# Citizenship Starts Here: A Community Engaged Approach to Civic Education

Grace Northern
*Illinois State University*, egnorth@ilstu.edu

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*Grace Northern*

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## Acknowledgements

**Abstract:**

In 2015, Illinois legislators passed HB 4025 which required every public high school to include a civics course for students to complete before graduation. In 2019, this bill was expanded to include middle school students through Public Act 101-025. In this study, I investigate how the civic education standards as outlined by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and other school climate factors impacted middle school students' civic engagement. I used data collected from the Center of Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and the Illinois Civics Hub. The sample consisted of 497 middle school students from two schools in the State of Illinois. Multiple linear regression analyses indicated that no instructional variables significantly predicted civic engagement; however, variables for personal efficacy and community engagement in the classroom both positively impacted civic engagement among students. In keeping with existing work, this paper sheds light on the importance of community engagement as a potential component for high-quality civics education. I conclude with a policy recommendation which highlights strategies for community engagement in civic education for school district leaders to consider when implementing statewide standards.

*Keywords*: Youth civic engagement, civics education, community engagement

# INTRODUCTION

High-quality, research-based, and community-engaged civic education is necessary due to increasing levels of political polarization and decreasing levels of civic knowledge and engagement. This capstone project explores civic education trends in the United States through an overview of the literature, background on recent Illinois civic education mandates, and a research design that draws from CIRCLE and the Illinois Civics Hub's *Illinois Civics in the Middle Study* to explore factors that may contribute to civic engagement among middle school students. This study consists of surveys of eighth grade students in Illinois, questioning their civic learning opportunities and experiences in middle school.

This capstone begins by discussing the benefits of community engagement in classrooms beyond civic development, such as increased access to learning opportunities, improved student retention, and teacher optimism. It then highlights the alarming statistics surrounding civic education in the United States, with declining civic knowledge among Americans and stagnant civic knowledge among eighth graders (The Nation's Report Card, 2018). The paper then provides an overview of the state of civic education in Illinois, including the legislation that requires public schools to include a separate civics course of study in their curriculum before graduating eighth grade, and the specific pedagogy that advocates for more active citizenship in civic learning. Finally, I will attempt to determine whether the state's new civic education standards impact civic engagement among eighth graders by conducting a regression analysis which includes other school climate variables that may influence civic engagement, as well.

The results shed light on the importance of including engagement opportunities for students in civic education programming. It also addresses the importance of analyzing civic

development before students reach high school, as many previous studies have only focused on high school students.

## NATIONAL STATE OF CIVIC EDUCATION

Civic education has been a hot topic of debate in the United States over the last decade. With increasing levels of political polarization and decreasing levels of civic knowledge and engagement, the need for high-quality, research-based, and community-engaged civic education is essential. Civic education provides students with the foundational knowledge of our nation's history and political processes and teaches the skills necessary to become informed citizens. Beyond that, civics teaches youth to engage in critical debate with peers and think critically about the decisions that impact their communities and quality of life.

Studies suggest that states prioritizing civic education in their curricula have higher levels of youth civic engagement (Shapiro and Brown, 2018). However, the marginalization of civics education can be seen in state requirements across the United States. Only nine states require a year of civics or government education before graduating. Additionally, testing civic knowledge relies heavily on standardized tests and does little to measure students' civic skills and agency.

A study conducted in 2016 by the Annenberg Public Policy Center revealed that only 26 percent of Americans can name all three branches of government, a significant decline from 38 percent in 2011 (2016). Further, a nationally representative sample of eighth graders demonstrating civic knowledge for this grade level returned scores that have remained stagnant since 2010 (The Nation's Report Card, 2018). These alarming statistics, coupled with the fact that civic education and social studies programming has fallen to the wayside as U.S. education policymakers have prioritized test scores in science and mathematics, further justify the need for

a revision of civic education standards and recommitment to civic curriculum development in the United States (Hansen et al., 2018).

## OVERVIEW OF THE STATE OF CIVIC EDUCATION IN ILLINOIS

In August 2015, Illinois legislators signed into law House Bill 4025 requiring "every public high school to include in its curriculum a separate civics course of study to help young people acquire and learn to use the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will prepare them to be competent and responsible citizens throughout their lives" (HB 4025). Four years later, Gov. J. B. Pritzker extended this requirement to grades 6, 7, and 8 through Public Act 101-0254.

The unique aspect of this legislation was that it was the first time the state had implemented civic education while encouraging a specific pedagogy. The pedagogy advocates for more active civic learning, emphasizing engagement such as civil debate and service learning. Chicago Public Schools (CPS) launched a similar program two years prior to the passing of the legislation. For the first time in the state's education history, we saw a shift from textbook learning to teachers implementing an action-based civic curriculum (Schmidt and Price, 2020).

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) offered further clarification of P.A. 101-0254, stating the required course content must include:

- **Government institutions**: This may include discussing the foundations of our American government, branches of government, and other institutions per the Illinois civic content standards 6-8[1].

- **Discussion of current and societal issues**: Current and societal issue discussions may link issues to core curricular goals as well as address meaningful and timely essential

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[1] Standards 6-8 refer to the Illinois civic instruction standard required for grades six, seven, and eight.

questions about public policy issues that deserve the attention of students and the community.

- **Service learning**: Service learning addresses the idea of taking informed action upon learning; service learning MUST connect to the content within the classroom. This could take the form of a traditional service project in civil society and/or advocacy for public policy at the local, state, or federal levels of government. Service learning does NOT refer to having students gather community service hours or volunteering.

- **Simulations of the democratic process**: The goal of simulations is to engage students in practices of citizenship and promote a deeper understanding of the workings of government institutions through role-playing, scenario consideration, or problem-based case solutions.

