

Project E Pluribus Unum

Who is an American? Americans are not defined by race, religion, or a uniform culture. Their common bond is neither blood nor history, but an abstract truth. Peter W. Schramm explained this when he was honored by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services as an “Outstanding American by Choice.”

Schramm was a youngster in Hungary during a failed revolution against Soviet Cold War Communism. His father told him that the family was going to America because, “We are Americans, but in the wrong place.” Schramm’s father understood America to be both a *place* and an *idea*¹--the same idea that Abraham Lincoln identified in 1858 as the link connecting newer immigrants to the Founding Fathers:

“ . . . but when they look through that old Declaration of Independence they find that those old men say that ‘**We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,**’ and then they feel that that moral sentiment taught in that day evidences their relation to those men, that it is the father of all moral principle in them, and that they have a right to claim it as though they were blood of the blood, and flesh of the flesh of the men who wrote that Declaration, (loud and long continued applause) and so they are. That is the electric cord in that Declaration that links the hearts of patriotic and liberty-loving men together, that will link those patriotic hearts as long as the love of freedom exists in the minds of men throughout the world.”²

Abraham Lincoln speaking in Chicago, Illinois, July 10, 1858

This abstract idea expressed in the Declaration of Independence is intuitive; however, knowledge about American government, democratic principles, history, geography, documents, symbols, and holidays must be gained by study and experience.

The goal of project **E Pluribus Unum** is to showcase ideas and strategies for ESL instructors to use in preparing immigrants to be successful with the recently-redesigned test for citizenship. The following overview of teaching demands and instructional resources delineates the context for project **E Pluribus Unum**.

¹ Use your favorite search engine to look for *American by Choice Peter W. Schramm*.

² Go to <http://www.vindicatingthefounders.com/>. Click on *Chapter 7* in the menu on right screen. Scroll down and click on *Electric Cord Speech*.

An ERIC Digest article by Thomas Nixon and Fran Keenan³ refers to Aliza Becker and Marketa Lindt's enumeration of a citizenship teacher's functions:

- to teach the benefits (and responsibilities)⁴ of citizenship
- to educate students about the naturalization process
- to prepare learners for the oral and written exams, including teaching language skills, culture, and content
- to teach test-taking strategies
- to instill confidence: empowerment
- to give referrals for legal advice

Becker and Lindt stress that the teacher must not assume the role of legal advisor: Rather, a teacher should be familiar with local organizations that offer free or low-cost legal assistance.

These instructional tasks are complicated by a variety of beliefs about citizenship. Westheimer and Kahne discuss three concepts of "the good citizen."⁵

- **The Personally Responsible Citizen** reflects character traits such as honesty, integrity, self-discipline, and hard work. This type of citizen works, pays taxes, obeys laws, and helps those in need by volunteering in crises such as floods and tornadoes. S/he contributes to food or clothing drives, works in soup kitchens or senior centers; and contributes time/money to charitable causes.
- **The Participatory Citizen** actively participates in the civic affairs and social life of the community, state and nation. S/he learns how government and community-based organizations work and engages in planning and organizing collective, community-based efforts.
- **The Justice Oriented Citizen** pursues social justice and calls attention to injustice. S/he emphasizes strategies for change that challenge injustice (especially strategies that address the root of a problem). These citizens are more likely to be involved in social movements, and they work to effect system change.

Existing resources for citizenship instruction include materials by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. North Carolina community colleges have free instructional materials in **The Virtual Library** at <http://www.nc-net.info/>. A pertinent selection of other free internet materials from a variety of sources

³To find this article go to <http://www.erictesters.org/> and search for *Citizenship Preparation*. Click on *Citizenship Preparation for Adult ESL Learners*. **ERIC Identifier:** ED409747.

⁴Parenthetical material has been added by the writer of this paper.

⁵Use your favorite search engine and enter *Educating the "Good" Citizen* by Westheimer and Kahne. Alternatively, you can search for *The American Political Science Association* and then use the internal search to locate the document.

is included at the end of this document. Any internet search yields numerous print textbooks and workbooks for sale as well.

