

From the Desk of David Lantz

To Whom It May Concern

In recent weeks, conversations with several grassroots activists and academic scholars alike have pointed to the need for some sort of document which attempts to summarize the most important principles that we should be teaching in introductory civics classes. Additionally, in order to avoid the new wave of social justice/identity politics/critical race theory curriculum, some sort of summary as to what this brand of “activist civics” teaches is also needed. Having been the State Director of the Indiana Christian Coalition and now an adjunct college political science and economics instructor, I have a foot in both the conservative grassroots and conservative academic worlds. And so, I thought I would take a stab at summarizing these principles.

The following **5 Positive Principles of Civics Instruction** is therefore my attempt to provide at least the beginnings of a discussion of what should be taught as positive attributes of the American form of government. The **5 Negative Principles of Civics Instruction** are concepts parents and teachers of traditional civics need to be aware of as they grapple with the ideas being promoted by liberal, Marxist-oriented proponents - ideas which at their heart are contrary to the American experience.

Respectfully, David L. Lantz

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5 Positive Principles of Civics Instruction

1. Civics instruction should promote equality. For rights to be projected, justice must be blind.

- a. From the Declaration of Independence: “All human beings are created equal, and are endowed with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”
- b. Happiness is not guaranteed. Thus, the American ideal is to promote equality of opportunity, not equality of outcome, which some today label “equity.”

2. Civics instruction should promote morality, upon which good government is based.

- a. From Article 3 of the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights: “... happiness of a people, and the good order and preservation of civil government, essentially depend upon piety, religion and morality ...”
- b. Webster's 1828 dictionary defines politics as: “The science of government; that part of ethics which consists in the regulation and government of a nation or state, for the preservation of its safety, peace and prosperity; comprehending the defense of its existence and rights against foreign control or conquest, the augmentation of its strength and resources, **and the protection of its citizens in their rights, with the preservation and improvement of their morals.**” (Emphasis added)
- c. Furthermore, from Article 3 of the Northwest Ordinance, enacted July 13, 1787 during the Constitutional Convention: “Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, **schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.**” (Emphasis added)

3. Civics Instruction should promote the concept of what John Locke called a “Social Contract” that seeks to balance the competing goals of liberty and security.

- a. Larry Arnn, in his book, **The Founders’ Key**, states that The Declaration of Independence declares a set of inalienable rights which are the aspirational promise of government. The Constitution sets forth the regulatory guardrails necessary to fulfill this promise.
- b. America has adopted the application of what is called “negative liberty” or “negative rights.” It is the idea that individuals should be left alone to pursue actions/not pursue actions. Do I choose to own/not own a gun? Do I choose to get / not get vaccinated? Etc. The 10th Amendment is an example of this concept of negative rights applied in the US Constitution.

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- c. Individuals are constrained from participating in behavior that is destructive to others by Principle Number 2 – that people are instilled with an inner moral compass based on religious faith.

4. Civics Instruction should promote a process that produces laws which “are wholesome and necessary for the common good” (as quoted from the Declaration of Independence).

- a. In the American experience, such laws are achieved through the process of representative government. The Declaration of Independence declares that “...the right of representation in the legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants.”
- b. “Representation provides a restraint upon the ruled as well as the rulers. In this sense, too, it is an institution of limited government.” (Arnn, *The Founders Key*, p. 29.)

5. Civics instruction should promote a concept that liberty is protected through law.

- a. This principle transcends all men and all times. In America, we strive to create a society in which we all have equal opportunity. While we have failed at times in the past, the promise of America is that “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice.”
- b. The American Experience has always been about living up to our ideals. One form of proof of this is that America eventually listened to Susan B. Anthony, who made this same point in her 1873 speech “Is it a Crime for an American Citizen to Vote?” when she said:

“It was we the people-not we white male citizens-nor yet we male citizens-but we the whole people, who formed this Union; and we formed it, not to give the blessings of liberty, but to secure them-not to the half of ourselves and the half of our posterity, but to the whole people, women as well as men. And it is downright mockery to talk to women of their enjoyment of the blessings of liberty while they are denied the use of the only means of securing them provided by this democratic-republican government.” (Quoted from Peter Chales Hoffer, “For Ourselves and Our Posterity: The Preamble to the Federal Constitution in American History,” p. 4.)

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5 Negative Principles of Civics Instruction

1. Civics instruction should promote the idea that society is based on class conflict between the oppressor/powerful/privileged class and the oppressed/powerless/unprivileged class.