According to the mandate, "School districts are free to determine how to incorporate civics education into their current curricula in a way that best meets the needs of their students" (p. 2). The guidance document emphasizes that the legislation does not require civics to be a standalone course; instead, educators should work to incorporate civic learning into existing course structures. This legislation and advocacy for research-backed classroom practices to enhance civic learning in the classroom has made Illinois a leader in civic education within the national civic education community (Hayat and Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2020).

Illinois legislators and educators have continued to advance their capacity to address civic competencies in young adults by partnering with organizations such as the Illinois Civics Hub and the Center for Information on Civic Learning and Education (CIRCLE). The Illinois Civics Hub (ICH) and CIRCLE have contributed by providing high-quality research and proven

practices to inform not only Illinois Social Studies Standards but to create a culture of civic learning across disciplines. As a part of this work, ICH has developed a network of faculty and administrators committed to advancing civic education in the state through peer-to-peer learning, resource sharing, mentorship, professional development opportunities, and collaboration between schools. There are over 80 high schools in the network. Enrolled in those schools are over 100,000 Illinois students, about one-third of the state's public high school population.

Additionally, ICH created professional development opportunities to address the requirements outlined in the civics course mandate. Inspired by the landmark report, *Guardians of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools*, ICH's Guardians of Democracy (GoD) micro-credential courses address each of the four mandated civic course objectives (Hall et al., 2011). Teachers are provided online asynchronous professional development opportunities in topics such as informed action, current and controversial issue discussion, and simulations of democratic processes. Educators and administrators may use these micro-credential "badges" to advance their practice and pedagogy and to satisfy the professional development credits required for teacher certification in Illinois.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Youth Civic Engagement

Definitions of civic engagement vary. However, most scholars in both political science and education agree that civic engagement begins with the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to the quality of life through both political and non-political processes (Putnam, 1992; Elrich, 2000; Adler and Goggin, 2005; Checkoway and Aldana, 2012; Youniss et al., 2002; Brabant and Braid, 2009). Debates over civic engagement have permeated

the political science discipline since Robert Putnam's reintroduction of the subject at the end of the twentieth century in which he champions citizen civic engagement as a key factor to a healthy democracy.

Literature related to *youth* civic engagement has mushroomed over the years, particularly in the community development field. For the context of this research, it is essential to understand how youth's ability to be civically engaged is vital to a democratic society. The consensus among academics is that youth are fully realized individuals capable of enacting social change within their communities (Zeldin, 2004; Checkoway, 2012; Brennan and Barnett, 2009; Christens and Dolan, 2010). Shaw (2014) argues that because most young people are unable to vote, attention should be focused on helping young people develop the skills needed to meaningfully impact their communities. Thus, both educators and lawmakers should strive to make civic learning relevant to the reality in which young people live.

Political socialization, especially civic education, needs to be diverse, inclusive, and relevant to individuals from all backgrounds and allow them to make explicit connections to their surrounding communities. This focus will allow for the democratic process to be "inclusive, energized, and renewed" as youth learn to navigate their civic identities and become informed voters before turning eighteen (Shaw, 2014, 304). Specific attention should be given to the fact that systemized inequalities, such as voter access, might affect a young person's ability to be civically engaged, particularly among working-class communities of color (Balsano, 2005; Ginwright and Cammarota, 2007; Flanagan and Levine, 2010; Levinson, 2010; Levinson, 2012; Wray-Lake and Hart, 2012).

**Civic Education**

The public school system, more than any other public institution, plays a critical role in developing civic disposition, knowledge, and skills for America's youth. Considering the amount of time young people spend in the public school system, the number of studies justifying public schools as incubators for political socialization should come as no surprise (Tocqueville, 1969; Campbell, 2019; Lee, 2012; Pasek et al., 2008; Niemi and Junn, 1998; Manning and Edwards, 2013).

While early critics in the discipline claimed classroom civics instruction does not directly impact civic engagement (Langton and Jennings, 1968), later studies, using a cross-sectional analysis of the NAEP civics exam, showed that the effect of civic instruction on political knowledge and civic engagement was significant (Nieme and Junn, 1998). To continue our understanding of how civics instruction contributes to political knowledge and engagement, scholars advocate for a more interdisciplinary approach to studying this effect and more randomized studies on classroom instruction (Campbell, 2019).

Since the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, public school systems have placed a growing emphasis on standardized examinations testing knowledge in skills in math, science, and reading comprehension, while testing for civic and citizenship knowledge has fallen to the wayside. Few states currently require some form of civic education. Of those that do, some require students to pass a civics exam to graduate or, at the very least, take a civics exam to test proficiency. However, according to a 2016 report published by the Education Commission of the States, most states still need to include civics, social studies, or citizenship in their assessments of education quality. Moreover, NAEP civic test score gaps continue to widen between white

students and students of color and between students from low-income families. The following

