

ABOUT THE SECTION

Today, we're yakking about Core Democratic Values. The Yak likes to call them Cool Democratic Values. This themed section is one of several the Yak will be doing this school year to help explain topics you're learning about in school.

Thanks to the students at Washington Elementary in Wyandotte who shared their favorite Core Democratic Values through artwork. The art came from the sixth-grade classes of Ms. Mary Ellen Caruso and Mrs. Shelley Turkowski, who yak with us often.

Note to teachers: If you're getting this issue in the classroom, you will be getting a set of posters on the Core Democratic Values within the month.

Coming up: Our next Yak's Corner special themed issue is traveling in the steps of Lewis and Clark, a journey to mark the expedition's bicentennial and how it changed America. There also will be a special classroom-only section on "Taking the Mystery out of MEAP." For more information on ordering the Yak's Corner magazine in the classroom, please call Jacki Hagel at 313-222-8656 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays.

On the Cover :

The photos in our cover collage are clockwise, the Liberty Bell (KRT); Erving Elementary School in 2001 raising a flag (Paul Gonzalez Videla); a post-September 11 flag craft by Jason Stafford, (Hugh Grannum) two hands held (KRT). Top right, Washington Elementary sixth-grader Mark Paulitch of Wyandotte was one of the students who wore an "American Pride" shirt as part of the class's red, white and blue day. (Photo by Romain Blanquart).

Core Democratic Values

WORDS TO LIVE BY

"We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness ..."

"Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." This is the most quoted phrase from the Declaration of Independence.

The words are important to Americans. That's why so many people know them by heart. They are woven into the way Americans live their lives. Of course, that's only a small part of the declaration that was approved in Philadelphia in 1776.

You know these words because of your social studies lessons. In Michigan, these are part of what we call the Core Democratic Values.

First of all, "Core Democratic Values" is a mouthful, but you hear those words all the time. In this section, the Yak wants to help you understand Core Democratic Values.

Let's start with the word "core." The core means the heart of a subject. Just like an apple has a core at the center, your lessons have a core. It's the center that the values or lessons are built around.

The word "Democratic" doesn't describe a political party in this use. Democratic refers to our system of

government. America is a democracy. We don't have a king or queen and we elect leaders. That's what our founding fathers fought for in the Revolutionary War.

Values are beliefs of an individual or a group that are considered important, in that people feel strong emotions about these beliefs — either for or against.

The state Department of Education defines Core Democratic Values as the beliefs and constitutional principles outlined in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution and other important national documents.

On this page, we'll share the Core Democratic Values and the constitutional principles that are their cornerstones.

★ Life: Each person has the right to the protection of his or her life.

★ Liberty: Liberty includes the freedom to believe what you want, to choose your own friends, and to have your own ideas and opinions, to express your ideas in public, the right for people to meet in groups, the right to have any

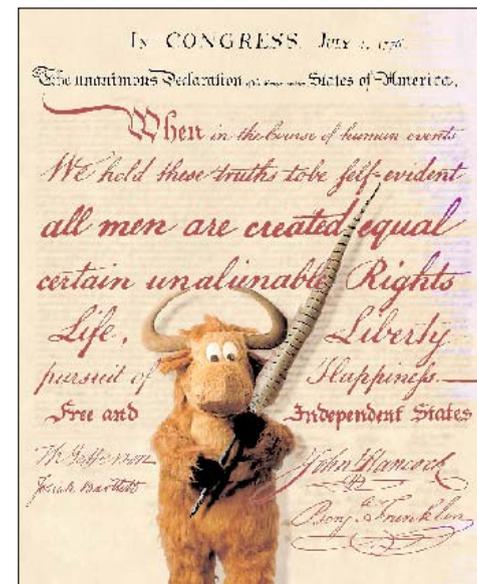


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY KENT PHILLIPS

lawful job or business.

★ The pursuit of happiness: All people can find happiness in their own way, so long as they do not step on the rights of others.

★ Justice: All people should be treated fairly in getting the advantages and disadvantages of our country. No group or person should be favored.

★ Common good: People should work together for the good of all. The government should make laws that are good for everyone.

★ Equality: Everyone should get the same treatment regardless of where their parents or grandparents were born, their race, religion or how much money they have.

★ Diversity: Differences in language, dress, food, where parents or grandparents were born, race and religion are not only allowed but accepted as important.

★ Popular sovereignty: The power of the government comes from the people.

★ Patriotism: A devotion to our country and the core democratic values in words and deeds.

Source: Michigan Department of Education definitions of values

On Pages 4, 5 and 6, you'll find a primer on the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights and definitions of constitutional principles. These set up the foundation of our government.



PHOTO BY HUGH GRANNUM

Kids show their patriotism in a Fourth of July parade.