

Civics Education, Civics Engagement and Media Literacy Task Force

MEETING MINUTES

Friday, April 26, 2024

3:00 PM Remote Meeting On Zoom and YouTube Live

The meeting was called to order at 3:01 PM by Chairman, Rep. Brown K. 056.

The following task force members were present:

Members: Rep. Brown K. 056; Stephen Armstrong; Andrew Feinstein; Theodore Hollander; Kenneth Lesser; Alison Chandler; Amy Lin Meyerson; Aynsley Diamond; Bianca Shinn; Edward Brown; Jason Mancini; Jonathan Weiner; Sally Whipple; Anthony Perugini; Alison Villanueva

Absent were: Angela Parkinson

Guests: Rep. Smith F. 118

All present members introduced themselves and spoke to their experience in civics education, engagement and media literacy.

Mr. Armstrong asked the members to state what it is they hope the task force can accomplish and to propose suggestions on how achieve it.

Mr. Feinstein stated they hope to collaborate with the Senate's newly established task force that is charged to address the affects of hate speech on children, as the two task forces will ultimately have many of the same goals.

Ms. Lin expressed they are interested in seeing the curriculum include promotion of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), deterring hate speech, and confronting bias, including providing techniques for de-escalation and peaceful conflict resolution to educators.

Mr. Hollander expressed they are interested in seeing increased mandates for civic education in middle and high schools, as well as to extend such mandates to elementary schools.

Mr. Feinstein expressed that mandates are disfavored in the legislature and that they are interested in seeing teaching models of interactive situations that teach and promote collaboration and compromise.

Rep. Brown expressed their interest in seeing the task force's study findings provide the teeth necessary to inform and convince the legislature that increasing civics education credit requirements is needed.

Ms. Shinn expressed their interest in seeing a mandatory and engaging civics education curriculum be extended to middle school students.

Ms. Villanueva expressed their interest in seeing key stakeholders included in the task force's conversations.

Ms. Whipple expressed support for the previously stated goal to extend civics education to elementary school students.

Mr. Armstrong expressed that civics education should not only be taught in schools, but other agencies such as museums and historical societies as well.

Mr. Lesser expressed interest in seeing a regional civics engagement task force established to expand input and extend study time.

Mr. Mancini expressed interest in seeing a landscape assessment that identifies all the human resources, operational resources, programs and projects that already exist to see how others approach civics engagement.

Mr. Brown emphasized the importance of including media literacy as an additional tool to help students develop critical thinking skills.

Rep. Smith expressed media literacy is vitally important in exercising civic responsibilities.

Mr. Armstrong asked Diamond to provide the college-level perspective of civic engagement and media literacy.

Ms. Diamond stated it's a balance between conversing with faculty and institutional leadership. They also proposed that each member of the task force exchange emails that details what it is that makes the task force important to them and their future goals.

Ms. Chandler expressed interest in seeing the task force find a way to embed civic engagement and media literacy throughout the entire school curriculum, not only as a singular component of it.

Mr. Perugini expressed support for extending the civics engagement curriculum to K-12 and repetitively enforcing such courses throughout the K-12 experience.

Mr. Feinstein expressed support for the idea of embedding civic engagement throughout the school day, rather than mandating it as a singular component of the curriculum.

Mr. Armstrong asked the task force how they could engage with the non-college, adult community.

Mr. Hollander suggested a curriculum that includes take-home assignments for students K-12 that requires the student to engage with their parents and discuss the assignment focusing on civic engagement.

Ms. Chandler suggested implementing a "teach-to-learn" strategy to get parents and adults involved in civic engagement while reinforcing the students' knowledge of the material. They also suggested including public libraries as a forum for adults to learn and involve themselves in civic engagement.

Ms. Shinn expressed support for including public libraries as a forum for adults.

Ms. Villanueva expressed interest in seeing the task force articulate a position statement that communicates the state's mission for education so school districts and education organizations have a clear, shared understanding of the state's core values.

Rep. Brown thanked the members for their ideas and discussed future meeting plans for the task force.

The next meeting will be the end of May.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:24 PM.

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Rosalie Filippone  
Task Force Administrator

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Minutes Prepared by