figure shows the widening gap between these two groups.
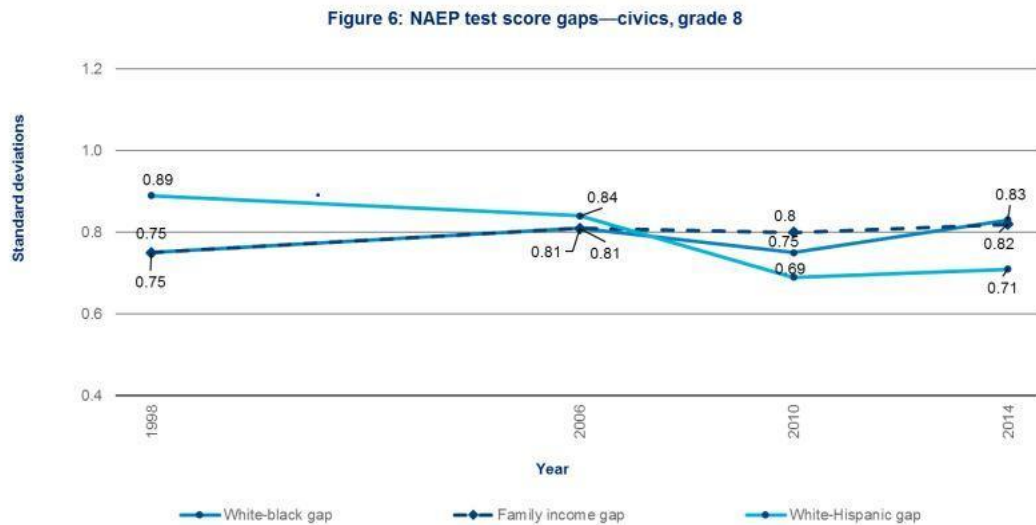


**Figure 1:** National Assessment of Educational Progress civics test score gaps from the 2018 Brown Center Report on American Education, calculated using the NAEP data explorer.

These widening gaps for civic scores are concerning for many reasons. First, they

demonstrate the decline in political knowledge for all students starting at the eighth grade level.

Second, they demonstrate that high-quality civic education may be increasingly inaccessible to

students in marginalized communities. The political socialization that comes from public

schooling is particularly important for immigrant families, people of color, or low-income

families who may have fewer opportunities to be civically engaged compared to their wealthier,

white counterparts (Campbell and Nieme, 2015; Levinson, 2007). The trendlines demonstrated

above calls attention to the decline of civic education and highlights the need to create a

pedagogical practice that makes civic education relevant to the lives of every student and citizen.

**Community Engagement and Education**

Effective civic learning should go beyond being able to name the three branches of government. Recent literature in education has advocated for what has been deemed "action" civics, meaning teaching students how to participate in democracy alongside teaching what democracy is. Academics and practitioners advocate for developing service- and politically-oriented youth by making civic education socially and culturally relevant to students' everyday lives. Doing so encourages civic participation at a young age that may continue throughout adulthood (Malone, 2008; Zaff et al., 2003; Blevins et al., 2021; Barber et al., 2012).

Discussion of community engagement in civic learning appeared as early as the 1900s with Arthur Dunn's, *The Community and the Citizen*. Dunn was one of the first advocates of making civic learning and citizen socialization relevant to the student by relating lessons to their surrounding community (Dunn, 1907). Recent studies on service learning in civic education yield positive results, suggesting that community engagement can promote sustained civic engagement into adulthood (Blevins et al., 2021; Barber et al., 2012; Hepburn, 1997). However, most of the literature is limited to models seen in higher education or high schools rather than in the K-12 context (LaDuca et al., 2020; Watson, 2007; Niemi et al., 2000; Coelho and Menezez, 2020). Additionally, much of the research on service learning focuses on the impact of the service learning project, as opposed to the relationship between the service learning program and its effects on student's civic engagement. In other words, the research uses accomplishing the service learning project as an outcome instead of determining its effects on students' civic participation beyond the classroom. No studies so far have determined the impact of community engagement in the classroom on student civic engagement outside of the classroom for middle school students.

In this context, community engagement refers to teachers helping students make relevant connections to civic learning and engaging them with community stakeholders. Civic engagement refers to the skills and behaviors commonly associated with they way citizens participate in civil society and can be seen in the examples outlined in the U.S. Census Volunteer and Civic Life Supplement. The Volunteer and Civic Life Supplement, one of the surveys used to measure civic engagement of U.S. residents, asks questions pertaining to participant's volunteerism, working to change local policies, and doing something for a charitable cause.

More research on the effects of community engagement in the K-12 setting on non-academic civic engagement across varying grade levels is needed. To that end, this research attempts to test the effects of teacher-directed student connections with and engagement to their communities on students' participation in civic society outside of the classroom. This capstone also proposes a model for high-quality civic education that is relevant to students' lives and communities.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

As stated previously, this capstone research seeks to address the effects of the Illinois legislative mandate for civic education as well as the criteria specified by ISBE's civic education standards. This capstone focuses on middle school students in response to recent legislation and also to address gaps in previous research that solely focuses on high school students. It also analyzes other factors that might contribute to students' civic engagement at the middle school level. In this capstone, civic engagement refers to students' participation in behaviors commonly associated with civic engagement, such as volunteering, advocating for change in their schools,

raising money for a charitable cause, or helping other register to vote. The research questions are as follows:

1. Do the civic education standards as outlined by the Illinois State Board of Education impact civic engagement among eighth grade students?

2. Is community engagement in the classroom a predictor for civic engagement among eighth grade students?

3. What other school climate factors contribute to levels of civic engagement for eighth grade students?

This research will test the effects of ISBE's civic education standards and other school climate factors on youth civic engagement. The variables for both community engagement and youth civic engagement are derived from questions in the *Illinois Civics in the Middle* survey conducted in Spring 2022 on a sample of middle school students from various school districts in the state. The full survey and questions can be found in Appendix A.

This survey was conducted to measure the progress of civic learning in the State of Illinois since the passing of HB 4025 and addresses different teaching and learning strategies in the middle school Social Studies classroom. The research design employs a linear regression to determine the likelihood of a middle school student to have a higher level of civic engagement beyond the classroom based on the civic education standards as outlined by ISBE and other school climate factors. The following discusses the study's overall purpose, the process of student data collection, variable measurements, and the analysis process.

