

# PARTNERS

*in education for democracy*

A Newsletter of Civitas:  
An International Civic Education  
Exchange Program

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## Palermo Summit: A City in Renaissance Welcomes 350 International Civic Educators

By Sarah J. Wheat

More than 350 educators from around the world met over the summer in Palermo, Italy — once a bastion of organized crime — to participate in two landmark civic education conferences.

The CIVITAS International First World Congress (sponsored by the City of Palermo, the Italian Minister of Education and CIVITAS International) and the ICEEP conference (sponsored by the Center for Civic Education) were designed to broaden the Civitas program and to examine the role of civic

education in strengthening a culture of democracy and lawfulness.

Palermo was selected to host the events because of the recent “Palermo Renaissance,” which has dramatically reduced the strength of the Sicilian Mafia through increased civic involvement, law enforcement and various innovative school programs.

One five-year-old program, called “Palermo Opens Its Doors: The School Adopts a Monument,” has been recognized internationally for its achievements. Classes participating in the program adopt architectural and cultural monuments and work to restore and preserve them. To commemorate the work of two prominent Mafia prosecutors who were killed in 1992, the students act as guides each May to thousands of Palermo residents who tour the monuments.

### First Lady Addresses Palermo Delegates

*Following are excerpts from First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton’s speech delivered in Palermo on June 18, at the CIVITAS convention.*

Today we have come from more than 80 countries to learn the lessons of Palermo and to underscore the vital role that citizens and citizens movements play in strengthening the forces of democracy around the world.

I want to recognize the contributions of CIVITAS International. It has provided invaluable help and promoted important work to make the idea of civic education come alive, and by doing so it has helped to nurture democratic values around the globe. Thank you for sponsoring this important international conference.

I have seen the results of the work of CIVITAS in many different settings. Just a few years ago I had the privilege at the White House of meeting with some of the teachers who had been trained by CIVITAS who had been working with young people in Bosnia, helping to prepare future citizens following the end of that terrible conflict. I was impressed then with the work they were doing as they went into classrooms and communities, helping people not only to rebuild the physical aspects of their lives but to reclaim their rights as human beings and as citizens, to help build a new democracy. All of you know so well that a

Highlights of the CIVITAS World Conference included a keynote speech by U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and addresses by Romano Prodi, president of the European Commission, and Nigerian playwright and Nobel laureate Dr. Wole Soyinka. Workshops on “Building Nongovernmental Organizations in Support of Civic Education,” “Promoting Citizenship in the Classroom and Community through Project Citizen” and other topics gave participants from Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe the opportunity to exchange ideas and learn from one another in small discussion group settings.

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## ABOUT THE ALBERT SHANKER FELLOWSHIP

Albert Shanker, the late president of the American Federation of Teachers and the son of Russian immigrants, helped found the CIVITAS consortium for civic education. The consortium was created in 1995 to strengthen civic education and constitutional democracy throughout the world. It is composed of teachers,

school administrators and civic activists from the United States and more than 50 other nations.

Shanker Fellows are distinguished civic and economic educators as well as democracy activists participating in the Civitas International Exchange Program.

## CIVITAS: AN INTERNATIONAL CIVIC EDUCATION EXCHANGE PROGRAM

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### BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

#### Primary Site:

The Center for Civic Education, Calabasas, CA  
E-Mail: [international@civiced.org](mailto:international@civiced.org)

#### Secondary Sites:

Arizona Bar Foundation,  
Center for Law Related Education, Phoenix, AZ  
E-Mail: [Lynda.Rando@staff.azbar.org](mailto:Lynda.Rando@staff.azbar.org)

Partners in Education Inc., Sparks, NV  
E-Mail: [JudithSimpson@hotmail.com](mailto:JudithSimpson@hotmail.com)

#### International Partners:

Civitas@Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Tel: 011-387-71-665-841 or 851 or 921  
Pedagogic Institute of Republika Srpska  
Tel: 011-381-78-18252

