

**Council on
Public Legal Education**



Council on Public Legal Education
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The Board of Directors for Seattle Public Schools
Superintendent Jose Banda
PO Box 34165
Seattle, WA 98124-1165

Co-Chairs

Hon. Marlin Appelwick
Judith Billings

Dear School Board Directors and Superintendent Banda:

CPLE Members

David Barber
Jeff Bernstein
Anita Crawford-Willis
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The Washington Council on Public Legal Education (the Council) seeks to promote public understanding of the law and civic rights and responsibilities. The Council pursues this mission by conducting, coordinating, encouraging, and publicizing civic education efforts in Washington State.

Engaging young people to learn, discuss, and get involved with civic education projects in their early years has proven results: civically engaged citizens who contribute to their communities as adults. The potential benefits are particularly relevant for students who are identified as “at risk” because they come from low-income and less-educated households and often are denied access to robust civic education so important for their future engagement as citizens.

Young people lacking knowledge about civics are more distrustful of government, less apt to volunteer, and less likely to vote, according to a recent study by the Educational Testing Service. The authors¹ found a notable gap in the civic knowledge of students based on race and ethnicity. African-American and Hispanic students scored lower than white and Asian/Pacific Islander students in grades 4, 8 and 12.

¹ For more information on this report, go to <http://www.ets.org/s/research/19386/>

In April, Seattle teacher Web Hutchins made a presentation to the Council and asked for the Council's support to his initiative, "Civics for All."² The principles contained in this initiative are ones that the Council is committed to, and we want to encourage you to support them as well.

Mr. Hutchins' proposal is aimed at improving student academic achievement and civic engagement by creating a "civic culture of learning," where students are motivated to learn about justice, civility, ethics and other values that will inspire them to become engaged in their community as citizens.

Mr. Hutchins has been teaching young people about government and media literacy for 21 years, with significant positive results. He is seeking the Board's support now to make civics education a top priority for students in all grades. We applaud his efforts.


We are a nation in crisis when it comes to having citizens who truly understand how our government works at all levels, and how individual citizens can become effectively involved in making government work for all of us. Introducing young people in Seattle Public Schools to civic rights and responsibilities as they enter school and continuing to involve them in age-appropriate activities throughout their schooling is a wise investment in our community.

The goals of "Civics for All" affirm our belief in the importance of this endeavor, and we urge you to give it strong consideration.

Sincerely,



Marlin Appelwick
Co-Chair



Judith Billings
Co-Chair

² Details about this proposal can be found at <http://www.civicsforall.org/Vision>