**Illinois Civics in the Middle Study Data**

In response to HB 4025 and Public Act 101-0254, CIRCLE and Illinois Civics Hub partnered with two Illinois school districts to measure the efficacy of civic learning among middle school students and teacher response to the new mandates. The survey design mirrors the language used in the proposed Illinois Social Studies Standards, and measures student learning in the following categories: Current and Controversial Issue Discussion, Simulations of Democratic Practices, Foundational Civic Knowledge, and Informed Action and Service Learning. In addition, the survey measures student experience with the mandated civic pedagogy, student understanding of civic systems, such as a basic understanding of local and federal government functions, the rights and responsibilities of citizens, how to face problems in their community that require a civic solution, and ability to identify multiple strategies to interact with the government (e.g. the courts, town halls, writing letters to state and district leaders, etc.). The survey also captures general demographic information of students and asks questions pertaining to their levels of civic engagement. The collection of this data is ongoing and will be a part of a larger report published outside of the timeline of this capstone project.

Data collection began in May of 2022 with the distribution of surveys to two middle school districts in the state, one rural and one suburban. It is important to note that the collection of this data is ongoing and will be compiled into a final report published by CIRCLE in the fall of 2023. However, this capstone is limited to data collected from the first iteration of the study conducted in the Spring of 2022.

The survey was distributed digitally using Qualtrics which students accessed on computers or smartphones during school hours. The current sample size of surveyed students totaled 511; however, after eliminating participants who did not consent to have their answers

recorded, the total surveyed sample size is 497. Of the sampled population, 46.4 percent

identified as male, 42.8 percent identified as female, 2.7 percent identified as third gender or

other, and 8.1 percent preferred not to disclose their gender. The racial demographics of the

sample include 3.5 percent Native American, 3.7 percent Asian, 5.4 percent Black, 50.8 percent

Latinx or Hispanic, 2 percent Pacific Islander, 20 percent white, 5.5 percent biracial, and 4

percent biracial or multiracial. The remaining 5.1 percent preferred not to disclose their race.

**Measures**

*Illinois Civics Standards Variables*

  Several variables attempted to measure students' responses to the standards as outline by

ISBE as well as their overall civic engagement. Survey questions were designed to address the

specific standards as outlined by the Illinois State Board of Education, and they are outlined as

follows:

**Table 1***:* **Variables**

| Variable | Mean | Standard Deviation | What the variable attempts to measure |
|---|---|---|---|
| Civic Engagement | 0.20 | 0.29 | Level of Engagement |
| Design Teaching Strategy (DTS) | 0.44 | 0.24 | Pedagogical Approach |
| Simulations of Democratic Processes (SoDP) | 0.30 | 0.28 | Pedagogical Approach |
| Foundational Civic Knowledge (FCK) | 0.77 | 0.25 | Pedagogical Approach |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Informed Action and Service Learning (IASL) | 0.44 | 0.24 | Pedagogical Approach |
| Current and Controversial Issue Discussion (CCID) | 0.44 | 0.26 | Pedagogical Approach |
| Media Literacy | 0.53 | 0.36 | Pedagogical Approach |
| Self-Efficacy | 0.63 | 0.35 | Level of Efficacy |
| Community Engagement | 0.24 | 0.28 | Level of Engagement |

**Foundational Civic Knowledge.** The scale for foundational civic knowledge relates to the learning of core civic concepts including the roles and responsibilities of citizens, the role of government, and major themes and significant events in United States history. Students were asked the depth to which these topics were covered in their courses, with responses ranging from not covering the topic, covering it briefly, and covering it in depth. The variable was binary with not covering the topic coded as a 0 and covering it briefly or in depth coded as 1. Positive responses to these questions were calculated as a mean (range = 0–1, M = 0.77, SD = 0.25).

**Design Teaching Strategy**. The scale for design teaching strategy relates to the practices, skills, and dispositions that frame civic learning in the classroom. Students were asked if, during their Social Studies class, they had done any of the following: identified and created essential questions relating to the U.S. Constitution, investigated causes and solutions to social problems, or used data and research from multiple sources to consider diverse perspectives on a topic.

Positive responses to these questions were calculated as a mean (range = 0–1, M = 0.44, SD = 0.24).

**Informed Action and Service Learning.** The scale for informed action and service learning relates to opportunities for all students to engage in civic action and parallels the state's Social Studies standards as clarified by the legislation. Students were asked if they were able to research issues facing their community and propose changes to solve problems in the school or community. Positive responses to these questions were calculated as a mean (range = 0–1, M = 0.44, SD = 0.24).

**Current and Controversial Issue Discussion.** The scale for current and controversial issue discussion relates to the intentional discussion of current events in the classroom with differing points of view in which students can engage. Students were asked whether they addressed current and controversial issue discussion in the classroom. Positive responses to these questions were calculated as a mean (range = 0–1, M = 0.44, SD = 0.26).

**Simulations of Democratic Processes**: The scale for simulations of democratic processes relates to opportunities for students to engage in interactive activities that invoke civic learning and engagement. Students were questioned about the different types of democratic simulations they participated in in the classroom such as roleplay, online or tabletop games, and case study analysis. Student scores were calculated by the number of democratic simulations they stated they had participated in. Positive responses to these questions were calculated as a mean (range = 0–1, M = 0.30, SD = 0.28).

*School Climate Variables*

**Civic Engagement**. This variable attempts to measure a students' level of civic engagement by measuring behaviors commonly associated with individuals who engage

frequently in civil society (Putnam, 1992; Elrich, 2000). The questions mirror those asked in the

U.S. Census Volunteer and Civic Life Supplement to measure civic engagement. As shown in

Figure 2, questions pertained to students' behaviors in school, such as working to change a

school or community policy, participating in protests, volunteerism, helping register other people

to vote, and others. The questions were combined and calculated as a mean to create a score of

student civic engagement. The more activities the student stated they had participated in, the

higher their combined civic engagement score (range = 0–1, M = 0.20, SD = 0.29).

