

Board of Education American  
Civics/Americanism Committee meeting

Middle School/High School Conference Room  
700 South Kent St.  
Madison, NE 68748-0450

Wednesday, September 15, 2021 6:15 PM  
Central

1. Call the Meeting to order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. American Civics/Americanism curriculum report
4. American Civics written reports from the Principals
5. Receive Public Feedback on American Civics and Americanism.
6. Close the committee meeting

## September 15, 2021 Civics Report

At the Elementary School level, civics is more about responsibility and citizenship than the structure of our Government. Our teachers work on these skills everyday. In addition, they incorporate lessons and set up classroom procedures that instill positive interaction with peers and taking part in decision making.

- Kids take part in setting up classroom rules that are fair for themselves and for the teachers.
- Classroom meetings allow students to voice their opinions and discuss issues.
- Classes will vote on classroom representatives, activities to do, etc.

During Social Studies Units, or when there is a special Holiday or observance, the teachers will use the opportunity to connect what they do at school to the event being discussed.

- On Friday, September 10, all of our elementary classrooms took time to discuss the 20th Anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11th. Some went through slideshows, some watched a BrainPop video, and all talked about what it meant and how it affected so many people.
- Mrs. Kush put a Memorial Table in the Lunchroom to generate discussion, and the following message was read over the loud speaker:

*Tomorrow, Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021 is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a terrorist attack that took the lives of nearly 3,000 people on American Soil. 2 Airplanes crashed into the twin towers in New York City, One crashed into the Pentagon Building in Washington DC, and one crashed into a field in Pennsylvania after the passengers were able to overpower the terrorists and keep them from crashing into another building.*

*That day has changed the United States and the world Forever. Even 20 years later, it is on peoples' minds. Many lost Parents, Children, Husbands and Wives, Friends and all sorts of relatives, but in the event, we also saw bravery, compassion, and concern for others safety and well-being. Many of us realized how lucky we are and spent more time with family and telling our friends how much we love them.*

*When you go to lunch, you will see a table with place settings. This is to honor and remember those who never returned home that day. Many died during the attack, while hundreds of police officers, fire fighters, volunteers, and other heroes died while trying to rescue people who were trapped in collapsed buildings and rubble.*

*Though none of the students in our building were alive 20 years ago, it is still important to understand history and the major events that changed the world, and it is always important to be grateful for what you do have and appreciate the important people in your life.*

At the Middle/High School level, civics begin to move more towards citizenship and responsibilities outside of the school and how that connects to local, state, and federal

Government. Within our curriculum, more time is spent learning about the branches of Government, what they do, why it is important, and what our role is within that.

- In High School, American History's first project was diving into the Constitution. Learning more about its history, what is in it, and how that affects us today.
  - *For their project that concludes on Constitution day, Friday, September 17, students were given a role as President, Vice President, Senator, Congressman, or Supreme Court Justice. The class then completes an activity of how a bill becomes a law. Students then write a paper about the Constitutional Power of their position they were assigned.*
- In the Middle School, all classes discuss current events, but Curriculum wise, they cover Civics in different ways.
  - 6th grade primarily focuses on Ancient Cultures. This allows them to discuss why Government exists, how it was first developed, and what we learned from studying those early systems.
  - 7th Grade focuses more on Systems of Government in other Countries around the world. They look at how it affects the people, how much involvement the people have, and who is allowed to participate.
  - 8th Grade focuses on the United States Government. Each class writes a Declaration of Independence from the Middle School and learns about the branches of Government.

I brought Quiz 3 of the Citizenship tests that all of our 8th graders take. They actually take the 97 question test that people must take to gain Citizenship. Mrs. Johnson breaks it down into 4 Quizzes that all 8th graders complete by December.

# Madison Public Schools

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Office Manager

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## Civics Activities High School: 2021-2022

Here are a few of the Civics lessons and ideas that I have seen from our HS Social Science teachers.