### HUNGARY

#### Primary Site:

Florida Law Related Education Assn. Inc. Tallahassee, FL  
E-Mail: [ABPflreaED@aol.com](mailto:ABPflreaED@aol.com)

#### Secondary Site:

State Bar of Texas, Law Focused Education, Inc.  
E-Mail: [jmiller@texasbar.com](mailto:jmiller@texasbar.com)

#### International Partner:

CIVITAS Association, Hungary  
E-Mail: [drahos@civitas.civitas.hu](mailto:drahos@civitas.civitas.hu) [set@civitas.civitas.hu](mailto:set@civitas.civitas.hu)

### LATVIA

#### Primary Site:

Social Studies Development Center of Indiana University,  
Bloomington, IN E-Mail: [patrick@indiana.edu](mailto:patrick@indiana.edu)

#### Secondary Sites:

Maine South High School, Park Ridge, IL  
E-Mail: [feichter@prodigy.net](mailto:feichter@prodigy.net)

We the People... The Citizen and the Constitution Program,  
Addison, IL  
Tel: 630-832-5950

#### International Partner:

Democracy Advancement Center, Riga  
E-Mail: [ddc@acad.latnet.lv](mailto:ddc@acad.latnet.lv) [valts@apollo.lv](mailto:valts@apollo.lv)

### POLAND

#### Primary Site:

Mershon Center of the Ohio State University, Columbus, OH  
E-Mail: [remy.2@osu.edu](mailto:remy.2@osu.edu)

#### Secondary Site:

Center for Civic Education Through Law, Waterford, MI  
E-Mail: [CCEL@oakland.k12.mi.us](mailto:CCEL@oakland.k12.mi.us)

#### International Partner:

Center for Citizenship Education, Warsaw  
E-Mail: [ccejacek@lcp.atm.com.pl](mailto:ccejacek@lcp.atm.com.pl)

### RUSSIA

#### Primary Sites:

American Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation,  
Washington, D.C.

E-Mail: [rperelmu@aft.org](mailto:rperelmu@aft.org) [jdavis@aft.org](mailto:jdavis@aft.org)

Council for Citizenship Education at The Sage Colleges, Troy, NY

E-Mail: [schecs@sage.edu](mailto:schecs@sage.edu)

#### Secondary Site:

School of Education, Boston University, Boston, MA

E-Mail: [rsperber@bu.edu](mailto:rsperber@bu.edu)

#### International Partners:

Russian Association for Civic Education

E-Mail: [peterpol@redline.ru](mailto:peterpol@redline.ru)

Grazhdanin Training Center

E-Mail: [citiz7@cityline.ru](mailto:citiz7@cityline.ru)

### RUSSIA EAST

#### Primary Site:

Social Studies Program, Anchorage School District, Anchorage, AK

E-Mail: [phillips\\_doug@msmail.asd.k12.ak.us](mailto:phillips_doug@msmail.asd.k12.ak.us)

#### Secondary Site:

"We the People..." Project, Seattle, WA

E-Mail: [hand@PSIA-NW.org](mailto:hand@PSIA-NW.org)

#### International Partner:

Sakhalin Civitas Center

E-Mail: [eurasia@sakhmail.sakhalin.ru](mailto:eurasia@sakhmail.sakhalin.ru)

### STEERING COMMITTEE:

American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C.

E-Mail: [smann@apsanet.org](mailto:smann@apsanet.org)

#### Visit us online at the following Web sites:

[www.civnet.org](http://www.civnet.org)  
[www.civiced.org](http://www.civiced.org)  
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[www.firn.edu/civiced](http://www.firn.edu/civiced)  
[www.flrea.org](http://www.flrea.org)

### PARTNERS Staff

Managing Editor: Gerald S. Cohen

Assistant Editors: Joseph W. Davis, Rimma Perelmuter

Copy Editor: Kathleen Larson Florio

Design: Amy Pollack

Editorial Coordination:

GSC Communications, Swarthmore, PA

E-mail: [gerryc@gsc2.com](mailto:gerryc@gsc2.com)

## First Lady Applauds Palermo's Effort to Renew Itself

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democracy proclaimed on paper alone does not guarantee that people understand their democratic and civic responsibilities.