## In Middle School so far have you ever...
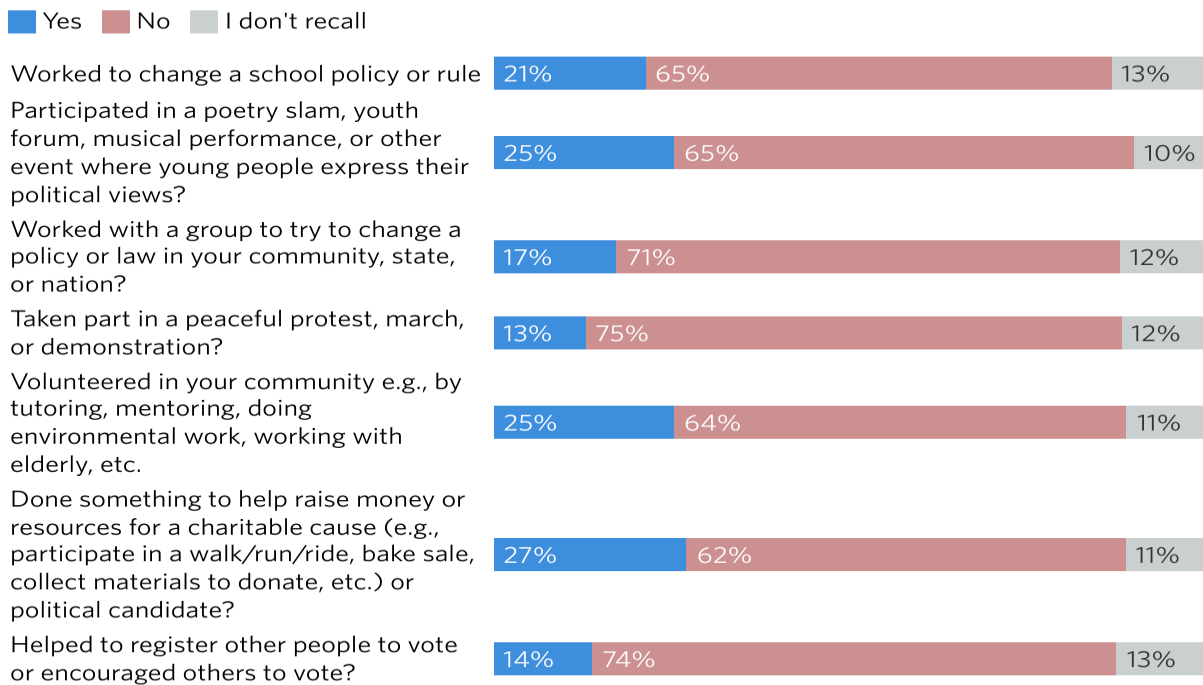


**Figure 2:** Student responses to questions pertaining to civic engagement (N=497).[2]

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[2] Similar to community engagement responses, it's important to consider the effects of the pandemic and two years of virtual learning on students' ability to be politically socialized.

**Media Literacy.** The media literacy variable measures students' ability to analyze and evaluate information using varying forms of media. Public Act 102-0055 requires all students to complete a semester of media literacy education. Students were asked whether during their Social Studies classes they critically evaluated different types of media (newspapers, online articles, videos, social media, etc.) with varying perspectives.  Positive responses were calculated as a mean (range = 0–1, M = 0.53, SD = 0.36).

**Self-efficacy**. Self-efficacy is associated with a student's perceived ability to perform certain civic competencies. This variable was created due to previous research suggesting students' self-efficacy affects their political knowledge (Hoskins and Janmaat, 2016). Students were given the scenario of addressing an issue in their school, then asked how comfortable they would feel organizing a meeting to address the issue, creating a plan to address the issue, researching and analyzing data related to the issue, and how they felt about expressing their point of view to an audience. Based on their level of agreement with each statement, we took the mean of each student's response to create their self-efficacy score (range = 0–1, M = 0.63, SD = 0.35).

**Community Engagement**. Like the civic engagement scale, the community engagement variable measures the extent to which students are engaged with their communities through their schoolwork. The scale addresses questions relating to a community project they completed during the school year. As seen in Figure 3, questions are related to whether they used community resources to research the project, discussed the project with peers in the community, related their project to the community, and collaborated with other stakeholders in the community. Their answers were then combined to create an average for the community engagement scale (range = 0–1, M = 0.24, SD = 0.28).

## Community Engagement in the Classroom

Number of students who responded "yes" when asked about types community engagement practices in their class

| | Number of Students |
|---|---|
| Play a role in choosing the issue or planning the project | 105 |
| Discuss the project with peers before working in the community | 125 |
| Conduct community research and analyzed information and data | 170 |
| Work closely with people in the community | 77 |
| Reflect on how the information learned relates to the community | 113 |

Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 3:** Table displaying number of students who responded "yes" to questions related to community engagement[3]

The purpose of each of these variables is to measure the effect of different classroom instruction practices and the Illinois Social Studies standards on civic engagement for eighth grade students. Taken together, these variables attempt to measure not only student competencies in their Social Studies classes, but to determine which methodology and pedagogical practice proves to be the most effective for developing civic engagement skills in students.

