

# California Civic Learning Initiative

## Summary

The California Civic Learning Initiative (CCLI) is an initiative of **Constitutional Rights Foundation** (CRF) to improve and expand civic learning in California. CRF, in collaboration with Lead Partners (**Berkeley Law, California Chief Justice's Power of Democracy Civic Learning Initiative, Californians for Civic Learning, Center for Civic Education, Civic Engagement Research Group at the University of California Riverside, Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute, USC Rossier School of Education**), and numerous Coalition Agencies, will:

- Provide high-quality curriculum materials and teacher professional development aligned to proven practices in civic learning.
- Help educators prioritize civic learning at the state and local levels of public schools.
- Ensure more students are given the opportunity to earn the new California Seal of Civic Learning and Engagement on their high school diplomas.

## Background

Over the past few years, the need for high-quality civic education has been dramatically pronounced. Hyper-partisanship, fake news, and an attack on our Capitol illustrate the dire need to strengthen our democracy and ensure a better informed and more responsibly engaged populace for the future.

We believe that it is imperative to ensure that civic learning in the state of California be at the forefront of our public schools. Over the last year, CRF has created the **California Civic Learning Initiative**. CRF's key partners are Berkeley Law, USC Rossier School of Education, Californians for Civic Learning, the Reagan Library, and the Center for Civic Education – all California based and all with a deep understanding of the need for non-partisanship and balance as we work with public schools.

Initiative activities will be driven by the goal of ensuring that all students, especially those in underserved schools and communities in our state, have opportunities to earn the State Seal of Civic Engagement by developing civic competencies.

In this hyper-partisan political environment, it is imperative that a non-partisan, balanced approach be taken in all aspects of this work. Curriculum materials and programs will be reviewed to ensure balanced, multiple perspectives are provided. All instructional resources will be provided free of charge.

## Turning Theory into Practice

The Initiative will include regional civic learning opportunities for teachers and school site administrators:

- Day-long conferences will provide civic learning resources, **professional development**, and the opportunity to hear from leading California researchers and scholars. Conferences will be held in Southern, Central, and Northern California and hosted by partners, law schools, and county offices of education.
- Programs and resources we will provide free of charge to teachers include CRF's **Civic Action Project (CAP)** and the **Civil Conversation (CivCon)** model for academic discussion.
- After-school online professional development sessions will be offered throughout the academic year and feature lessons and resources that have been proven to be effective in under-resourced schools.
- Though students earn the Seal in high school, we know that it is vital that civics start early, thus we will provide **programming for K-5** to build the foundation for meeting the State Seal criteria.
- The initiative will hold a **California Civics Expo** near the end of the academic year to celebrate student civic engagement.
- We will work with partners to ensure **youth participation** in this project and will work with CRF's CAP Youth Board and the Center for Youth Development through Law.
- All activities will include an **evaluation component**. Surveys will gauge satisfaction with the professional development and resources provided and will assess knowledge and/or skills gained through the professional development offered.

## Turning Practice into Policy

It is essential that our coalition work with local and state policy makers, as well as public school leadership, to ensure that a focus on civic education becomes institutionalized. CRF and USC Rossier School of Education are already working together to reach county- and district- level superintendents to not only provide support as they navigate their own “public square” activities including board meetings, but to ensure their awareness and encourage their support of the importance of civic learning and the seal.

We know that buy-in and support from school administrators at every level – county to school site – is key. CCL will take a lead role in this initiative's efforts to **raise awareness about the importance of civic learning with local and state decision-makers** and will continue to work on policy initiatives including:

- Dedicated funding streams for civic learning research, professional development, and resources.
- Strengthening civic learning at the elementary and middle school levels.
- Incentivizing civic learning for school accountability purposes.
- Local school board adoption of civic learning policies and resolutions.

## **LEAD PARTNERS**

Constitutional Rights Foundation, together with:

Berkeley Law

California Chief Justice's Power of Democracy Civic Learning Initiative

Californians for Civic Learning

Center for Civic Education

Civic Engagement Research Group at the University of California Riverside

Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute

USC Rossier School of Education

## **COALITION AGENCIES (Partial list)**

Anaheim Union High School District

The Bar Association of San Francisco

Center for Youth Development Through Law

Civic Education Center

The Commonwealth Club

Fresno Unified School District

Integrated Action Civics Project of America

LEAD California

Los Angeles County Office of Education

NALEO Educational Fund

Sacramento County Office of Education

Treedom

Tulare County Office of Education

Ventura County Office of Education