

## Background and Conceptual Framework for Creating Civics It Up!



### Why was it developed?

**Background.** In 2014, the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC) was tasked by the (then) Office of Adult Education and Literacy (OAEL), now Career, Technical, and Adult Education (CTAE) Virginia Department of Education, to develop civics content standards for adult education. A working group of nine ESOL and EL/Civics—now Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education or IELCE—content specialists from around the state met to discuss how this project could be used to meet the needs of ESOL teachers and English language learners in Virginia. The group also solicited input from program managers and coordinators about the professional development needs of teachers as the field of ESOL shifted to civics and workplace-based content.

After taking all of these needs into consideration, the working group decided to create a supplemental resource that could be used in conjunction with current instructional materials and curricula that would meet the new requirements of WIOA and fulfill the OAEL tasking. The working group felt an instructional resource for integrating civics and workplace content into instruction would be the most valuable product for all users.



Figure 1 IELCE Working Group meeting at Wegman's in Fredericksburg. Pictured from left to right are: Susan Watson, Emily Beckett, MaryAnn Florez, Jennifer Fadden, Debby Cargill, Rosa Chiarello-Ugarte, Debbie Tuler, Lauren Lang, and Nancy Faux.

## How was it developed?

**Conceptual framework.** The working group met consistently from March, 2014, until April, 2016, to develop a practical instructional tool for integrating civics content into instruction. In late 2015 the Civics It Up! product emerged from two starting points:

1) Using the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) definition of Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE), which is:

...education services provided to English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries that enable such adults to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. Such services shall include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the **rights and responsibilities** of citizenship and **civic participation**, and may include **workforce** training.  
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/octae-program-memo-15-7-ielce.pdf>

Civics It Up! content was developed around three strands taken from the above definition:

1. Rights and responsibilities
2. Civic participation and
3. Workforce Preparation

2) Recognizing the need to supplement current instructional materials with civics and workplace content not found in published textbooks or other resources. Supplemental content would need to meet learners' needs and be relevant to their lives regardless of their employment situation and be user friendly to teachers.

The working group decided to organize Civics It Up! content by life skills topics because this is an organizing principle familiar to most teachers. The life skills topics developed for Civics It Up! include: health literacy, consumerism, and employment. There is room for more life skills topics to be added in the future. Within each of the three life skills topics there are three strands based on the WIOA definition. Thus, the Civics It Up! structure is shown below:

1. Health Literacy
  - a. Rights and responsibilities
  - b. Civic participation
  - c. Workforce Preparation
2. Consumerism
  - a. Rights and responsibilities

- b. Civic participation
  - c. Workforce Preparation
- 3. Employment
  - a. Rights and responsibilities
  - b. Civic participation
  - c. Workforce Preparation– the workforce strand for employment is subsumed into the other 2 strands to avoid redundancy

Once the working group developed this structure, they set to the task of deciding subtopics for each strand of each life skill. Generally these are topics that students need, but are rarely found in textbooks, e.g. paying taxes. Each strand ranges from 2-4 subtopics currently giving a total of 22 subtopics across all life skills. For each subtopic content objectives were written that were based on the six language proficiency levels of the National Reporting System (NRS). Additionally, content objectives were correlated to the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) and the Virginia Adult ESOL Content Standards.

Finally, each content objective includes sample classroom activities, resources, and best practices for adult learners. The best practices are part of an instructional techniques bank, which includes references to pathways skills. The instructional techniques bank contains over 40 techniques and can be downloaded separately.

As an example:

Life skill: *Health*

Strand: *Workforce Preparation*

Subtopics: *Identifying Health Hazards*

*Preventive Procedures*

*Emergency Procedures*

*Health Related Communication*

For each subtopic: *objectives, activities, resources, techniques, pathway skills and standards correlations* are provided.

The Organizational Chart of Civics It Up! can be viewed from the main page.

**Using Civics It Up!**

The intent of the working group was for the Civics It Up! curriculum framework to be used as a supplement to current materials and curricula as a way to meet WIOA requirements for IELCE. It is not a comprehensive civics curriculum; but, rather, a tool for teachers and other users to incorporate authentic civics and workplace content into their existing lessons and materials. While the Civics It Up! curriculum framework provides an excellent resource for the

instructional and workforce preparation portions of IELCE, it does not address the integrated education and training, or IET, work placement requirements of IELCE.

Users may notice that many of the objectives in the subtopics, e.g. paying taxes, emergency procedures, are scaffolded in difficulty between language proficiency levels. This was done to accommodate multi-level classes or for teachers to decide what will work best with their classes. Nevertheless, some objectives are stand-alone and do not move up and down the NRS levels. This was done because students come and go from our programs and it is not often that a student will progress through all NRS levels, needing scaffolded objectives. How Civics It Up! would be used by teachers and how it would benefit learners rather than creating a comprehensive curriculum was the guiding principle in its development.

More information on how to use the Civics It Up! curriculum framework can be found on the welcome page.

Civics It Up! is maintained by the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center.