**Model and Methodology**

It is possible that eighth grade students' civic engagement may be influenced by any of the variables examined in the survey. Overall, civic engagement scores were relatively low for

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[3] The above figure summarizes the number of students who responded "yes" to questions relating to community engagement. While the numbers appear low, it is important to consider the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on student education and especially their accessibility to connect, yet alone members of the community.

eighth grade students in the sample. However, according to literature in the discipline, civic engagement in the classroom is expected to positively impact civic engagement for students outside of the classroom (Putnam, 1992; Theisse-More and Hibbing, 2004; Levinson, 2010; Dudley and Gitelson, 2001). Community engagement in the classroom is expected to positively impact levels of civic engagement and voter intention among middle school students in Illinois. Additionally, there are additional benefits associated with community engagement. Schools that promote community engagement in their classrooms boost learning opportunities and student retention, and improve teacher optimism (Daly, 2022). A civic curriculum that is diverse in its social and cultural relevance, allowing students to engage with their local communities, will make civic participation more accessible to younger populations.

To test this model, the research design employs linear regression to determine the likelihood of a student having higher civic engagement based on the level of community engagement they experienced in the classroom. This model tests the hypothesis that community engagement in the classroom is expected to positively impact the level of civic engagement among middle school students in Illinois.

# RESULTS

**Table 1***: **Multiple Regression Results for Predicting Civic Engagement for Eighth Grade Students**

| Variable | B | SE B | β | *t* | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Civic Engagement | -.048 | .088 | | -.543 | .588 |
| Design Teaching Strategy (DTS) | -.175 | .149 | -.084 | -1.168 | .244 |
| Simulations of Democratic Processes (SoDP) | .086 | .073 | .069 | 1.182 | .238 |
| Foundational Civic Knowledge (FCK) | .092 | .071 | .071 | 1.294 | .197 |
| Informed Action and Service Learning (IASL) | .164 | .115 | .098 | 1.428 | .154 |
| Current and Controversial Issue Discussion (CCID) | -.086 | .115 | -.047 | -.743 | .458 |
| Media Literacy | .057 | .058 | .055 | .988 | .328 |
| Self-Efficacy | .251 | .049 | .276 | 5.090 | <.001 |
| Community Engagement | .302 | .063 | .278 | 4.800 | <.001 |

Multiple linear regression was used to test if ISBE's Social Studies Standards (DTS, FCK, SoDP, IASL, CCID, media literacy) and other school climate factors (community engagement and self-efficacy) significantly predicted civic engagement scores for middle school students.

The fitted regression model is as follows:

*Civic Engagement* = -0.543(*DTS*) + 0.069(*SoDP*) + 0.071(*FCK*) + 0.098(*IASL*) - 0.047(*CCID*) + 0.055(*Media Literacy*) + 0.276(*Self-Efficacy*) + 0.278(*Community Engagement*) + e

The overall regression was statistically significant ($R^2$ = 0.23, p = < .001). It was found that both community engagement (β = 0.302, p = < .001) and self-efficacy (β = 0.251, p = < .001) significantly predicted civic engagement scores for students.

It is worth noting that none of the other variables, including those associated with the current Middle School Illinois Social Studies Standards, were statistically significant in predicting civic engagement for middle school students, according to this sample.

The above results appear to support the hypothesis presented. Community engagement in the civics classroom positively impacts levels of civic engagement for eighth grade middle school students beyond the classroom. These findings suggest that students who feel more connected to their communities have higher levels of civic engagement. This result is consistent with other researchers' findings indicating that those who feel more personally connected to local civic issues are more likely to participate and feel like they have something at stake regarding their political activity (Lenzi, et al., 2013; Levinson, 2010).

# POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The results suggest that other factors outside of foundational civic knowledge and skills outlined in the Illinois middle school civics mandate play an important role in predicting civic engagement for eighth grade students. First, self-efficacy, which is the sense that students have confidence in being able to organize and achieve goals on their own, significantly predicted civic engagement, a finding that is consistent with recent research findings (Hoskins and Janmaat, 2016). Second, classroom directed community engagement significantly predicted civic engagement, which is consistent with the existing literature. These findings suggest that school stakeholders must attempt to foster students' sense of self and their capabilities just as much as their civic knowledge. Evidence-based programs such as social emotional learning curriculums may be beneficial to incorporate in tandem with civics education, which are concepts the following proposed policy recommendation attempts to merge. Based on the above results, which suggest that school-related community engagement activities predict civic engagement in students beyond the classroom, more effort and opportunity should be put in place for students to relate their civic learning to their communities.

In partnership with CIRCLE and the Illinois Civics Hub, I worked to develop a K-12 district-wide model for civic learning in Illinois, drawing heavily from the Educating for American Democracy Roadmap. Educating for American Democracy (EAD) is an initiative by academics and practitioners in the field of civic education to design a cross-ideological, inquiry-based framework that guides school and district leaders to transform history and civics education

to meet the diverse needs of the 21st-century student body (Educating for American Democracy, 2023.)

Aligning this model with the Illinois Democracy Schools' model of Civic Learning Across Disciplines results in a cross-curricular civic learning model that is aligned with State Social Studies standards, engages students, and involves stakeholders at multiple levels. The model borrows from the format of EAD's Pedagogy Companion, which offers suggestions for target-based outcomes for students, teachers, and district leaders. As a part of this capstone project and my ongoing work with CIRCLE and the Illinois Civics Hub, I added a "Community and Family" section in the principles to provide more pathways for community engagement for students and school leaders.