Therefore--considering the content to be covered, the need to evoke active personal engagement in addition to passive knowledge, and the available resources--a promising approach for project **E Pluribus Unum** consists of:

- creating multiple ways to review the test questions and N-400 form,
- involving students directly in community activities or projects, and
- using writing to engage students' thoughts and perceptions on American citizenship.

Some ideas for developing this three-pronged approach are on the following pages. Consortium members may work directly from these starter ideas or may carry out similar topics of their own choosing.

1. Create Multiple Ways to Review the Redesigned Naturalization Questions and the N-400 Application

<http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/100q.pdf>

Applicants for citizenship must

- give complete answers and statements about the N-400 questions,
- give complete answers to the civics questions,
- use simple strategies to check their understanding,
- ask clarifying questions,
- understand and act on basic commands,
- read sentences correctly,
- answer questions in writing,
- write dictated sentences,
- sign and print their name.

For the listening skills, students need to work on question words like *who*, *when*, *where*, and *how*. For the writing skills, they must be careful not to eliminate words like *the*. For questions on the N-400, they must understand the meaning of *ever*.

To address these skills, we propose to develop multiple ways to ask the civics questions and the questions on the N-400 form. For example, question #30 reads, “If the President can no longer serve, who becomes President?” A simple rewrite produces “Who becomes President if the President can no longer serve?” Question #36 reads, “What are two Cabinet-level positions?” A rewrite could be, “Name two Cabinet-level positions.” Another possibility entails making incorrect statements and having the learners correct them. For example, “The first President of the United States was General Dwight D. Eisenhower.” The N-400 offers many opportunities for questions: “Do you need accommodation for a disability or impairment?” “Have you been in the U.S. military?” “What color is your hair?”

After expanding ways to ask the questions, find multiple ways to incorporate them into games and puzzles, with bonus points for actions like saying the Pledge of Allegiance or singing the Star Spangled Banner.

Civics Topic and # of Questions

- A. Principles of American Democracy (12)
- B. System of Government (35)
- C. Rights and Responsibilities (10)

American History

- A. Colonial Period and Independence (13)
- B. 1800s (7)
- C. Recent American History and Other Important Historical Information (10)

Integrated Civics

- A. Geography (8)
- B. Symbols (3)
- C. Holidays (2)

N-400 Application Sections

- Part 1. Your Name
- Part 2. Information about your eligibility
- Part 3. Information about you
- Part 4. Addresses and telephone numbers
- Part 5. Information for criminal records search
- Part 6. Information about your residence and employment
- Part 7. Time outside the United States
- Part 8. Information about your marital history
- Part 9. Information about your children
- Part 10. Additional questions
 - General Questions
 - Affiliations
 - Continuous Residence
 - Good Moral Character
 - Removal, Exclusion and Deportation Proceedings
 - Selective Service Registration
 - Oath Requirements
- Part 11. Your signature
- Part 12. Signature of person who prepared this application for you
- Part 13. Signature at interview
- Part 14. Oath of Allegiance

2. Involve Students in Community Activities

Starfish Projects

The Starfish

Based on The Star Thrower by Loren Eiseley

As was his habit, the man was walking along the seashore just before sunrise. He could see a young boy in the distance, bending down, picking something up, and throwing it into the water. Time and time again, he kept hurling things into the ocean.

The man walked faster. As he drew near he was able to see that the boy was picking up starfish that had been washed up on the beach, and--one at a time--he was throwing them back into the water.

The man asked the boy what he was doing. The boy replied, "I'm saving the starfish. The tide washed them onto the beach, but it is going out now. The sun will soon be hot, and if I don't throw them back, they will die here."

"Why waste your time," said the man. "There are miles of beach, and starfish are all along the way. You can't possibly make a difference."

The boy smiled, bent down and picked up another starfish. As he threw it back into the sea, he replied, "I made a huge difference to that one!"