But today the work of CIVITAS, and the work of the people and leaders of Palermo and the work of so many of you here, is helping to make clearer than ever that, if communities wish to enjoy the benefits and fruits of democracy, then they must produce citizens who understand what hard work it is to keep democracy alive.

✱

Educators played such an important role in all that we have seen happen here in Palermo. They created a lawfulness group and began to promote activities that promoted civic consciousness among their students. To the teachers, the parents and the students who rallied to demand the money pocketed by dishonest officials be used instead to construct new schools and repair old classrooms, we owe a great debt of gratitude.

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So Palermo has taught us to listen to the voices, listen to the weak, the marginalized, listen to those who appear powerless but, once they decide to be citizens, are part of the most powerful movement on earth. Palermo teaches us another equally

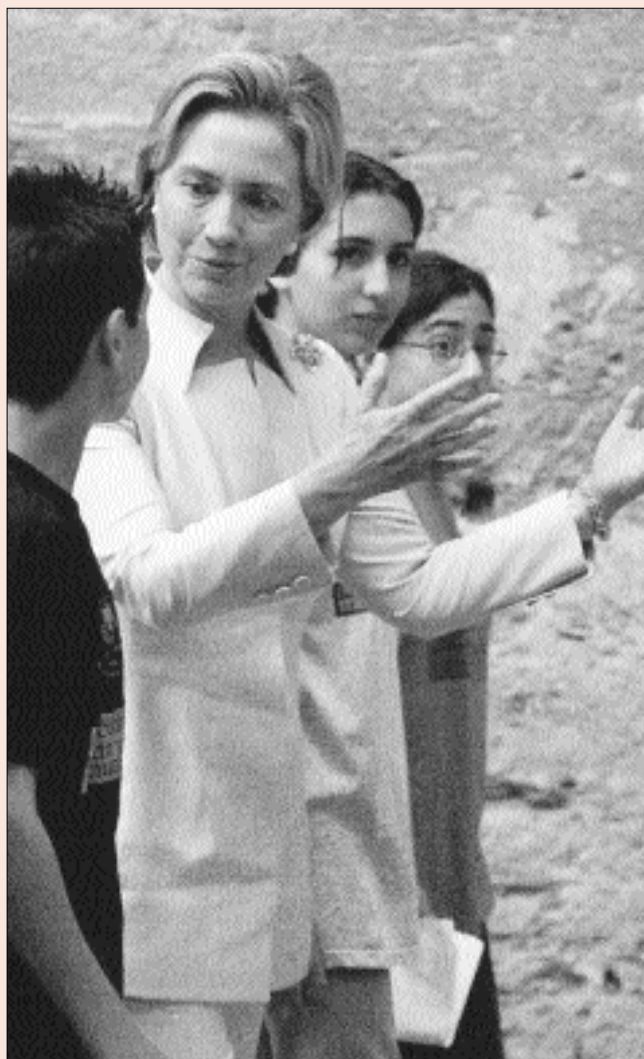
important lesson: if we are to ensure that we continue to move the forces of democracy forward so that they prevail, then we have to create the citizens of the future. That means education for citizenship in classrooms, but it also means education for citizenship in families and communities.

I have just come from one of the mon-

uments that the children have restored. I saw the excitement and the pride in their eyes and on their faces. I have seen how this church that was closed for decades and decades and which is now reopened has helped to revitalize an entire neighborhood. The children were taught those lessons. They were taken there by their teachers. They helped to create a CD-ROM about what they have done and what they have learned. They are on the frontiers as pioneers in democracy building.

One of those young citizens, a girl named Anna, wrote: "Let's not be quiet. The death of the judges makes us understand that we have to talk and not be as silent as fish. If we see young people drugging themselves, we have to speak up and not be afraid."

