

Civics Education: Annotated Instructional Resources and References



Instructional Resources

One focus of the Teaching Skills That Matter (TSTM) in Adult Education project is identifying high-quality, evidence-based materials and training to support teachers in integrating transferable skills development in the areas of civics education, digital literacy, health literacy, financial literacy, and workforce preparation skills into adult education and literacy instruction. The following selection of easy-to-use instructional resources have been recommended by subject matter experts in civics education for teaching the skills that matter. Please note that these only are intended as a starting point to support teachers' important work in this area and exploration of existing instructional resources.

Constitutional Rights Foundation. (2019). Teaching with primary sources. Retrieved from <https://www.crf-usa.org/primary-sources/teaching-with-primary-sources>

This resource provides clear and easy-to-use lessons for teaching civics content related to the immigrant experience in the United States, with an emphasis on analyzing historical photographs. The materials are designed for K–12 students, but they are appropriate for adult learners as well. The photographs and illustrations are suitable for all learners. English learners of different levels, from Low Intermediate to Advanced, can tackle the written materials with scaffolds and other instructional supports.

Generation Citizen. (2015). *Generation Citizen curriculum: Common Core-aligned*. Retrieved from http://generationcitizenca.weebly.com/uploads/4/8/8/4/4884795/gc_curriculum_v_6.5_3.pdf

The Generation Citizen curriculum is a comprehensive set of well-developed lesson plans and student handouts that focus on civic engagement through project-based and problem-solving approaches. Although the material is targeted to native speaker middle school and high school learners, it is appropriate for adult learners. The curriculum can be adapted for High Intermediate ELLs; however, the language complexity of the lessons is too challenging for lower level ELLs.

New York City Office of Immigrant Affairs. (n.d.). We speak NYC. [Video series]. Retrieved from <https://wespeaknyc.cityofnewyork.us/episodes/>

The We Speak NYC website covers a variety of skills through different video episodes focusing on rights, health, education, and parent engagement. Study guides for each episode serve as a framework for viewing and exploring the related vocabulary and concepts. The high-quality videos and study guides are targeted to adult learners. A limited number of lesson sets is available for the Season One episodes. Although some of the engagement and referral resources are New York City based, they can be easily

adaptable to local contexts. Supplemental or additional scaffolding may be required for learners with low literacy language proficiency levels.

Reta, C. O., & Lane, M. A. (2002). *Talking with the police—An English language and civics workbook for English language learners*. Monterey Park, CA: Bruggemeyer Memorial Library LAMP (Literacy for All of Monterey Park) Program.

This curriculum features a comprehensive set of lessons that focus on the civics-related theme of engaging with law enforcement and the community. Lesson handouts are targeted to adult English language learners at the beginning through intermediate levels. The handouts give clear instructions and use a variety of approaches to develop multiple skills. Although the lessons are slightly dated (from 2002), they are still effective and relevant. They need little adaptation, especially the lessons on developing digital literacy skills. This resource is linked from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services website. Teachers can download it by chapter or as a whole workbook.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2017, June). Adult citizenship education sample curriculum for a low beginning ESL level course. Retrieved from <https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Office%20of%20Citizenship/Citizenship%20Resource%20Center%20Site/Publications/M-1166.pdf>

This comprehensive sample curriculum includes a set of detailed lesson plans that instructors can use to prepare adult English language learner students for the naturalization exam. The scope and sequence, linked lesson plans, and student handouts clearly outline the ESL and civics themes covered in each unit.

Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center. (2016). *Civics It Up!* curriculum.

The *Civics It Up!* curriculum is a useful resource that enables instructors to choose from a range of skills and objectives, based on their students' literacy levels, to autogenerate lists of (a) the standards that correspond with the objective(s), (b) the activities that can be used to meet the objectives, (3) appropriate teaching techniques for each activity, (4) skills addressed through each activity, and (5) additional resources to support each activity. The curriculum is organized around three strands: Health, Employment, and Consumerism. Each strand includes three subtopics: Rights and Responsibilities, Civic Participation, and Workforce Preparation. Teachers can tailor materials for learners from beginning literacy through advanced levels of language and literacy proficiency.

The additional resource for the activities usually is an external lesson plan, but external lesson plans vary widely in their quality of content and ease of use. Links to a few of the suggested lesson plans are broken, and at least one link involves a limited number of free-access opportunities and then a (low-cost) subscription fee.



Additional References

The following is a selection of additional resources recommended by subject matter experts in civics education for adult educators to learn more about the topic area addressed in the *Teaching Skills That Matter* project. Please note that these only are intended as a starting point to support teachers' important work in this area and exploration of existing references resources.

Blevins, B., & LeCompte, K. (2015). I am engaged: Action civics in four steps. *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, 23–26. National Council for the Social Studies. Retrieved from <https://www.socialstudies.org/publications/ssyl/march-april2015/i-am-engaged-action-civics-in-four-steps>

The brief outlines the four major steps of the problem-solving projects that are part of the Action Civics model and the primary skills addressed in those steps. Although the brief focuses on upper elementary and middle school instruction, it presents a useful overview of a model that can be adapted for project-based learning for adult ELLs. The brief also provides examples of Action Civics projects that adult educators may want to implement in their classrooms.

McHugh, M., & Doxsee, C. (2018). *English Plus integration: Shifting the instructional paradigm for adult immigrant learners to support integration success*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/english-plus-integration-instructional-paradigm-immigrant-adult-learners>

This brief outlines a proposed shift in the instructional paradigm for the integration success of adult ELL immigrants to the United States. It presents the rationale for focusing on key components, such as contextualized English acquisition; the development of digital literacy skills; integration topics directly related to civics, financial literacy, and family educational pathways; and the development of individual and family success plans.

Nash, A. (2010). Thinking beyond “increased participation”—Integrating civics and adult ESOL. World Education, Inc. Retrieved from <https://nelrc.org/publications/pdf/Civics%20and%20Adult%20ESOL%20-%20Nash.pdf>

This brief explores different interpretations of the aims of a civics education and recommends a series of steps that can be used in civics participation projects for adult immigrant learners. The author identifies two views of a civics education: a “procedural view” that focuses on the principles of democracy, and a “substantive view” that emphasizes fairness, justice, and how democratic ideals may not actually be fulfilled in local communities. Traditional citizenry in civics education is defined as “personally responsible” or “participatory” versus one that is more “justice oriented” with an attitude of inquiry and skepticism toward authority. The brief, which is aligned with the latter definition and with Equipped For the Future (EFF) active citizenship skills and principles,



recommends five steps to guide civics participation projects in adult ESOL civics classes and includes a case study as an example.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2018). *Guide to the adult citizenship education content standards and foundation skills: A framework for developing a comprehensive curriculum*. Retrieved from [https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Office of Citizenship/Citizenship Resource Center Site/Publications/M-1121.pdf](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Office%20of%20Citizenship/Citizenship%20Resource%20Center%20Site/Publications/M-1121.pdf)

This guide addresses the specific citizenship skills covered in the naturalization exam. It presents the standards that instructors can use to develop appropriate lesson plans. Lesson plans and teaching resources suggested by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) are provided in other USCIS online documents.

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