



Mr. Jose Banda
Superintendent
Seattle Public Schools
Seattle, WA 98124-1165

Dear Superintendent Banda:

A recent article in Education Week by Web Hutchins, one of your award-winning teachers, about the need for teaching civics across K-12 caught my attention, both because it was very well-written and its arguments are ones we are wholly in agreement with here at the Great Books Foundation. The main points raised by Mr. Hutchins are so closely aligned with our mission that I sought him out to extend our compliments to him. In our conversation, he briefly outlined the Civics for All initiative, and I became even more impressed with his convictions and the opportunity for Seattle to offer a substantial addition to the goals of the Common Core. I am writing to extend another voice in strong support of this initiative for the benefit of your students and the example you would set for school systems across the country.

Our mission statement reads: *The mission of the Great Books Foundation is to advance the critical, reflective thinking, and social and **civic engagement** of readers of all ages through Shared Inquiry discussion of works and ideas of enduring value.*

We believe, and I personally believe, that our democracy cannot survive if our educational system does not foster "civic engagement" in our public discourse. The failure to help millions of our fellow citizens understand how a participatory democracy needs to work is evident daily in the coarseness of our national political conversation. The obviously growing inability or unwillingness to consider other points of view, and the lack of respectful character in our public dialog (if it can be called that), is mainly a product of what Mr Hutchins argues -- that public educational lacks a critical focus on civics. One of the values of our Shared Inquiry form of discussion is that it calls for participants to support their ideas with other than their own opinion and to listen carefully to the ideas of others. I profoundly hope that your Civics For All program helps your students, and others in Seattle, understand the critical importance of civil discourse in fostering the self-governing principles upon which our country was founded and needs to sustain in order to maintain our freedoms and way of life.

Throughout our nearly 70-year history as a not-for-profit educational organization, the Great Books Foundation has been involved in and supportive of many of the new ideas in K-12 education. We are particularly excited about the learning environment imbedded in the Common Core standards, and have seen a significant increase in interest in our programs as a result. But there is a key piece missing from the standards, and the creative leadership offered by your adoption of the elements of Civics for All will benefit your students directly and also serve as a gold-plate model for other districts across the U.S. Please add our supportive voice to those you are considering as you deliberate the manner in which you might endorse Civics for All.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George L. Schueppert".

George L. Schueppert
President

Cc: Mr. Michael Tolley
Ms. Shauna Heath