I love that image. Do not be as silent as fish. Think about what that young girl is telling all of us. Think about what she is asking of us adults. This simple statement that she goes on to conclude by saying: "If we see someone who doesn't respect our city, we have to scold them. All Sicilians must learn that Sicily is wonderful." If every child had that same sense of citizenship, we would not have to worry about the future of our democracies.



First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton speaks with middle school students who accompany her on a tour of downtown Palermo. (AP/Wide World Photos)

# River Speaks Project Unites Two Countries

If water is the basic ingredient of life, then perhaps ensuring the continued quality of this life-giving substance can be the one issue that unites us all.

Using this as a starting point, a group of educators in Ohio, Poland and Lithuania have embarked on an interdisciplinary education project that is capturing the interests of students, teachers, parents and local civic and political leaders.

The project, called *The River Speaks*, has engaged participants in 16 schools in Poland and 7 schools in Lithuania, including more than 40 teachers of various disciplines, primarily at the elementary and middle school levels.

Students in these schools have used the rivers near their schools or in their communities as a focus for environmental experimentation, oral history projects, video production, map making, dance, song, and vocabulary building. At the same time, said Doreen Uhas-Sauer, a history and English teacher in Columbus, Ohio, who helped found the international project, the students have raised levels of public awareness among local government officials. She said they have sparked discussion not only about the condition of their rivers, but also about the value of engaging students in the public dialogue of their community.

“Every time students engaged in the process, they were not just learning for themselves; they were learning for the community,” she said. “The community’s level of awareness escalated at every level.” She said parents in some communities gave financial support and time to the projects.

*The River Speaks* was hatched two years ago at Ft. Hayes Arts and Academic Alternative High School in Columbus. Biology teacher Edward Quickert had been monitoring sections of the Olentangy River for a wetlands project. Uhas-Sauer approached Quickert about the possibility of using the river as the focus for an interdisciplinary lesson on local history, as well as biology.

As the project coalesced, Uhas-Sauer, who has participated in several educational exchanges with Poland and Lithuania through the Mershon Center at Ohio State University, pitched the possibility of making the project international. With support from Civitas: An International Civic Education Exchange, the Mershon Center and the Center for Citizenship Education in Warsaw, the proposal became a reality.

In September 1998, Uhas-Sauer and Quickert went to a national teacher training conference in Vilna, Poland, to present a workshop on *The River Speaks*. The teachers brain-

stormed ideas about how to replicate the Columbus project in Polish schools, and reviewed videotapes and lesson plans of the American project. They held a similar workshop in Lithuania. Out of these workshops, *The River Speaks* was transformed. What began as an isolated interdisciplinary project became an international experiment in social action and civic education.

The project has taken root most aggressively in School No. 51 in Lesnica, Poland. There, under the enthusiastic leadership of principal Edwar Pnowski, who had participated in the September 1998 workshop, students have pursued a number of educational investigations of the Bystrzyca River.

“The entire activities around the school revolved to some extent around the project,” Uhas-Sauer said. “Kids were doing folk songs, interpreting the movements of the river through dance as they pretended to be living plants growing along the river. They created writing assignments, including lists of words to describe moods of the river while watching a videotape produced by other students of sounds of the river rushing by.

“So they were building vocabulary, classifying words and turning them into free-form poems. In one class children collected trash and dumped it on a desk. Then they talked about how the river would feel or how the environment might feel. At upper levels of the school, students did scientific testing of the river. Chemistry students were looking for pollutants or classifying organisms. They also created models of recreational facilities, of things that would be environmentally friendly.”

A report on the state of the river, as well as ideas on how to manage it to encourage multiple uses and biological diversity, has been presented to local government officials for their consideration.

How did officials react? Uhas-Sauer said it opened their eyes. “They understood that these were up-and-coming voters, that they were people who were going to stay in the community, and that they may just be children, but that they have legitimate claim and voice.”

Uhas-Sauer said the project has been instrumental in developing a sense of community and in stimulating citizenship skills in students. It also has opened a new chapter of openness in the former communist countries, where the Soviet legacy in education was alienation, distrust and well-defined hierarchies.