As seen in Figure 4, the EAD Model is a set of six pedagogical principles that are connected sequentially. The model begins with a commitment to creating a civic learning environment accessible and relevant to all students. The model ends with a dedication to continuous improvement through formative assessment and student feedback to refine instructional strategies.
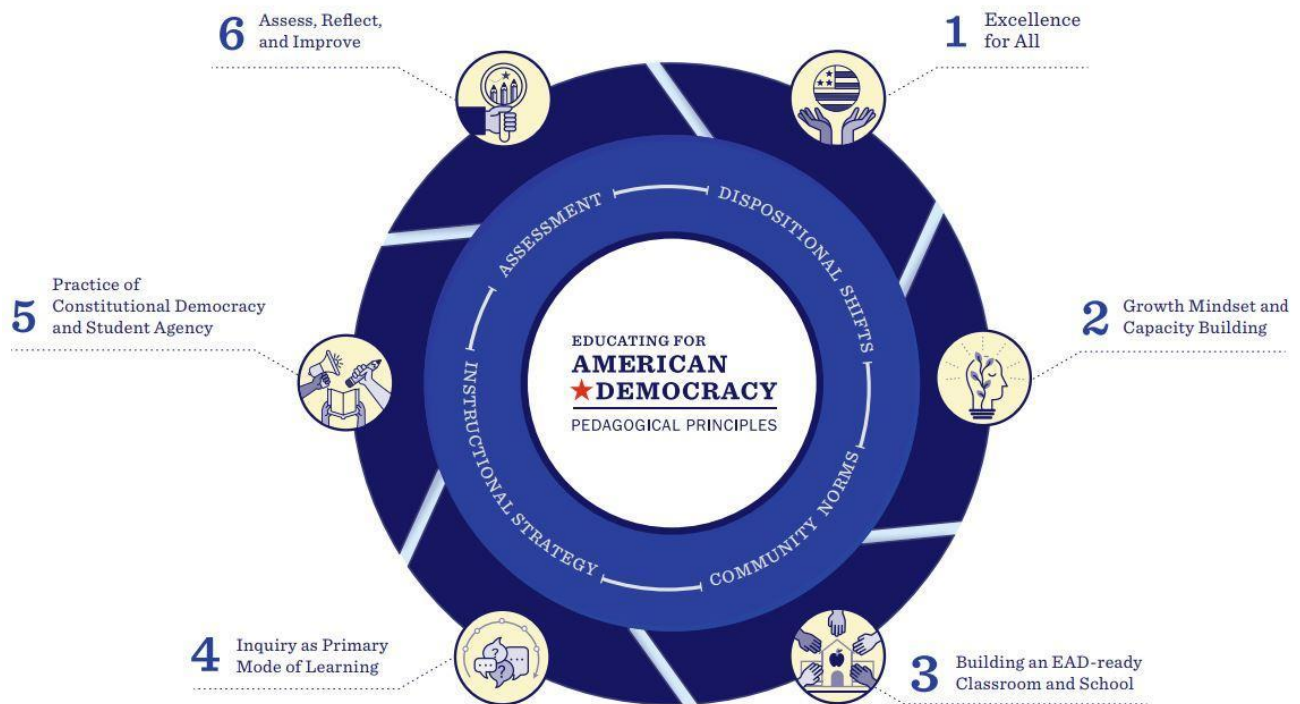
**Figure 4:** Visualization of the Educating for American Democracy pedagogical principles used for the district model for Illinois Democracy Schools.

Each principle incorporates guidance for activities and pedagogical practices to help teachers, students, schools, and communities develop the agency and skills necessary to support high quality civic learning and development. The model refers to these practices as "Moves," which are further developed by incorporating participation from community and family members. The Moves contain statements ranging from suggestions on pedagogical practice to advice on how to develop sustainable partnerships between schools and community partners. The full model can be found in Appendix B.

Some key examples from this model can be found in Principle 3: Building Culture and Support for Civic Learning Across Disciplines, where community and family members are asked to "partner with other schools, students, community leaders, and families to develop civic relationships" and to "be responsive to opportunities and efforts made by families and

community members to shape and strengthen civic learning and engagement." Meanwhile, roles for teachers and school leaders in the same principle include "build[ing] relationships with community organizations, extracurricular programs, local government, and families." The model leverages schoolwide assets including staff, students, and teachers, while seeking to build meaningful connections between community organizations and local leadership. The current model is a draft and is intended to be a living document that incorporates meaningful feedback from teachers, staff, students, families, and community members. [4]

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this paper I reviewed the current literature on civic education and youth civic engagement, provided background and context for the current study, and a synopsis of the current legislative mandate on civic education in the State of Illinois. I then tested the relationship between civic concepts as outlined in the Illinois Middle School civic education mandates, other school climate factors, and civic engagement. This research was meant to explore the effect of civic learning concepts and community engaged classroom practices on civic engagement for eighth grade students. The results presented in the regression coefficients confirm my hypothesis that community engagement predicts higher levels of youth civic engagement among eighth grade students in Illinois. After addressing the results of the analysis, I presented a community-engaged district wide model for civic education which includes guidance and strategies for students, teachers, administrators, and community leaders on how to build relationships so that students may engage authentically with their communities and develop their civic skills.

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[4] For the full district model developed during the fellowship, please refer to Appendix 2.

The results were surprising given that research suggests that specific civic pedagogies such as classroom discussions and simulations can impact students' civic development (Hess, 2009). However, it is also important to note that much of the research currently available on civics education is reported from samples of high school students. While these specific social studies standard variables did not impact students' civic engagement in this study, they may still be valuable in fostering civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Future researchers should continue to explore civics education in middle school and analyze what kind of knowledge, skills, and dispositions are necessary for middle schoolers to develop to be ready to engage with more complex civics material in high school that will foster long term civic engagement. In sum, the results of the present study suggest that civic concepts as outlined in the Illinois Middle School civic education mandates do not directly influence students' civic engagement. This is not to suggest that the standards are not relevant to the civic development of eighth grade students, rather, other factors might play a more important role than legislators and drafters of civic education standards are currently considering.

