



BAYLOR

Dear School of Education Alums and Friends:

In April of last year, I had the high privilege of breaking bread with retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. At that meeting, we had the opportunity to discuss her growing concerns about the shortcomings of civic education in the American public education system – concerns that troubled her even when the process of upholding the rule of law occupied the full scope of her time and attention. The situation could reasonably be dubbed a crisis – especially in light of the jarring fact that more high school students know the names of the judges on "American Idol" than know the names of the Supreme Court Justices. But, not surprisingly for this lifelong public servant, Justice O'Connor moved quickly to action.

In 2009, three short years after stepping down from our Nation's Highest Court, Justice O'Connor founded an organization called iCivics, devoted to helping "young Americans to become knowledgeable, engaged 21st century citizens by creating free and innovative educational materials." To that important end, the iCivics team developed free-access, internet-based games that help elementary, middle, and high school students not only learn about how our government functions, but through simulations provide students with the opportunity to see it firsthand. Students who play these highly informative games can campaign as a presidential candidate in a race to the White House, advise a Supreme Court Justice on issues of free speech, or take a seat in Congress and craft a bill that will pass the muster of your fellow congresspeople.

Thus, when Justice O'Connor extended an invitation for Baylor and the surrounding greater Waco community to come alongside iCivics, we were honored and delighted to accept. Over the course of the current academic year, Baylor Law School and Baylor's School of Education have been partnering with Waco ISD and Midway ISD administration and teachers to integrate the iCivics content into their curriculum; study the progress of civics education in these classrooms; and ultimately publish the results.

As part of this effort, Baylor Law students have stepped up to volunteer in these classrooms. These Baylor Law Reps, as they are called, have proven to be an invaluable resource for the creative and inquisitive minds in these elementary, middle, and high school classrooms. This collaborative approach, called The Baylor Model, draws from the expertise of the Law School, the School of Education, and the teachers already in the classroom. The Baylor Model is not only promising, it is a resounding success.

As the current school year draws nearer a close, Justice O'Connor has, to our great joy, agreed to join us in Waco and celebrate the wonderful strides iCivics has made here in our own backyard. The culmination of this visit will be on the afternoon of April 30, when we will welcome Justice O'Connor to Waco Hall for an "On Topic" discussion. On that occasion, the iconic Justice will be invited to share her passion for civic education, as well as reflect on her years of distinguished service to our country. For further information about The Baylor Model, and Justice O'Connor's visit to Waco, please click here. If you would like additional information about iCivics visit the iCivics website at www.icivics.org.

We are deeply thankful for Baylor's opportunity to assume a leadership role in the unfolding development of the iCivics program. In addition, we are truly blessed to welcome to Baylor University Justice Sandra Day

O'Connor, a remarkable defender of our beloved Constitution.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Starr". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "K" and "S".

Ken Starr
President, Baylor University

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Baylor University Waco, Texas 76798 1-800-229-5678

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