## Civic-Link:

# Irish Launch New Project Citizen Program

By Jenifer McShane

An innovative program in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is attempting to defuse years of tension by encouraging cross-border educational exchanges among school children in the region.

*Civic-Link*, a *Project Citizen* initiative of Co-operation Ireland, was formally launched at a high school in Belfast on May 25 in the presence of U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley, Northern Ireland Minister of Education John McFall, and Republic of Ireland Minister for Education Michael Martin.

Co-operation Ireland, a nonpolitical nonprofit organization headquartered in Dublin and Belfast, will administer the pilot along with the Center for Civic Education as part of a new initiative of Civitas: An International Civic Education Exchange Program.

The three-year pilot project is designed to encourage young people to learn about their own community and others, and to become more active citizens. In the first year, *Civic-Link* will be introduced in 30 schools

throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland that will each be linked with a cross-border partner school.

Students from the cross-border partner schools will work

together on public policy research issues. Their collaborations will include visits to each others' homes and schools. Students, for example, will try to identify issues or problems within their own area or group and then examine current policies relating



Students from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland exchange ideas.

to these issues. They may then decide to explore an alternative policy of their own to resolve the issue. The project's sponsors hope that North-South visits and ongoing communication will enable the students to share information, learn from each other, and cooperate in constructing action plans to bring about change.

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**“Already, the leaders of the programs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries have expressed an interest in adding the Irish innovation to their programs.”**

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About 70 students from 12 schools took part in an introductory workshop on the day of the launch. They examined what they felt were important issues in their area — litter, vandalism, robberies, violence, suicide and health

problems relating to alcohol, drugs and HIV.

“By developing a program that includes linking classes of students in different and diverse communities, Co-operation Ireland’s *Civic-Link* program has made a remarkable contribution to the center’s *Project Citizen* program,” said Chuck Quigley, executive director of the Center for Civic Education.

“This addition should enhance the program in the United States as well as in many other countries in which it is being implemented. Already, the leaders of the programs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries have expressed an interest in adding the Irish innovation to their programs, as well as linking their schools in their countries with schools in Northern Ireland.”

*Jenifer McShane is U.S. Project Director for Civic-Link.*

# Hungarian and American Civic Educators Share Teaching Methods at Summer Institute

Dozens of Hungarian civic educators took the opportunity to expand their teaching strategies and deepen content knowledge in civic education during a five-day summer institute in Fonyod, Hungary.

The July institute, a joint initiative of The Florida Law Related Education Association Inc., Civitas-Hungary and The State Bar of Texas-Law Focused Education Inc., was the partnership's culminating activity for 1998–99.

Institute participants included 47 civic educators from Hungary — secondary teachers, university faculty, pedagogical institute faculty and Civitas coordinators. Civitas-Hungary staff, Hungarian teacher-trainers, American master teachers and university faculty presented and facilitated discussions at the institute.

Teachers who participated in the institute received in-service credits for recertification in civic instruction through an agreement between Civitas-Hungary and the Hungarian Ministry of Education.

Rosie Heffernan, a *We the People...* teacher from Florida who facilitated parts of the institute, said the sessions “magnified the successes” of all previous activities she has observed through the partnership over the last few years. She attributed the success to several factors: the greater number of participants trained at one time in one location; the high level of theoretical and ideological discussions, which not only assisted the participants as educators, but respected and intellectually

challenged them as professionals; and the quality of the presenters.

