

## Spotlight on Americanism Education

Education was first addressed by the American Legion in the 1919 Convention when it was realized that the development and support of a continuous constructive educational system needed to be designed to accomplish certain citizenship and Americanism objectives. Early on in those days there were no school boards, no school districts no PTAs, and very little oversight, particularly regarding educational curriculum. The American Legion worked to ensure teachings in citizenship, the constitution, and physical fitness became a standard part of school curriculum nationwide.

Another early accomplishment was **American Education Week**. During World War I it was discovered that an alarming proportion of the American populous was illiterate and physically unfit. In 1921 the newly formed American Legion and the National Education Association entered in discussion which resulted in the observance of the first American Education Week, the third week in November. The basic principle that is driven from this observance is that nothing is more vital to the well-being of our nation than the education of our citizens.

Since those days, the American Legion's education programs main objectives are; to make it possible for any child of a veteran to receive an education beyond high school; to encourage the membership of the American Legion and its affiliated organizations to take an active part in the development and maintenance of a school system that will serve the needs of all children at every level; and to encourage students to select careers where personnel shortages exist.

The first step that should be taken is to form a Coordinated Education Committee to facilitate cooperation between the Legion, Auxiliary, Sons, and Riders. Next, here's how you can play a most important role; a partnership should be formed with your local educators including the school boards/districts and the PTA to promote **American Education Week, Boys State and Girls State, the Oratorical Contest, the Essay Contest, Flag Education**, as well as offering any other available scholarships. This partnership, once established, will open the door for numerous other opportunities such as patriotic observances, including Veterans Day programs, **American Legion School Award** program, **Veterans in the Classroom** program and countless community event support.

As in any calls made or actions taken in your community, the first step to be taken is always to communicate your intentions first with your Post Commander. There is no sense in wasting anyone's time or efforts if someone has already called on an educator. You should also consider that contact may have been made at a school from another Post or Squadron, there are no borderlines to be observed; when you call an educator for an appointment, ask if they have previously received a visit from a Legion representative.

I would like to encourage all reading this to get involved, more information is available thru the American Legion's website and there are a number of publications detailing more information which can either be downloaded or obtained from Emblem Sales as follows: *The Guide for Parents and Students* # 755.209, *American Education Week* #23-006, *Policy on Education* # 23-005, *PACT* (Post, Auxiliary and Community Together) # 23-002, *American Legion School Awards Medal program* #23-007, *Veterans in the Classroom* # 23-015 & 23-016.

Source: American Legion Americanism Manuel(also available at [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org))