

ASU workshops give K–12 teachers the tools to teach engaging civic lessons

By Annie DeGraw, ASU News
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Eighth grade social studies teacher Ebony Bodden knows that her subject isn't the most riveting for students.

However, the motivation to offer impactful and comprehensive instruction while keeping students' attention was among the reasons the Desert Wind Middle School teacher attended a workshop hosted by Arizona State University's [Center for American Civics](#).

The workshop was one of two in a series held at the ASU Chandler Innovation Center this fall. The purpose: to give Arizona K–12 public school civics and social studies teachers like Bodden vital educational resources, tools and knowledge to implement classroom lessons based on trusted facts and information.

This particular course was done in partnership with the [Bill of Rights Institute](#) and focused on alignment with state standards; how to integrate American virtues into curriculum through connections between history, civics and government that students will find relevant; and the best way to engage students about the country's past and present.

Bodden is constantly on the hunt for trendy concepts to do just that. She uses topics from TikTok and implements them with a curriculum from the Bill of Rights Institute, which she has found helpful.

"I love that they have over 6,000 resources that I can choose from and, if I'm having a hectic week, I can go in and pull a lesson plan and implement them right then and there," Bodden says. "And the fact that ASU is behind it, I know we're getting the real deal."

As a 12th grade constitution and government teacher, Hamilton High School's Brandon d'Entremont hoped to gain a deeper understanding of what resources are available to him.

He admitted that creating lesson plans to capture students' attention can be tricky and sought methods to help navigate that path.

"It's certainly a craft, but with the right people and the right tools, it is manageable," d'Entremont says. "The ability to see how closely aligned a lot of the resources are to the Arizona state standards is helpful because at the end of the day, time is everything for a teacher. So, seeing how that saves me time so I can give it to my students' growth, I think that's priceless."

Showcasing civics and assisting teachers with implementing the curriculum are at the heart of this educator-centric series, explains Elizabeth Evans, program director for civic education and outreach at the Center for American Civics.

"Teachers are getting knowledge and information and shown how they can take it and easily deliver it," Evans says. "We want to make it easy for teachers and create a community in Arizona civic education."

The curriculum comes from the center's Arizona Constitution Project. Evans is also responsible for the [Civics in a Year](#) podcast that provides essential civic knowledge in 10 minutes per episode. This is just one of the many resources that teachers can take advantage of that, like the workshops, are free.

The center teamed with the National Constitution Center for the series' second workshop on Oct. 9. Amanda Wright, who teaches Advanced Placement U.S. government and civics at Arizona College Prep High School in Chandler, liked coming away with academic pieces and knowing how to apply them in her classroom.

"It's very timely and topical with regard to the issues we're facing," says Wright, after hearing a presentation that covered separation of powers and federalism by Paul Carrese, director of the Center for American Civics at ASU. "ASU gives this a nice blend. It's great to have that knowledge and be able to translate that to our students."

The workshops allow the Center for American Civics to equip teachers with the tools they may otherwise not have access to. This is paramount in a time when civics and social studies take a backseat to other subjects when it comes to prioritizing which courses receive focus and funding, explains Carrese, who is also a professor in the [School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership](#).

"The larger background message is that they are doing very important work as civic educators in the public schools because our whole form of politics and government requires a civic education and citizen education in order to function properly," Carrese says.

"We as a department have a responsibility not only to undergraduate students, graduate students and the university community we are in — we have an obligation to the public schools and to other teachers that we work with on our area of expertise."

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



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