



Program takes civics education to the next level

by The Educator 15 Sep 2018

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In August, a free resource was announced for high school teachers who will now be able to help children explore and understand Australia's democratic freedoms.

The Story of Our Rights and Freedoms curriculum unit was created through a unique partnership between education not-for-profit Cool Australia and the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC).



The 18 lesson unit for Year 7-10 will broaden students' understanding of democracy and its function throughout history with captivating curriculum for history and civics and citizenship classes.



Below, *The Educator* speaks to Chris Vella, the head of education at Cool Australia, to find out more.

TE: In your view, do young Australians know enough about democracy? If not, is it a matter of apathy or lack of education?

CV: We believe that students can never know too much about democracy if they are to become active and informed citizens. Through the success of a previous unit of work that we partnered with the Australian Human Rights Commission to create, *Magna Carta*, we have seen that students and teachers are seeking out engaging content in this area. This is why we have continued this partnership to create 18 free lessons that explore key features of the Australian government, and how those systems act to protect the rights and freedoms of all Australians.

TE: What are the most significant benefits of The Story of Our Rights and Freedoms for school students within a civics context?

CV: These free resources are the best of both worlds. The expertise of the Australian Human Rights Commission filtered through the educational experience of Cool Australia. These curriculum linked-resources support students from years 7-10 to building a critical understanding of human rights and responsibilities, and to develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills to apply human rights in everyday life.

TE: I understand that this resource also helps to improve students' 21st century skills. Can you tell us more about this?

CV: Because we believe that they will be highly important to students throughout their whole lives, including in their future careers, all Cool Australia resources address a range of 21st Century skills. Since the Story of Our Rights and Freedoms lessons are based around such complex multifaceted topics they really complement 21st Century skills such as creative thinking, empathy, problem solving and cultural understanding. Each Story of Our Rights and Freedoms lesson involves a range of dynamic activities that will have students communicating, collaborating, and taking initiative to become more engaged citizens.

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Natalie @ Be Kind 2 You — Fantastic Work!! We need to see more of this within schools.

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Mary Jane Rottenkrotch — One possibility is that female principals need to accommodate their male teacher's needs better. I don't think that you will hear that possibility offered. And they wonder why

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John Wright — We need to remember , however, that it is a time for personal develop - and not necessarily academic skills. In fact, this can be dangerous to push academics too soon. There are highly ...

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Alex Jenkins — Great opinion piece that definitely has some fairly obvious truths behind it. And while I do agree that decisions, far to often, are being made by bureaucrats, the remaining stakeholders

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