

**Session:** iCivics

**Speaker:** Sandra Day O'Connor

**Date/Time:** July 11, 2014 / 1–3:00 p.m.

**Notes by:** Mary Kay Sommers, NAESP Past President/retired principal, Fort Collins, Colorado



## Session Summary

Principals have an enormous influence on how their students become engaged, informed citizens. Research shows that today's students are not being taught civics. They lack an understanding of how our government works and how they can effectively participate in our nation's growth. To combat this problem, former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor founded iCivics, an organization that is developing engaging online civics games and a civics curriculum.

*It's time to restore civics education to all students, not just those in schools with mostly college-bound students in higher-income areas.*

## What is iCivics?

It's a free, interactive, game-designed program that teaches K-12 students the key elements of how our government works, as well as the skills needed to be effective citizens. The curriculum is tied to state and Common Core standards.

## By the Numbers

- As of 2013, only **7%** of American citizens have confidence in Congress accomplishing much.
- Only **7%** of 8th graders can name the three branches of government.
- Giving 4-11th graders two 30-minute sessions of iCivics boosts post-test scores in civics by **19%**.

## Sample Activity

In a simulation, students act as legislators who must collaborate on legislation. They must understand the complexities of negotiation and communication.

## Action Items for Principals

- Implement an **effective civics education program** in our schools.
- Give students a chance to **solve a local problem** by working with officials to make a difference. Once students see the influence they can have, they will feel a strong sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.