“The participants were exposed to lectures espousing the principles of democracy; practical methodology for incorporating these principles in the classroom; cooperative learning techniques for exercising and internalizing

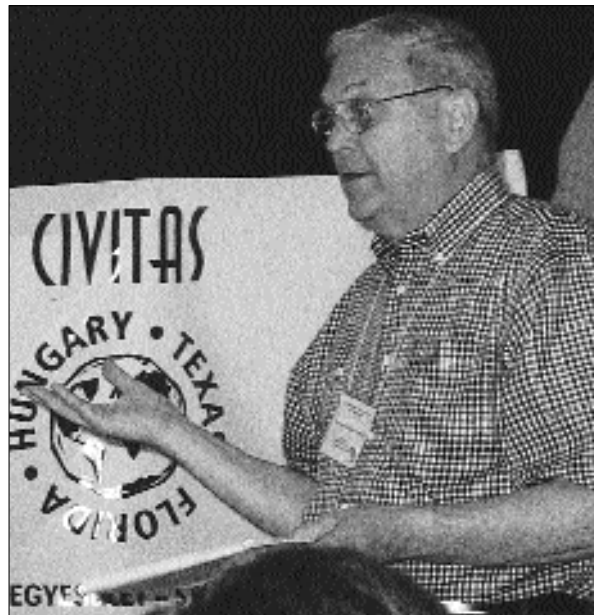
room application sessions.” At the end of the week, he said, the exchanges of gratitude were so rich that participants became emotional.

About 95 percent of those who filled out program evaluations said the institute was extremely useful. All agreed or strongly agreed that they were likely to use knowledge gained during the coming school year. They gave the presenters high marks for their style, content knowledge and methods.

The Civitas Summer Institute took over 10 months to develop. In October, Civitas-Hungary staff visited Florida to discuss the institute design and the composition of the joint Hungarian-American institute faculty. Based on those discussions, a delegation of Hungarian educators was chosen to visit Florida and Texas in January to experience civic education in the United States and to complete the design and content of the summer institute.

The Hungarian delegates included a constitutional attorney, a university instructor, the director of a human rights and peace education foundation and the director of teacher training for Civitas-Hungary. The delegation worked very closely with the Texas representatives while visiting Austin, Texas. Finally, assignments were made to each institute faculty member, lessons and activities were developed, and all materials were formatted and translated for use in an institute notebook.

The institute model focused on four



Chief Justice Major B. Harding, Florida Supreme Court, discusses the independent judiciary and the role of the courts.

civic knowledge, skills and virtue; and the correlation of civic and economic education in a democratic society,” she wrote in an evaluation of the program.

Ernest Abisellán, associate director of The Florida Law Related Education Association Inc., who administered the institute, added that the model was well received by participants. “The teachers were enthusiastic, engaged and very involved in the active learning strategies modeled by the American presenters during the class-

core content areas with corresponding strategies for classroom application. The content areas were

- Principles of Democracy in Education for Democratic Citizenship;
- Teaching Democratic Constitutionalism;
- Developing Democratic Communication Skills; and
- Civic and Economic Education for Democracy.

On the first day of training, John Patrick, Ph.D., of Indiana University and a Civitas partner with Latvia, discussed global trends in education for democracy and the principles of democracy in education for democratic citizenship. Heffernan led the teachers in lessons on comparative constitutionalism and core democratic principles.

Later in the week, Chief Justice Major B. Harding of the Florida Supreme Court discussed American constitutionalism and the role of the independent judiciary. Jerry Perry from Texas discussed the principles of American democracy found in the U.S. Constitution, and Jan Miller, secondary site coordinator, presented lessons on the separation of powers.

Dr. Cheryl Jennings of the Florida State University Stavros Center for Economic Education (affiliated with the National Council for Economic Education) discussed the relationship between civic and economic education. She presented a lecture on economic decision making and public policy. She also facilitated various lessons developed by the National Council for Economic Education.

The institute was deemed such a success that discussions are already underway in Florida, Texas and Hungary to repeat the institute model in 2000.

## Region Watch and CCE Project Updates

### Project Citizen Launched in Four More Countries

*We the People... Project Citizen*, the Center for Civic Education's program for middle school students to promote competent and responsible participation in local government, is currently in use in 18 countries around the world. This spring, Croatia, Kazakstan, Hungary and Poland each held their first countrywide *Project Citizen* competitions and/or showcases. In Croatia, 200 students from 12 schools from all regions of the country traveled to Zagreb for the showcase. Approximately 400 Kazakstan students participated in the *Project Citizen* competition in Almaty.

