

# EDUCATING FOR DEMOCRACY

## California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools

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### CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS FOUNDATION NAMES 2008 EDUCATING FOR DEMOCRACY AWARD WINNERS Six California Schools Acknowledged

**Los Angeles, CA....** Six California public schools were acknowledged as the winners of the 2008 Educating for Democracy Awards. The awards are part of Educating *for Democracy: The California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools*, a statewide project of the Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF) in collaboration with the Center for Civic Education and the Alliance for Representative Democracy and funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The California Campaign represents a coalition of government, education, business, law, parents, labor and service groups to renew civic education in California,

The goal of the coalition is to strengthen civic education in California's public schools consistent with the recommendations in the Civic Mission of Schools report including:

- Working with schools to assess their current civic education practices and improve them by developing and implementing promising practices and providing teacher preparation and resources.

The following California schools are being recognized for their efforts to prepare students for active and responsible citizenship using the six promising practices in civic education identified in the Carnegie Foundation's Civic Mission of Schools report (2003). For a detailed list of all six promising practices, please go to [www.cms-ca.org](http://www.cms-ca.org).

**“We are proud to acknowledge the impressive and diverse body of work from students, teachers, administrators and parents at these six schools. Clearly, they are leaders in the fight to make effective civic education a greater priority in California public schools,”** stated Marshall Croddy, CRF's Vice President.

### **Schools of Distinction**

#### **Bell Gardens High School, Bell Gardens**

At Bell Gardens High School in Los Angeles County all students are involved in multiple civic education opportunities by the time they graduate. As a graduation requirement, all seniors complete a “Senior Community Project” in which students research community issues of importance to them and take action to address those issues. Further, student government engages more than 3000 students each year in discussions about civic issues and what they can do as a school to make a difference. In the classroom, teachers integrate two dynamic curricula: *City Works*, which engages students in simulations of local government functions and discussions of current events, and *Deliberating in Democracy*, which utilizes technology such as online discussion and videoconferencing with classrooms across ten

countries. Teachers also participate in the *Teaching American History Program*, which provides them with professional development in history education.

### **Santiago Creek School, Santa Ana**

Santiago Creek School, and Alternative High School in Orange County, infuses engaging civic education both in and outside of the classroom. In their Civics class, students debate and discuss current events important to students' lives, such as immigration, gang conflict, housing and the economy. Students then design and implement service projects that relate to these issues, such as crocheting afghans to give to the homeless, and a letter writing campaign to elected officials about the needs of the homeless. In their Human Relations Class, the students participate in simulations, learn about the history of civil rights, and again design and implement service projects to address these issues, such as a mural exchange with Capetown South Africa focused on apartheid and the Truth and Reconciliation Trails. An after school club, *Community as School*, provides more opportunities for students to be involved in their community.

### **Foothill High School, Bakersfield**

At Foothill High School all students participate in a dynamic civic education program in their senior year. The *We the People* curriculum involves students in simulated congressional hearings, and the *Project Citizen* curriculum involves students in service-learning. The school is aiming to deepen these experiences further, by developing a 12<sup>th</sup> grade *We the People* competition. Further, they are planning to provide more curriculum alignment by bringing *Project Citizen* into the 9<sup>th</sup> grade year. The school has also taken seriously the challenge of engaging all incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders in clubs and activities, and has used the program *Link Crew* to achieve this goal. Civic related clubs include History Club, Key Club, Interact, and Forensics. Finally, the school has been using student surveys to involve all students in student governance issues.

### **Meadowbrook Middle School, Poway**

For the last two years, Meadowbrook Middle School (MMS) has participated in a statewide Constitution Day activity, in which students send drawings about what the constitution means to them. MMS has sent in more panels than any school in the state with full grade-level participation and hundreds of students. The students' artwork and messages clearly demonstrate that classroom instruction about the Constitution and Bill of Rights in Meadowbrook classrooms builds content knowledge, while also making the content relevant and meaningful to students. Students participate in History Day, which involves students in becoming experts on historical topics through extensive research and documentation; participate in mock congressional hearings; and mock elections and use the *Project Citizen* curriculum to examine public policy. Out of the classroom, students are involved in myriad civic activities including writing their own views on budget cuts for YouTube, where they received over 5000 hits.

### **School of Merit**

#### **Endeavour Elementary School, Bakersfield**

Endeavour Elementary School has brought together teachers from grades K-4<sup>th</sup>, the student body president, the president of the parent teacher association, and school and district administrators to develop a plan for strengthening civic education at their school. Together they have reviewed the six promising practices in civic education, assessed their schools' current activities, generated ideas for ways to expand civic education opportunities, and engaged others in their school and community in the discussion. Their plan includes increasing the number of classes using *Project Citizen*, mapping civic education standards into every curricular area, and discussing current events in every classroom.

## **Special Recognition**

### **De Anza High School, Richmond**

West Contra Costa Unified School District launched the first year of a civic-based service-learning requirement for graduating seniors. De Anza High School stood out this year for successfully providing high quality service-learning for all students in their Government/Economics classes. Outstanding civic components of their projects included students discussing current events and researching issues of concern. Further, each class went through a democratic process of decision-making which led to the design and implementation of a class project. Their service-learning included studying the economics of poverty, creating hygiene kits and delivering those kits to a homeless shelter, and researching global warming and educating other students about what action can be taken.

**Constitutional Rights Foundation** seeks to instill in our nation's youth a deeper understanding of citizenship through values expressed in our Constitution and its Bill of Rights and to educate young people to become active and responsible participants in our society. CRF is dedicated to assuring our country's future by investing in our youth today. For more information about CRF programs, please visit [www.crf-usa.org](http://www.crf-usa.org).