- a. Former Attorney General William Barr recently gave a speech at the Americans Defending Freedom's annual Edwin Meese III Award for Originalism and Religious Liberty, 5/20/2021, in which he characterized the above principle this way:
- b. "In recent years, public schools across the country have rushed to embrace so-called "Critical Race Theory." CRT is nothing more than the materialist philosophy of Marxism substituting racial antagonism for class antagonism. It posits all the same things as traditional Marxism:
 1. That there are meta-historical forces at work;
 2. That social pathologies are due to societal conventions and power structures which have to be destroyed;
 3. That conflict between the oppressed and the oppressors provides the dynamic and progressive movement of history;
 4. And that individual morality is determined by where one fits in with the impersonal movement of these historical forces."

2. Civics instruction should promote science and evidence-based decision making as the basis of law and government regulation.

- a. John Dewey and his disciples rejected moral teaching based on religion. One of his students, Norman Woelfel, wrote the following in his book "Molders of the American Mind" (1933, p. 229):

"The things of highest value for individual experience and for ethical standards in modern America will not, however, be found out so long as intellectual leaders maintain a sensitivity *over the supernatural significance of Christian mythology or a sentimental personal attachment to the character of Jesus.* (Emphasis added)."
- b. The current state of culture in America is humanism: Placing man at the center of attention. The concept of humanism has replaced theism, the placing of God at the center of attention. Regarding this development Charles Colson and Ellen Santilli Vaughn write in their book, **The Body** (1992, p. 169):

"Because there is nothing beyond what we see and feel (there is no supernatural), the natural is supreme; therefore, all nature is equal and there is no longer a reason for humanity to be considered the center of the universe. **No surprise, then, that Earth Day would get more attention than Easter.**" (emphasis added)

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3. Civics instruction should promote the concept of positive liberty/positive rights as a means of redress of institutional racism, sexism, and privilege.

- a. If you are poor, uneducated, or powerless, you are constrained from pursuing “happiness.”
- b. Government should provide support to such individuals, else “they will likely languish in their deprived situations and will ultimately suffer the indignity of helplessness.”
(<https://www.libertarianism.org/topics/positive-liberty>)

4. Civics instruction should promote the concepts of diversity, group identity and group power inequalities.

- a. “It is important to recognize that the dialectical nature of identity means that the identity and collective actions of minority groups are heavily dependent on the view of themselves they see reflected in the majority culture. ... An awareness of the social and dialectical nature of identity is therefore critical in a diverse society.” (from <https://www.21global.ucsb.edu/global-e/december-2010/individual-and-collective-discussion-identity-and%20individualism>)
- b. “The State, in complicity with white supremacist organizations, has done everything in its capacity to ensure that the relations of slavery were entrenched in US political, social, and economic life. In doing so it ensured that its slave populace, and other targeted populations, would remain in bondage, trapped in its carceral apparatuses. In reaction to the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and the rise of a black man to the height of its political machine, coupled with the decline of US imperial power in the 21st Century, hegemonic power birthed the only logical solution to preserving its dominant grip: a fascist movement to take control of the State. The ascendance of Donald Trump to power is the natural outcome of the white supremacist state.” (from <https://www.revolutionaryabolition.org/political-framework/>)

5. Civics instruction should promote the concept of social justice.

- a. Social justice must be achieved through the application of evolutionary thought that treats the Constitution as a living, evolving, document.
- b. Identity politics is “fundamentally incompatible not only with the principles of the Declaration of Independence but also the rule of law embodied in the United States Constitution.” (Letter from Matthew Spaulding, Executive Director of the 1776 Project to the Department of Education’s Proposed Rule defining priorities for the American History and Civics Education programs, May 17, 2021, page 85).
- c. The concept that principles are fixed and unchanging, is false. Truth is fluid, not fixed. Therefore, the statement that “We hold these truths to be self-evident” is false: Since truth is fluid, it is NOT “self-evident.”

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Even Abraham Lincoln recognized this tendency for truth to evolve in his August 24, 1855 letter to Joshua Speed, in which he wrote:

1. As a nation, we began by declaring that "*all men are created equal.*" We now practically read it "all men are created equal, *except negroes*" When the Know-Nothings get control, it will read "all men are created equal, *except negroes, and foreigners, and Catholics.*"

For further reading you may wish to consult the following:

Larry Arnn. The Founders Key. Nelson Books, 2012

Charles Colson and Ellen Santilli Vaughn. The Body: Being Light in Darkness (Dallas: Word Publishing), 1992

Peter Chales Hoffer. For Ourselves and Our Posterity (Oxford University Press), 2013

Matthew Spaulding, Executive Director of the 1776 Project Letter to the Department of Education's Proposed Rule defining priorities for the American History and Civics Education programs, May 17, 2021

The full text of Lincoln's letter to Joshua Speed can be found at <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/speed.htm>. Lincoln concludes by writing: "**When it comes to this I should prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretence of loving liberty -- to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocrisy [sic].**" How prescient!

David Lantz. The Unraveling of We the People, Winters Publishing, 2017.