



This story is taken from [Opinion](#) at sacbee.com.

---

## **Editorial: The root of civic culture**

### **One semester of civics doesn't do the job**

***Published 2:15 am PST Tuesday, February 14, 2006***

Even as the United States has embarked in great experiments of nation-building abroad, engagement in politics and government at home continues steadily to fall. American children don't learn through osmosis how democracy works and how to make a difference in their communities. Our public schools are, as always, vital to that mission.

While that issue is not on California's front burner, it should move up. The state with the most diverse public school population should take a lead in rekindling common ideals and effective citizenship.

In July, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a resolution passed by the Legislature urging the state Board of Education and local school boards to "examine current practice" on learning democracy throughout the curriculum in the K-12 years. State law requires only that students take a one-semester course, "Principles of American Democracy," in 12th grade. Students take courses in U.S. and California history in grades 4, 5, 8 and 11, but that doesn't seem to be working. The 2005 California Survey of Civic Education found "knowledge of structures and functions of government and of current political issues is modest, at best."

Legislators need to hold hearings to find out what schools are actually doing. Ten schools in the state, including Kennedy High in Sacramento and Sheldon High in Elk Grove, are working as pilot sites for improving civic education. But what are others doing?

At a time when we are promoting democracy around the world, we could be doing a better job of fostering it at home.

Go to: [Sacbee](#) / [Back to story](#)

---

This article is protected by copyright and should not be printed or distributed for anything except personal use.  
The Sacramento Bee, 2100 Q St., P.O. Box 15779, Sacramento, CA 95852  
Phone: (916) 321-1000

[Copyright](#) © [The Sacramento Bee](#), (916) 321-1000