

Special Feature

Transforming Students to Citizens: *The Civic Mirror*

The Civic Mirror is a new and innovative education program that turns the old rules of teaching and learning on their head. By the end of this year over 100 educators across the world will have used it in their classrooms. The educational dividends are truly amazing!

In a nutshell, The Civic Mirror is an online and face-to-face, game-based education program that turns classrooms into countries and students into citizens. The online program manages the simulated country scenario, and it sets up high stakes, face-to-face classroom events that reflect our political and economic systems. So while students study course curricula in the usual ways, they are also given their own government, economy, legal system, and environment to use and put into action what they're studying.

The pedagogical benefits and implications of The Civic Mirror are as exciting as they are cutting-edge. The program entirely changes the "teacher-student contract" in the classroom, shifting it *from* the traditional one (that requires the teacher be the centre-piece of classroom "scenario management") *to* a new one that enables students to take control of their classroom experience, and allows teachers to coach, mentor, and utilize the endless teachable moments it provides (instead of managing one classroom scenario after another).

For example, rather than teaching students about *The Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, students use *The Charter* as their own book of law and must familiarize themselves with it if they want to take someone (even their government) to court. If the teacher observes crimes being committed in her students' country scenario, she would use that *real and student experience* to more meaningfully teach the concept. Or, if *The Charter* is not a component of that particular course's core curriculum, she may pull aside (let's say) the three students who are being neglected by their government and point out that *The Charter* has certain clauses that guarantee all Canadians (which means citizens in their country too) a certain standard of living and essential services (i.e. welfare). This is just one example of how the program brings curriculum to life for students who would likely otherwise be learning from books and lectures.

The Civic Mirror can be used for any course, unit, subject or program that deals with government, law, citizenship, economics, morality and/or character education. Because political, economic, and personal decisions affect people of all ages, The Civic Mirror is appropriate for students of just about any age, and it has been used with success from the Gr. 6 to post-secondary levels.

For more information, please visit <http://civicmirror.com/>

To view a video of student reflections and testimonials, visit:
http://www.civicmirror.com/videos-student_reflections.php

If you have any questions about the program or would like to contact its creator personally, feel free to email Regan Ross at reganross@action-ed.com.

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