- organize and carry out a project of your choice to "make a difference"
- recycle
- organize (or join) a "clean up" campaign to get trash off the roadside or out of the river
- volunteer at an elementary school
- donate blood
- volunteer at a local agency in your community
(Loaves and Fishes, Meals on Wheels, the Humane Society, the Community Kitchen)
- send letters and care packages to servicemen overseas
- for a period of weeks, do "random acts of kindness" for community recipients (other than your friends)
Have each student keep a journal of the acts s/he did, how each was received, and how it made him/her feel to do these. Be sure that students do and submit one/two things per week to you. Also let them use class time before a break or near the end of class to tell classmates about their "random acts."
- start/join a neighborhood watch program or a safe communities project
(Safe Communities projects can focus on a variety things: driver/traffic safety, abuse prevention, school bullying, heart safety, motorcycle safety, drug abuse prevention)
- Grow a community garden and give the produce to a local food charity or collect food for a local food bank

Custodians of the Future Projects

Life today in the United States is a gift from past generations. Preserving freedom has taken enormous courage, loss of life, pain, effort, hard work and risk. Such commitment to country (patriotism) must be ongoing. The people of the United States today must be the protectors of liberty. Help students appreciate this gift from the past by finding out about the investment in this country made by preceding generations of people in the locale where students are now living and studying.

- visit historic monuments and historic preservation sites
- explore old cemeteries to find the graves of people who die in wars
- interview older people (perhaps in retirement homes) who fought in WWII or worked in the war effort on the home front.

Your Job Description as a Citizen Projects

*"Ask not what your country can do for you -
ask what you can do for your country."*

John Fitzgerald Kennedy

- work at a polling station
- invite an elected official to visit your class and talk with you about how something works, e.g., find out how your state/local taxes are used
- go on a police "ride along"
- attend a school board meeting
- attend a city council meeting
- attend a criminal trial or serve on a mock jury
- volunteer in an election campaign

3. Looking at America through the Lens of My Life

Students Write Their Thoughts and Perceptions on America

Go to <http://www.academiaexchange.net/Kalman/Ode2Aamerica.html> and read “An Ode to America” by Cornel Nistorescu, the managing editor of the Romanian Newspaper “Evenimentul Zilei” (News of the Day). Nistorescu ponders the united response of Americans after 9-11, wondering what enabled Americans to respond as they did. His conclusion: “Only freedom can work such miracles.”

Nistorescu’s view of America gives an outside perspective of America during a time of stress. Some topics are suggested below to get your students thinking and writing about their own thoughts about America and Americans.

What I Know about Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness (students’ personal experiences with restrictions or opportunities here or in other countries)

As a naturalized citizen how will I fit into American culture and contribute to the American national identity?

America was . . . America is . . . America will be

Some American values I see practiced daily are
Are these the values in the Declaration and Bill of Rights or do they seem to be a different set of values?

I would like to tell (an elected official of your choice) that Or write a letter to the editor (or the President) about what you want for America.

Why did our founders think education was important to democratic government?
What do you think the American people must know in order to preserve American democracy?

Background: Thomas Jefferson proposed a system of free public elementary schools, believing them to be essential to the continuation of a democratic form of government. Jefferson wrote, “If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be.” In similar vein, James Madison said, “Popular government without education is the prologue to a farce or a tragedy.”

What problem(s) do you think are endangering America today? What are the founding values that need to be brought to bear on the problem(s)?

“Freedom is . . .” Let the class write as many ways to complete this phrase as they can.

“A good citizen is . . .” Again, let the class write as many responses as they can.

What is your American Dream? What do you need to do to achieve it?

What has America done that you admire? What has it failed to do? Can America still lead the world?

What is your vision of citizenship?

Life in America is a gift from the citizens of the past to the citizens of the present. As a new citizen, what can you do to preserve and protect America’s founding values and pass them on to the citizens of the future?

