

Some changes—or perhaps, additions is a better word—to our public education system would, it seems to me, be advantageous here in our country where it seems that very few people understand how the government of the people is supposed to function. I don't blame teachers. They have pretty strict guidelines about what they must spend time in the classrooms. Instead, at least in our state, it might be a plus for our system of self-governing if we made a few basic, and not so difficult changes to school life.

Most of us don't learn everything all at once. When I found myself in a home in Sweden where nobody spoke English, I took out my language book. But, I didn't try to explain evolution or even tell anyone how to bake my favorite cake on that day. Instead, I looked in the dictionary and consulted the grammar book and said, "Jag ska försöka prata svenska." (I am going to try to speak Swedish.). After a few weeks I could make myself understood. After several months, I could carry on a conversation. But, everything I learned was step by step.

We could apply the same principles to learning our responsibilities and privileges as American citizens. And we could start in Kindergarten.

A five year old could understand that the leader of the country is the President. A couple of years later, the same child could learn a little bit about laws—why Dad stops the car at a red light even if there is nobody coming from the other way, or why Mom uses her seatbelt even to drive a little way.

Somewhere along the way, voting could be explained. This one is easy. Children in a class could vote for Reading before or after Recess; for Dodgeball or Basketball in gym class; and a little later, for class officers.

By the end of the high school years, America's young people should know about the branches of government, what is required of a citizen, how laws are made by compromise, what the Constitution is all about, and what the Statue of Liberty is supposed to stand for. That single semester of "Government" that was the requirement for high school seniors when I was in school is not enough. We need to permeate education with information—presented step by step from Kindergarten on—of the responsibilities and privileges of U.S. citizenship. It might eliminate some of the craziness and conspiracy theorizing and make more informed, better citizens.