#### Russia

CCE's Mary Bristol and Ron Morris participated in a workshop April 16–17 in Vladivostok that was designed to help participants — both teachers and members of nongovernmental organizations — to understand a democratic, pluralist society.

The workshop focused on the concept of the “ideal citizen” in a democratic society. The participants developed their own list of characteristics of an ideal citizen, which they analyzed and compared with Civitas definitions of the ideal citizen. The participants also role-played lessons on authority from the Center's *Foundations of Democracy* and examined the concept of public policy making while reviewing CCE's *Project Citizen* curriculum.

The conference was funded by the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR) through a grant from USIA.



One of the 200 Croatian students who traveled to Zagreb for the first Project Citizen showcase prepares for his presentation.

## New Video Documents *Project Citizen's* Successes

Eleanor Roosevelt, who was considered one of the most effective child and family advocates of her day, was a strong proponent of teaching children the nuts and bolts of government and how it affected their lives.

“Our children should learn the general framework of their government” she said. “And then they should know where they come in contact with the government, where it touches their daily lives and where their influence is exerted on the government. It must not be a distant thing, someone else’s business, but they must see how every cog in the wheel of a democracy is important and bears its share of responsibility for the smooth running of the entire machine.”

It was in this spirit that the Center for Civic Education launched *We the People ...Project Citizen* as a civic education program for upper elementary and middle schools. Today the program has evolved into an international movement. A new 22-minute video released by CCE in April, which cites Eleanor Roosevelt’s intent, documents the growth and positive results of the program.

The video includes interviews with civic educators in Kazakstan, Brazil, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It describes how *Project Citizen* has successfully been adapted and implemented by a variety of countries around the world.

CCE Executive Director Charles Quigley notes that the program has a very important historical precedent in American life. “There is a saying that the philosophy of today’s classroom is the philosophy of tomorrow’s government,” he says in the video. “Traditionally in the U.S., Jefferson, Madison and everyone said one of the principal reasons for having schools, and also one of the reasons for having public schools, is to pass on to each generation an understanding of their heritage.”

Karl Kurtz, director of state services for the National Conference of State Legislators, a sponsor of *We the People*, explains that the program is especially relevant today. “We have had over the last decade a real crisis in terms of public support for governmental institutions,” he says on the video. “The only solution to that in our view over the long run is education.”

Quigley also explains the appeal of the program to other nations. “Because our curriculum materials deal with fundamental ideas, such as participation, such as questions of

political authority and different ideas about proper sources of authority and where you draw the line on authority, people in other countries have found them relatively easy to try to adapt to their cultures.”

The video shows students defending their portfolios during the *Project Citizen* countrywide competitions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Irish educators discussing the launching of their own version of *Project Citizen*, called *Civic-Link*, to provide, among other things, exchanges between students in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Marianne McGill of Co-Operation Ireland indicates on the video that the program has great potential for her country. “What’s great about this project is that you can do it in terms of action-oriented activities about issues that initially may not be controversial, and that sets the foundation of getting into deeper issues about what citizenship really means,” she says.

For information on the video’s availability, please contact CCE at their Web site at [www.civiced.org](http://www.civiced.org).

### Palermo Delegates Broaden the Agenda

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For the first time, the ICEEP Summer Seminar was expanded to include educators and civic leaders from outside Eastern and Central Europe. Representatives participated from Colombia, Indonesia, Kazakstan, Mexico, Mongolia, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland.

The 80 participants in the one-and-a-half-day meeting exchanged information on civic education and planned upcoming Civitas program activities. Highlights of the meeting included the premiere of a new video on *Project Citizen* (see related story) and a discussion of *Education for Democratic Citizenship: A Framework*, a new project designed to outline the core concepts of democracy shared by countries throughout the world.

*Sarah J. Wheat is International Program Coordinator at the Center for Civic Education.*