Many people feel that America has lost something. Do you feel that way? Why or why not? http://www.americanc.org.uk/online/American_Dream.htm

How do American heroes show American values? Compare early American heroes with those you hear about in today’s news, e.g., the cowboy with the basketball star.

What are the differences between the America in movies/television and the America you know?

Before the Civil War, Americans said “the United States are . . .” After the Civil War, they began to say “the United States is . . .” Why?

[For the teacher: Go to <http://encarta.msn.com/> and use the internal search to look for *United States Government*. Click on the result of that name. Scroll to the bottom and click on (page) 10. Scroll down to C. *Changing Balance* and read the first paragraph.]

Time in America: Americans treat time as a resource, like water or money. Does this attitude cause you problems? Why or why not? What is your own view of time?

Who is an American?

Have students explore the topic “What I Love about America.” To get you thinking, one individual has written the following:

“I love the rule of law—that it applies to us all, no matter what our station in life. It may seem that the rich and powerful are treated better in the

system, but in America the rich and powerful can and do go to jail from time to time while the least powerful and the poor have the right to confront their accusers, the right to an attorney, the right to remain silent, and the right to refuse admission to government officials wanting to enter their home.”

Paraphrase the Declaration of Independence in modern English.

Each generation must be taught to cherish and protect freedom and liberty at home and abroad. What are some of the “seeds” of freedom that you think need to be planted in the hearts of each generation?

Argue (agree or disagree with) either of the following statements. Explain your reasoning.

We cannot have freedom without personal responsibility. Each person must accept the consequences of his/her own decisions.

*Innovation and service are best produced by competition.
Government and monopolies give poorer results at greater cost.*

An issue currently under consideration in America is some form of national healthcare for everyone.

- What would the following Americans say about national healthcare?
Why? What do you think?

Yet this government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of its way. It does not keep the country free. It does not settle the West. It does not educate. The character inherent in the American people has done all that has been accomplished; and it would have done somewhat more, if the government had not sometimes got in its way. Henry David Thoreau

A government big enough to give you everything you want is a government big enough to take from you everything you have. Gerald Ford

Congress has not unlimited powers to provide for the general welfare, but only those specifically enumerated. Thomas Jefferson

I am for a government rigorously frugal and simple. Were we directed from Washington when to sow, when to reap, we should soon want bread.

Thomas Jefferson

- Is it right for the government to put heavy taxes on unhealthy or unsafe products like cigarettes, candy and soda to try to get Americans to be healthier?
- How do you feel about Japan’s new national law requiring all citizens between the ages of 40 and 74 to have their waists regularly measured

annually? According to U.S. News & World Report: "If a man's waist is more than 33.5 inches or a woman's more than 35.5 inches, they are considered at risk and referred for counseling and close monitoring."

Private companies and local governments will be hit with hefty financial penalties if their employees fail to meet the waistband quotas set by Japan's Ministry of Health. Is this fair?

- Canadians are often on long waiting lists for a doctor's appointment or life-saving treatment like radiation because the government rations health care to contain costs. Do you want government and corporate (insurance) employees to determine what health care you can have and when? What are other alternatives? (For the teacher: See <http://www.futurecasts.com> and click on *Book Reviews* under the Archive Categories. Now click on Gratzer's *The Cure* under Health and Health Care.)

How do you see yourself as being very much like the Americans you see/know?

How do you see yourself as being different from the Americans you see/know?

What is your contact with Americans? (friends, at work, in class, in church, practically none, etc.)

Choose local newspaper articles, identify the pertinent constitutional concepts, and agree or disagree with the writer.

Online Resources

Note: For many of the following documents, you need Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available free online. Go to <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/adobepdf.html> and click on *Downloads* in the menu across the top of the screen. Choose *Get Adobe Reader* in the drop-down menu and follow the directions on your screen.

USCIS Sample Sentences for Written English Testing

Use your favorite search engine to look for *M-476 A Guide to Naturalization*. Scroll to the final page in this document for the sample sentences.

