

## **Florida**

### **Florida Campaign for Civic Education**

**State Facilitator:** Annette Boyd Pitts, Executive Director, The Florida Law Related Education Association, Inc. (850) 386-8223, [ABPflreaed@aol.com](mailto:ABPflreaed@aol.com)

**Congressional Conference Delegation Membership:** Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis, Supreme Court of Florida; Representative Curtis Richardson, Florida House of Representatives; Hank Coxe, President, The Florida Bar; Ben Wilcox, Director, Common Cause; Marilyn Wills, League of Women Voters; John Doyle, Miami – Dade County Public Schools; Levon Terrell, Florida Department of Education; Mark Schlakman, Florida State University; Justice Barbara Pariente, Supreme Court of Florida; Justice Peggy Quince, Supreme Court of Florida; Mary Chiles, Office of U. S. Senator Bill Nelson; Robert Guterrez, Florida State University; Diane Wheatley-Gilotti, League of Women Voters-Florida.

**State Plan:** The Florida Civic Campaign promotes civic education state-wide through an array of programmatic, policy, and awareness initiatives. The Florida Law Related Education Association, Inc. serves as the coordinating body for the campaign. Main objectives include:

- 1) Expand visibility of the status of civic education in Florida's public schools;
- 2) Collaborate with public and private entities to advance the status of civic education in Florida;
- 3) Encourage effective programs and policies to improve the civic mission of Florida's schools;
- 4) Expand the development and delivery of civic education resources to Florida's schools;
- 5) Incorporate civics as a requirement for middle school promotion;
- 6) Encourage involvement of government officials in K-12 civic education classrooms and teacher training/education experiences;
- 7) Broaden support for civic education state-wide;

**Surveys/Inventories:** The Florida Campaign has developed a civic education survey instrument to ascertain the status of civic education in each of Florida's 67 school districts. Information is obtained annually. A copy of the instrument is available at [www.flrea.org](http://www.flrea.org).

**Legislation:** The campaign succeeded in expanding civic education requirements at the middle school level this year. The Florida Bar initiated a state-wide poll to document the

lack of public knowledge about constitutional principles and the structure/function of government. A media campaign followed to increase visibility of poll results and the status of civic education in Florida's schools. Common Cause and the League of Women Voters provided leadership in the legislative component of the campaign. Rep. Curtis Richardson introduced legislation to require the teaching of "state and federal government and civics education" in middle school.

A one semester civics mandate was passed during the 2006 legislative session as part of the middle school promotion legislation. A case study of the campaign's success is available on the FLREA website at [www.flrea.org](http://www.flrea.org).

**Other Activities:** A host of initiatives are underway to advance civic education in Florida's schools. The Supreme Court of Florida hosts a 4-1/2 day training for middle and high school teachers to prepare them to effectively teach about the courts and the Constitution. All seven justices serve as faculty for the institute. Twenty five teachers are trained annually. A multiplier effect is generated as graduates return to their districts and work with circuit judges to provide local training.

A new initiative of Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis has been implemented this year. Justice Teaching is a state-wide initiative to pair local judges and attorneys with every public school in Florida. Training and materials are provided. A web site provides registration, training dates, materials, and other resources for volunteers.

The Supreme Court of Florida also hosts a variety of educational opportunities for Florida students including a high school moot court competition, Constitution Day educational event, field trips, and Law Day initiatives.

The Florida Law Related Education Association, Inc. provides a wide range of constitutional education programs, hands-on student public policy initiatives, professional development opportunities, curriculum development and other resources as part of The Florida Campaign for Civic Education. Additional information may be obtained by visiting [www.flrea.org](http://www.flrea.org) or writing to Annette Boyd Pitts at [ABPflreaed@aol.com](mailto:ABPflreaed@aol.com).

A new initiative to expand legislative involvement in civics education will be proposed this year. The campaign has also requested involvement in the new standards development process.

A broad based coalition is developing state-wide to expand the work of the campaign. Regular meetings are being held new priorities and initiatives are currently under review.