The first one that I have seen is probably the biggest and most time consuming. It is called Madison History Day. Students are given a theme each year from NENHD (Nebraska National History Day). The themes are intentional pretty broad so to encourage students to be able to investigate information on a wide range of Historical Events. Once they pick a topic and get it approved from their teacher the process starts. They can either present a project or an essay. This project is worked on and off for several weeks. We then host a Madison History Day, judges are local community members. If placed in the top two they move on to District, State and then National History Day depending on how they fair at each level. Madison in the last 5 years has had students 3 times qualify for Nationals (weren't able to go the last year COVID)

I saw a very interesting lesson doing an observation last year and that was Fantasy Congress. Student choose Senators that have bills up for approval in Congress. They do research and background information on Senators and then are awarded points as their Senators bill are passed or not.

The Government class spend some time on "How a bill becomes a law". They follow bills in the Nebraska Senate and talk about how the procedure works from start to finish.

The Modern Problems class also dose some Local, State and Nebraska Government Project's They look for causes and look for change and figure out the process in getting these ideas looked out and change. They contact local, county and state officials with some of these ideas once they get the process figured out.

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Here are some of the things our students are doing in regards to American civics:

8th grade students take part in the state standard testing of the Civics and Naturalization units. They also cover the Revolutionary War, Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and how our government system works. Students are also made aware of their individual rights and civic duty responsibilities. All of our MS social studies students take part in Constitution Day activities.

Students complete a unit that covers a variety of topics such as ageism, sexism, racism, prejudice, discrimination, bigotry, and ethnocentrism. They also cover a unit on Manifest Destiny, in which they discuss government policies and how they affected groups of indigenous Americans. During this unit they complete research on a family member to complete a family tree project. Towards the end of the year the students study the impact that the Civil War had on our country both economically and socially.

Reid

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## **American Civics/Americanism Madison Elementary School 2021-2022**

The beginning of every week at Madison Elementary School, the principal holds a morning meeting with all K-5 students and staff. The Pledge of Allegiance is cited after Mrs. Kush reminds everyone to turn towards the flag and place their right hand over their heart. After the Pledge of Allegiance, everyone stays standing as they repeat Mrs. Kush in stating the Madison Elementary Motto. This motto helps remind each individual of their purpose, that they are here to help others make good choices, and to know they help make up what being a Madison Dragon is all about.

The morning meetings really bring the school together as a unit. It is where birthdays are celebrated and where students are noticed for the good that others have witnessed. When there are events, such as Labor Day, there is a discussion about what labor day is, besides a day off of school. It was presented as a federal holiday to honor the works and contributions of laborers to the development and achievement of the United States. The United States wouldn't be what it is today, if it wasn't for all of the hard work that people have put in to make it what it is.

Besides morning meetings, for 9/11 there is a picture of the Twin Towers, prior to them being destroyed, displayed on the projector screen in the lunch room during the students' lunch time. There are then conversations that take place amongst students and the principal. This school year, there will also be a table set and "reserved" for the fallen heroes.

Every Veteran's Day we hold a program. The program varies, but typically we have a guest speaker come in to share their unique experience serving our country. The veteran's day program at the elementary tries to have pictures and props to get students to better understand what the presenter is describing.

Throughout the classrooms, I know many teachers do activities and/or units on Thanksgiving using books, videos, writing activities, creating turkey vests and eating a "feast" with the students. I also have seen activities revolving around Martin Luther King Jr. and presidents of the United States.

The upper grades have done different voting activities and also study the important roles that leaders and citizens serve in the government. I see walls covered with ways students better understand multiple perspectives of the same event revolving around the Homestead Act, Oregon Trail diaries, military journal of Ponca Removal, and Standing Bear testimony. Students have had to interview family members, search for pictures, write narratives, and/or give presentations on different historical events. One great example is on why did people migrate to the Americas?

In summary, American Civics are taught at every grade level in many different ways. There are special “whole school” events and unique classroom lessons to help the students at Madison Elementary become educated about our country.