USCIS Naturalization Self Test

At <http://www.uscis.gov>, click on *Education and Resources* (across the top of the screen). Now click on *Naturalization Self Test* in the menu on the left of your screen.

USCIS Redesigned Test Vocabulary

Google *Writing Vocabulary for the Redesigned Naturalization Test* and click on *Redesigned Naturalization Test*. Scroll to the bottom and print the following documents:

- [Redesigned Naturalization Test: Vocabulary List for the Reading Test](#)
(164KB PDF)
- [Redesigned Naturalization Test: Vocabulary List for the Writing Test](#)
(165KB PDF)

USCIS Teaching Objectives

Use your favorite search engine to look for ***The Revised Naturalization Test: Teaching Objectives: A Guide for Adult Education Civics and Citizenship Teachers of Immigrants Volume 1***, a USCIS document that is unavailable at the time of this writing, but is expected to be downloadable soon. This document explains the five skill areas that will be tested (listening, speaking, reading, writing, and civics) and gives examples of how each may be tested.

Other USCIS Publications

At <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>, click first on *Education and Resources* (across the top of the screen), then on *Civics and Citizenship Study Materials* (in the left screen menu)—OR—Go directly to <http://www.uscis.gov/civicsflashcards>. Scroll to the bottom of this Civics and Citizenship Study Materials, and click on following PDF documents.

- **[Civics Flash Cards](#)** (3461KB PDF)
A useful study tool for students and teachers.
- **[Civics Flash Cards \(reversed colors\)](#)** (3465KB PDF)

- **Learn About the United States: Quick Civics Lessons** (1242KB PDF)
Short lessons based on the U.S. history and government questions found on the naturalization test.
- **Sample U.S. History and Government Questions** (169KB PDF)
Study questions for naturalization test preparation.
- **Sample Civics Questions for Elderly Applicants** (135KB PDF)
- **The Citizen's Almanac** (6672KB PDF) A handbook on U.S. civic history and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
- **Pocket Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States** (732KB PDF) A pocket-size version of America's two most important documents.

Other routes to some of the above documents include:

- **Sample questions that may be asked during the Naturalization Exam:** Google *U.S. History and Government questions USCIS*. You will find two PDF documents. One has 96 questions, beginning with *What are the colors of our flag?* The other—for elderly applicants—has 25 questions, beginning with *Why do we celebrate the Fourth of July?*
- **Flash Cards:** Go to <http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/M-623.pdf> or search for USCIS M-623 and choose the PDF document that begins *1 What are the colors of our flag? Red, white, and blue.*
- **Learn About the United States:** This document may be found at <http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/M-638.pdf> or you can search for *USCIS M-638* and look for *Learn About the United States* in the results.

Dictation

For dictation practice, go to <http://www.uscitizenpod.blogspot.com/>. Scroll down and click on *older posts* at the bottom of the screen. Now scroll down to Thursday, June 12 and click on *here* for Answers in Complete Sentences, a set of sentences for reading and dictation. You can also get these sentences by clicking on **NEW* N-400 and 96Q Dictation* under the heading US Citizenship Podcast Documents in the blue band on the right of your screen.

Podcasts, Interviews, Handouts, Dictation

Go to <http://www.uscitizenpod.blogspot.com/>. Scroll down and click on *older posts* at the bottom of the screen. Now click on any of the Labels (*Citizenship, Immigration, INS, N-400, Naturalization, USCIS*). These daily postings include written guidance, a podcast, keywords, dictation sentences, and a referral to the appropriate Handout (in the blue band on the right of your screen). Note that when you directly access the Podcasts, Interviews, Handouts, and Dictation via the menu in the blue band on the right of your screen, you will not get the

keywords, dictation sentences, and general guidance that is included under the daily posts. Be sure to explore the handouts.

Ideas for Study Tools

<http://www.studystack.com/menu-73378> Marstan's Citizenship Study Stack.

