

# Fresno leaders launch effort to teach students civic responsibility

By Jim Guy

- The six practices in civic learning are:
  1. Providing classroom instruction in government, history, law, economics and democracy
  2. Combining community service and learning
  3. Discussing current events
  4. Giving students a voice in school governance
  5. Offering extracurricular clubs
  6. Simulating democratic processes

To read the task force recommendations, go to:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/documents/cltffinalreport.pdf>

Fresno County educational, legal and business leaders Wednesday kicked off a project that wants to ensure today's students have a stake in tomorrow's democracy.

The California Civic Learning project is a statewide effort intended to emphasize classroom instruction in government, law and economics along with community service, so students can assume roles as voters and leaders in tomorrow's government and have the competence to participate in the global economy. The project's recommendations are the result of a statewide summit on civic learning held in 2013.

Its goal is driven partially by concerns that the state is failing in efforts to make students see a stake in their future: California is 38th in the nation in political engagement, according to a recent Washington Post study, with fewer than 35% of eligible voters casting a ballot in mid-term elections. In addition, less than half of the state's high school seniors see a themselves as having a responsibility to take part in local and state issues.

"The voting numbers are startling," state Justice Judith McConnell said at the breakfast session in north Fresno. And that puts the state in crisis mode, she said, noting that many students can name the judges on "American Idol" but not the justices on the U.S. Supreme Court.

McConnell, who chairs the California Civic Learning task force, is administrative presiding justice of the Fourth Appellate District's Court of Appeal.

Those concerns were echoed by Justice Donald R. Franson Jr., associate justice on the Fifth Appellate District in Fresno.

"We are not preparing our diverse students for a role in civic life," he said.

Juan Arambula, a former Assembly member and former Fresno County supervisor and Fresno Unified School District trustee, cited an African proverb to stress the need for change:

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together," he said. "This project will go a long way to make sure that we have the values to keep us together."

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