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

Dear President Patu and Superintendent Nyland,

This September will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the day I walked into Franklin High School for what was to become a thirty-six year teaching career. What awaited me was a vibrant civics-oriented social studies curriculum orchestrated by my department chair, Ralph Hayes. Its culmination was a senior, year-long course taught by Duane Strinden and Bill Butler.

Civic engagement was the *sine qua non* of Franklin's social studies curriculum then and it has remained so to this day. Those of us have been a part of it want nothing more than to see it instituted in every single school in the District (and, as a result of its success, copied by school districts throughout the state).

Franklin's Law and Society, Mock Trial, and Public Service Academy contributions to civics education are widely known. Unfortunately, Franklin is the only Seattle public school to consistently compete in the YMCA Washington State Mock Trial competition, and is the only *public* school in the state to have won it in twenty years! Seattle high schools are also notable for their absence from YMCA Youth and Legislature, a program that has produced many civic leaders. If Web Hutchins' prodigious efforts bear fruit, this is destined to change: the K-12 civics education program that he proposes will likely result not only in more schools participating in such activities as mock trial (which I have called "the most challenging

extra-curricular academic activity available to high school students”) and youth legislature.

Even more importantly, students will be attending city, county council, and legislative hearings, and observing state and federal trials. These experiences cannot but make them interested in reading about the issues they’ve seen debated, and engaging in the ongoing dialogue concerning the public policy issues of the day.

How do I know this? Because I’ve seen it happen: I have students who graduated forty or more years ago tell me on Facebook how much the critical thinking and engagement with public policy issues that were the essence of my Law and Society class has made them more effective members of the community. Here are three of them, offered not as a tribute to me, but as a tribute to the power of civics education:

I had the privilege of being a student in the Law and Society class he mentions and then, later, the honor of having him as my mentor teacher as I student-taught that same class. His message -- that the core ingredient of any social change is hope because without hope there can be no struggle and without struggle there can be no change -- has stuck with me throughout my career and has shaped my personal world-view in and out of the classroom.

He's why I teach law. And he's why I'm proud to teach and have taught in the communities I have and do.

Thanks, Rick.

Your influence continues unabated now even a decade after your retirement. You built a small army of happy warriors fighting for social justice.

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Rick, your legacy of opening our minds to critical thought, will be shared through the generations. As long as we pass on the knowledge and skill to our children and friends, you will live on. It is a concept that once learned, cannot be taken away.

Some have said, “oh, law and civics may be good for high school or even middle school students, but isn’t it a bit much for elementary school kids?”

No, it isn’t: I have written and taught mock trials at both Queen Anne and Lawton elementary schools and will doing one for second graders at QAE this spring. The lessons have been enthusiastically received, with students

demonstrating a good understanding of the purpose of a trial, trial procedure, and the reason for the different burden of proof in a criminal as opposed to a civil trial. A robust civics curriculum already exists for elementary-age students just as it does for older ones. Teachers would have a vast array of online civics resources available, and many in the District already engaged in civics education would be willing to share their civics curriculum with their colleagues.

The number of Franklin students who are notable for their contribution to the civic life of the community is breathtaking: Gary Locke: state legislator, county executive, Governor of the State of Washington, Secretary of Commerce, Ambassador to China; Ed Lee, Mayor of San Francisco; Cheryl Chow, a member of both the Seattle City Council and the Seattle School Board; Dean Lum, King County Superior Court judge; Frank Raines, head of President Clinton's Office of Management and Budget and CEO of the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae); County Councilman Larry Gossett; and Noah Purcell, the Solicitor General of the State of Washington (the youngest one) and former clerk to U.S. Supreme Court justice David Souter.

But it is those who, though they don't achieve civic fame but, amidst the struggles of their daily lives strive to keep informed, always vote, and are not hesitant to join the dialogue, who must be our primary concern. Like the beautician who told me that her continued civic engagement is in no small part due to Law and Society and its encouragement of robust debate.

It is to these "ordinary" - yet in their own way, remarkable – folk that Web Hutchins and those working with him have dedicated Civics for All.

Let their effort to infuse civics in the curriculum at every level be met with the success it so clearly deserves. *Res ipse loquitur*, as personal injury lawyers say of the obvious: the thing speaks for itself.

Sincerely yours,

Rick Nagel