Declining voter participation among the young. Persistently low scores on national civics and history assessments. High-school graduates who can’t find Iraq on a globe.

These are just some of the symptoms of civic education gone awry. To some observers, they suggest that efforts to teach students the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in democratic life are at best ineffective. Others believe that the schools are simply not trying hard enough. And still others question whether public schools should even be involved in shaping students’ civic values.

To some degree, education will always be civic in nature. But where should the lines be drawn? Who should determine what will be taught? And how can the nation ensure that students emerge with an understanding of their country’s history and most cherished values?

Stephen Macedo wonders if critics of civics truly care about public institutions
Chester E. Finn Jr. wants diversity in civics education