

## The New Hampshire Institute for Civics Education: Celebrating Our Beginnings, 2015-2016

The idea behind the Institute began years ago during a dinner conversation among lawyers and educators who shared a common concern regarding the stunning lack of civic knowledge in our population. Mary Susan Leahy, attorney and now Chair, formed a task force that met regularly to discuss possible ways to address this issue and solve this problem. The New Hampshire Institute for Civics Education is a result of many collaborators, conversations, and ideas shared over at least eight years.

Generously supported by the William W. Treat Foundation, the New Hampshire Supreme Court Society, the New Hampshire Bar Foundation, and William W. Upton, the New Hampshire Institute for Civics Education (NHICE) has completed its inaugural trainings for New Hampshire educators and is in the process of planning its second year. NHICE is fortunate to have benefited from so many individuals who have shared our mission, volunteered their time, and offered their ideas. Our first Board of Trustees will be gathered for the first time on June 8, 2016 at Red River Theatre in Concord for a celebration of our incorporation as a non-profit organization.

On February 20 and March 20 of 2015, NHICE hosted twenty-five high school and middle school teachers for two days of rigorous professional development in the area of civics education at Dartmouth College. Dartmouth Professor Aine Donovan and University of New Hampshire Professor Joseph Onosko along with NHICE President Martha Madsen organized these days featuring Tufts University's CIRCLE Executive Director Peter Levine and Yale Law School Professor Akhil Reed Amar. The program, titled "**Cultivating Participatory Citizens**" was very well received, as evidenced by the following quotations from the participant evaluations:

- *The speakers and reading materials were quite wonderful! This institute has really helped me to grow as an educator.*
- *Akhil Amar lived up to all expectations and exceeded them! Keep up the highly engaging and intellectual seminars.*
- *Very insightful speakers! Really enjoyed the ability to have discussions with colleagues and Amar's view was phenomenal!*
- *I enjoyed the in-depth aspect and scholarly expectations. I was challenged by the readings and intense lecture and discussion. I have enjoyed the group and interaction with this organization.*
- *This institute could not have been improved. I would like to see other seminars on constitutional issues, especially creative ways to apply this knowledge to the classroom. Overall the best seminar I've been to.*
- *I don't recall a workshop or seminar where I learned so much.*
- *Being around like-minded educators who are all faced with the mission of preparing our students to become participatory citizens was what I liked best. This was a great institute. Make this a regular thing.*

Sixteen of the twenty-five teachers who attended these events submitted high-quality curricula inspired by this training. Their work has been shared with other New Hampshire educators via *Constitutionally Speaking With Educators* e-newsletters and on the NHICE page on Constitutionally Speaking's website.

On June 26 and 27, 2015, twenty-eight elementary school educators gathered at Saint Anselm College's New Hampshire Institute of Politics for a workshop entitled, "**Planting the Seeds for Participatory Citizens: Integrating Civics Into the Elementary Classroom.**" Our keynote speaker was Third Circuit Judge Marjorie Rendell, the former First Lady of Pennsylvania and co-founder of the

Rendell Center for Civic Education and Civic Engagement. Presenters from Pennsylvania, California, and New Hampshire shared practical and engaging techniques that enable teachers to integrate civics concepts into their existing language arts curricula and classroom management systems. These elementary educators also submitted “slices of their best teaching” ideas inspired by this training. Please find representative samples of their very positive evaluation comments below:

- *I am ready to go back and teach my students about voting and the court system. Everything was GREAT! If you repeated this I would send my friends and tell them how important it is to attend.*
- *This workshop was fabulous. I really needed ways to incorporate social studies into what I do already. I feel I accomplished this here. The presenters were awesome! The teachers from Pennsylvania inspired me.*
- *Rebecca Valbuena was awesome! She is motivating, inspiring, and dynamic! She inspires me to do more civics in my classroom. This was wonderful!*
- *All aspects of the institute were wonderful. So grateful for the meals and great speakers!*
- *I am very excited to use “We the Civics Kids” curriculum and many other ideas. My other favorite presentation was Rebecca Valbuena; so many of her ideas are something I can implement in my classroom.*
- *How great to have a lawyer and a judge!*
- *I plan to visit the Stanton School in PA to see mock trials and their student government first-hand!*
- *All were excellent! I hope there will be lots more institutes for elementary level. We're always left out. These two days were so valuable. It's the best PD I've had in a long time. Judge Rendell coming really made an impact on me. Her coming made me feel that what I do is important.*

During first in the nation primary season (fall 2015- winter 2016) NHICE partnered with the Community College System of New Hampshire to support its Civic Forum Series - “Touching the Future.” Speakers included Hillary Clinton, John Kasich, Martin O'Malley, Judd Gregg, David Souter, Robert Putnam, Ed Rendell, Paul Montrone, Lindsay Graham, and Maggie Hassan. For more information connect to <http://www.ccsnh.edu/forums>

Looking ahead, we are capitalizing on our positive momentum and continuing our educational programming -increasing our numbers - in 2016 and 2017. On June 23 and 24, 2016 NHICE will host a training entitled “**Empowering Connected Citizenship: Making Civics Count in Middle School**” designed specifically for middle school teachers. We hope to train up to 50 educators at the NH Institute of Politics. These two days will feature training in:

- Game-Based Learning in the Middle School Classroom and iCivics
- Positive Engagement Using New Social Media
- The Art of Civic Engagement: Comics, Music, and Art
- Tools and Rules for Advocacy & The Power of Youth Voice
- Discovering the Bill of Rights
- Mock Trials in Middle School: Dovetailing with the Common Core Standards

Presenters will include Val McVey of the Florida Joint Center for Citizenship, Ann Gogol of Discovering Justice, Boston, MA, Marek Bennet of Live Free and Draw, Sarah Shanahan of Media Power Youth, Vicki Hebert of Dover Youth to Youth, and Jared Bedrick of the NH Mock Trial Association.

On June 27, 2016 NHICE will train up to 50 elementary educators in a program entitled “**Empowering Our Youngest Students: Civic Engagement in Elementary School.**” The Children's Museum in Dover will provide an inspiring venue for training in topics including:

- Your Vote is Your Voice
- What is Your Civics Superpower? Leading Students to Take Informed Action
- The Marriage of Literacy and Civics Literacy: We the Civics Kids
- Teaching the Court System: Jack and the Beanstalk
- Children Discovering Justice
- Captivating Young Minds and Hearts: Civic Engagement through the Inquiry Arc

Presenters will once again include national as well as local civics education scholars and practitioners. Veteran presenters Rebecca Valbuena, Susan Wolowitz, and Judge Marjorie Rendell will be joined this year by Jan Shafer of Discovering Justice, Boston, MA, Trish Ziakas and Anneliese Worster of Concord, and Keene authors JJ Prior and Emilia Whippie Prior.

Our high school trainings are still in the planning stage. NHICE hopes to work with Dartmouth College and Hanover High School's The Council to present to teams of administrators, teachers, and students regarding authentic student government and democracy in high school. Dr. Marc Brasof of Arcadia University has expressed an interest in presenting along with The Council at Dartmouth in early March 2017.

In addition, we are hoping to host presenters Dr. Michelle Herzog (past President of the National Council for the Social Studies and C3 Consultant,) Dr. Daisy Martin (Director of Social Studies Performance Assessment at SCALE, Stanford University,) and/or Dianna Hess ( co-author of *The Political Classroom* and Dean of the School of Education, University of Wisconsin at Madison) at Saint Anselm's New Hampshire Institute of Politics in early December, 2016.