuses on critical issues impacting Vermont towns, U.S. national and political issues as well as complex global issues.

[Close Up](#) - Close Up is a non-profit and non-partisan organization that believes a strong democracy requires active and informed participation by all citizens. They seek to serve young people from all communities and backgrounds, regardless of race, religion, gender, socioeconomic level, or academic standing. Since 1971, over 900,000 students, teachers, and parents have participated in Close Up's Washington, DC-based programs. Their curriculum is designed to provide participants with a stronger understanding of government institutions, history and current issues, and their roles as citizens.

### **Civic Education Resources**

The number of available Civic Education resources can be overwhelming for educators. Both [Common Sense](#) and [Educating American Democracy Project](#) provide extensive curated resources from nationally recognized leaders in the field of Civics and U.S. History. A few additional resources have also been provided.

[Educating American Democracy Project](#) (EAD) - The Educating American Democracy Project is a call to action to invest in strengthening history and civic learning, and to ensure that civic learning opportunities are delivered equitably throughout the country. The initiative involved a diverse collaboration among over 300 academics, historians, political scientists, K-12 educators, district and state administrators, civics providers, students, and others from across the country. Content resources are curated by alignment to EAD themes and driving questions, inquiry, rigor, and equity- with a lens to diversity, inclusion and accessibility. Resources can be searched by:

- Grade level- K-12
- Theme- such as, "Institutional and Social Transformation"
- Driving questions - such as, "How am I a part of my community?"
- Resource type - such as, assessment, unit plan, game, interactive
- Source - such as, the Library of Congress, the Bill of Rights Institute

[Common Sense: Best Government and Civics Websites and Games](#) - Common Sense has curated a selection of resources to support educators with helping students grapple with government and learn their rights as human beings and citizens. These websites and games offer students resources to explore the history of political movements, the rise and fall of governmental systems, and the way human rights have evolved over time. While this list isn't limited to the U.S., there's a healthy focus on the rights granted and governed by the U.S. Constitution, voter information for U.S. election, and how the

U.S. government operates, including info on the executive, judicial, and legislative branches.

[A Starting Point](#) - A Starting Point (ASP) is a video-based civic engagement platform whose mission is to create a bipartisan channel of communication and connectivity between Americans and their elected officials with the goal of creating a more informed electorate. Elected officials are asked to provide a maximum 2-minute response to questions from categories such as education, immigration, rights, and the environment. Users can hear a response to each question from members of both the Republican and Democratic parties, with new questions and topics updated continuously.

[Learning for Justice](#) - (formerly Teaching Tolerance) provides free resources to educators—teachers, administrators, counselors and other practitioners—who work with children from kindergarten through high school. Resources can be used to supplement the curriculum, to inform their practices, and to create inclusive school communities where children and youth are respected, valued and welcome participants.

[Constitution Law Resources](#)- Each year the Vermont Bar Association (VBA) distributes, at no charge, copies of the United States Constitution to classrooms and community centers around the state. VBA Members also volunteer to visit schools and civic groups to speak about the importance of the Constitution and to discuss the Bill of Rights with the students. If you are interested in volunteering or having a volunteer lawyer come to your school and speak, please email Education Director Jennifer Emens-Butler at [jeb@vtbar.org](mailto:jeb@vtbar.org).