



January 10, 2016

Board President Patu and
Superintendent Nyland
Seattle Public Schools
2445 3rd Ave S
Seattle, WA 98134

Dear President Patu and Superintendent Nyland,

I write in support of the Civics for All Initiative and the essential benefits it offers for the civic education of Seattle's elementary age students, especially those from low-income communities.

During my frequent visits to Seattle elementary schools in my role as a teacher educator, I have observed an alarming trend that is happening nationally as well: Schools with children in poverty focus on literacy and mathematics to the exclusion of social studies and civic education, yet schools with children of middle and upper class families have a much broader range of subjects including social studies. Such inequities pose considerable costs to our children and to our democratic society—a society that depends on a well-informed citizenry that understands how democracy functions and knows something of the world outside their own horizons. The Civics for All Initiative offers civics engagement opportunities for all of Seattle's youngsters.

The [Carnegie Report on The Civic Mission of Schools](#) (2003) outlines specific goals for civic education: to develop competent and responsible citizens that are informed and thoughtful, participate in their communities, act politically, and have moral and civic virtues and the belief in the capacity to make a difference. Such education for children in poverty becomes even more important if they are to participate and embrace the ideals of American democracy. And teaching civic education can't wait until high school as the report highlights: "Research suggests that students start to develop social responsibility and interest in politics before the age of nine. The way they are taught about social issues, ethics, and institutions in elementary school matters a great deal for their civic development."

During my terms as President of the National Council for the Social Studies and of the Washington State Council for the Social Studies we proposed that the goals of civic or social studies education do not need to be set aside to achieve the goals of literacy and mathematics. Indeed, these goals can work in concert with one another as the subjects of social studies can provide meaning and purpose to understanding and applying literacy and mathematics learning.

Therefore, I urge you and the Seattle School Board to support the comprehensive initiative of K-12 Civics for All. What better time to do this as we approach a national election season? A comprehensive and coherent program for K-12 schools in a city such as ours would be highly desirable. I hope you will support this initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margit E. McGuire".

Margit E. McGuire, PhD
Professor of Teacher Education
Civics for All Initiative Board Member