Bill of Rights Institute

<http://www.billofrightsinstitute.org/redesign.asp> Click on *Teacher* and explore free lessons, links to resources, founding documents, and daily news stories that highlight issues related to the Bill of Rights.

The Virtual Library

Go to <http://www.nc-net.info/>. In the menu on the left of your screen, highlight *Teaching Resources*. Move your cursor to the right for a drop-down menu and click on *ESL*. Applicable materials are denoted below. The name of each project is in the menu on the left of your screen.

Click on *North Carolina Curriculum Guide*. Scroll down to Domain Eight: The USA. There is a section of *General Resources* followed by lessons entitled *The Colonies, Independence, Government Structure, From Sea to Shining Sea, The Civil War, Elections and Voting, From Agriculture to Industry, The Cost of Government, The World Wars, The Legal System, A Shrinking Globe*.

Click on *The House I Live In*. This project contains lessons entitled *My American Dream, What is American Democracy, and Why Should I Become a Citizen?*

Click on *Living in America*. This project includes lessons entitled *Rights and Responsibilities, Citizenship, Due Process of Law/Interacting with the Police, The Court System, and American Government*.

Click on *A Collection of ESL Lesson Plans*. This project has a pertinent lesson called *Map Skills*.

Click on *Participatory Learning in EL/CIVICS*. This project contains a section entitled *Citizenship in the Community, Nation, and World*.

Click on *ESL: A Guide to US Citizenship*. This entire project was written before the recent changes but is easy to update with current information.

Click on *PROJECT Next Peace*. This project has a section on *Civics and US Government*.

Click on *Links to Literature*. This project includes a study of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech.

Click on *EL/CIVICS Education Curriculum*. This project contains the following lessons in one or more of Years One, Two, and Three: 13 Original Colonies; 3 Branches of U.S. Government; Abraham Lincoln's Birthday; American Flag; American Government; Arlington National Cemetery; Capitol Building; Citizenship Manual; Christmas; Columbus Day; Common Immigration; Congress; Declaration of Independence; Executive Branch; Federal Government; George Washington's Birthday; Government; Great Seal; House of Representatives; Income Tax; Independence Day; Jefferson Memorial; Judicial Branch; July 4th; Labor Day; Lincoln Memorial; Local, State, and Federal Government; Martin Luther King, Jr.; Memorial Day; National Anthem; National Motto; New Year's Day; Pledge of Allegiance; President of the United States; Responsibilities of US Citizens; Rights of US Citizens; Senate; State Government; Statue of Liberty; Supreme Court; Thanksgiving; Two Ways to Become a Citizen; Uncle Sam; Washington, D.C.; Washington; What is a US Citizen?; and White House.

Citizenship Test by the leading Spanish-language media company in the United States: Go to <http://www.univision.com> and click on *Inmigración* in the menu on the left side of the screen. In the middle of your screen under the heading *Formularios del USCIS*, click on *Preparate para ser ciudadano de los Estados Unidos. El mejor examen en linea para adquirir la ciudadanía norteamericana*. Click on *English Version*. Click on *Get Ready Here*.

A Practical Guide for Integrating Civic Responsibility into the Curriculum
edited by Karla Gottlieb and Gail Robinson.

Search by title for this 94 page publication of the Community College Press.
Choose a result that lets you view the entire publication in PDF or try
http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ResourceCenter/Projects_Partnerships/Current/HorizonsServiceLearningProject/Publications/CR_guide.pdf

Other Sites to Explore

- **Center for Civic Education** www.civiced.org
- **CIRCLE** (Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) www.civicyouth.org
- **Constitutional Rights Foundation** www.crf-usa.org
- **First Amendment Schools** www.firstamendmentschools.org
- **National Center for Learning and Citizenship (NCLC)**
www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/projectsPartners/nclc/nclc_main.htm
- **National Council for the Social Studies** www.ncss.org
- **Our Documents** (National History Day, The National Archives and Records Administration) at www.ourdocuments.gov