CIVIC AND SOCIAL LITERACY

We envision a Pennsylvania where citizens have the knowledge and skills they need to improve their lives, to participate and contribute effectively to their communities, and to connect with one another through discourse.

Rationale

- Only 42% of the state's registered voters voted in the 2010 gubernatorial election.
- Eighty-four percent of proficient adult readers voted in the 2000 presidential election, compared with 53% of below-basic readers.
- Less than half of all Americans can name all three branches of government.
- Good readers make good citizens. Regular readers are more than twice as likely as non-readers to volunteer or do charity work.
- Only 24% of college graduates and 27% of all Americans know the First Amendment prohibits establishing an official religion for the United States.
- Only 55% of all Americans know that Congress shares authority over U.S. foreign policy with the President. Almost a quarter incorrectly believe Congress shares this power with the United Nations.
- Although Congress has voted twice in the last eight years to approve foreign wars, only 53% of all Americans know that the power to declare war belongs to Congress. Almost 40% incorrectly believe it belongs to the President.
- Forty-six percent of Americans used the Internet to get news about the 2008 election, share their views, and mobilize others.
- Only 47% of high school seniors have mastered a minimum level of U.S. history and civics.
- In a survey that asked 12 questions on well-publicized current events, 18- to 29-year-olds had an average of only 5.5 correct. Nearly half could not name the Speaker of the House or the president of Russia, and 60% did not know how many American troops have been killed in Iraq.

High Tech

Downloadable ebooks, audiobooks, videos, etc. that reflect society's historic and contemporary issues and topics of interest to communities and individuals

Databases that support inquiry into historic and contemporary topics and issues

eLink portal to government resources and information

eLink portal to current news and issues

Online language tutorials

AskHerePA online, live question and answer services staffed by information professionals

Digital archives of state and local history

Broadband Internet access and rapid delivery of materials from remote locations

High Touch

Inviting, public facilities that provide space for community gatherings and educational programs

Strong print, audiovisual, and digital collections of up-to-date materials that reflect society's historic and contemporary issues and topics of interest to communities and individuals

Programs that educate and inform citizens about contemporary and historic topics in entertaining and meaningful ways

Government information in print and online

Citizenship resources

English as a Second Language classes

Materials to support immigrant populations' cultural and educational needs

Socrates Café programs fostering critical thinking and discussion by everyday people

National Issues Forums with facilitated discussion of social issues

Cultural and civic displays in academic libraries enriching knowledge and providing resources for further exploration