Further, the current findings highlight the importance of interventions and programming that focus on students learning and working alongside their community in order to feel agency and competence to address community and larger social issues. Moreover, considering the impact of both the self-efficacy and community engagement variables, students should be given more opportunities to increase their self-efficacy by having more authentic opportunities to address issues in their school communities. Additionally, legislators and school and administrators should work to find more opportunities for students to connect civic learning to their surrounding communities. The proposed policy recommendation attempts to address this by

merging both foundational civic concepts and community engagement to create a holistic approach to civic learning.

The research, model, and policy recommendation presented are a part of a larger study that explores these mandates more deeply through student focus groups, teacher interviews and surveys, as well as inputs from school administrators. This research is ongoing, and the final report with supporting qualitative and quantitative data will be published in September 2023 and was not able to be included within the scope of this capstone's timeline.

**Q1.1** Dear Student:

Your classroom was chosen to participate in a study about your civic education. This research study is trying to understand what you are learning in your classes on civics and how you think about civics. Taking this survey will involve questions about your classes and what you think about various ways to participate in the world around you. It should take you about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Thank you for your help!

Keep in mind:

This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. Choose the answer that is true for you and not the answer that seems best. This survey is anonymous. Neither we nor your teachers will know who you are, your answers will not affect your grade in any way. While you won't get a grade or any other reward, you may find some new insights at best and be annoyed or frustrated at worst. These are the potential benefits and risks to you. If you don't feel comfortable answering a question, skip it. You are free to stop at any time, including at the beginning, without any consequence.

If you have questions about any of this, you or your family can email Kelly Siegel-Stechler, the research leader, at kelly.siegel_stechler@tufts.edu or call at 339-223-3777. You can also contact the Tufts Social, Behavioral, and Educational Research Institutional Review Board at sber@tufts.edu or 617-627-8804.

Do you agree to participate in this survey?

o     Yes
o     No

**Q1.2 Introduction**
 The purpose of this survey is to learn more about how your school prepares you for college, career and civic life. This can happen in ANY class, not just in your social studies classes.
As you take this survey, think about how all of your classes have:
- prepared you to be an active member of your community by increasing your knowledge of how the government works and your rights and responsibilities.
- provided you with a deeper understanding of issues facing your community.
- deepened your understanding of yourself and others with different perspectives and experiences.
- engaged student voice in school and classroom decision-making.

**These answers will help your school create a plan of action to create better programs and activities for ALL students.**

**How to take the survey:**
You will see several sections that will ask about different aspects of your middle school. Some sections will have multiple rows or multiple cards you will rate whereas in others, you will see multiple choice questions. These are "prompts."  When you select a response for each prompt, click on the arrow (">") on the right side of the card to see the next prompt.

When you are done with the section, please clock on the double-arrow (">>") on the bottom of the screen to move to the next section. If you need to go back and change your answer, you can use the back double-arrow ("<<") to go back in pages. This survey can be taken on a computer web browser or a mobile device.

**If you have any questions, please write to Dr. Kelly Siegel-Stechler, Senior Researcher at CIRCLE at kelly.siegel_stechler@tufts.edu**

**Q1.4** In your schooling so far, have you taken or are you now currently taking a Social Studies course (such as "Civics," "American Government," "Government," "Current Issues," or "U.S. History?"
o       Yes
o       No
o       I don't recall or not sure

**Q2.1 Thinking about the social studies courses you have taken at your current school, how much was each of the following topics covered?**

| | I do not remember this topic. | We covered it briefly. | We learned about this in-depth/ or did a project on it |
|---|---|---|---|
| The major themes and significant events in the history of the United States, including the tensions in our democracy and issues related to race, class, gender, socio-economic status and/or sexual orientation | | | |
| How the Constitution and founding principles have applied to and impacted diverse groups of people in the past and present | | | |
| The powers, authority, legitimacy, and limitations of each level of government (federal, state, and local) as well as the civic power of individuals and groups | | | |
| The relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs | | | |
| The way people, groups, and communities govern themselves and make changes (including voting, lobbying, non-violent conflict, etc.) as well as attend to the root causes of problems in the past and present | | | |
| The ways in which news media, social digital platforms, and tools have created opportunities and challenges for civic and political engagement and impacted multiple communities | | | |
| Different roles and rights of individuals with various citizenship statuses in the United States | | | |
| Why and how different structures of government exist at local, state, and federal | | | |

| levels and impact multiple individuals and communities | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Societal contributions made by people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, Questioning (LGBTQ) or other gender identities and sexual orientations that have been discriminated against in the past and present | | | |
| Historical contributions made by the people who identify as Asian American or Pacific Islander  (AAPI) in the past and present | | | |

**Q3.1** As part of a social studies class at your current school, did you ever engage in a simulation of a democratic process or government activity that involved the following? (Check all the apply)

☐ Playing an online game (independently or with others) that simulates how the government works

☐ Interacting with classmates in a tabletop game to simulate how the government works

☐ Taking on the role of a citizen and/or government official to understand the rights and responsibilities of citizens

☐ Taking on the role of a government official to understand how the government works

☐ Analyzing a scenario, case study, or dilemma to understand how complex decisions are made by government officials and/or community members

**Q3.2** In one or more of these activities, were you asked to reflect individually or as a class to relate the simulation to your own life or to how democratic processes impact your community?

o Yes

o No

o Don't recall or not sure

**Q4.1** In the social studies classes at your current school, how often did your teacher encourage students to have discussions around current events where there are different opinions about the issues and that allow them to listen to and understand diverse perspectives? Please make your best guess.

o Almost every day

o A few times a week

o About once a week

o A few times during the semester or term

o Never

o Don't recall or not sure

**Q4.2** In any of those classes, did you study a particular social or political issue? Examples might include poverty, the environment, gun control, or a problem facing your local community.

o        Yes

o        No

o        Don't recall or not sure

**Q6.1** When thinking about various tasks and activities in which you engage at your school, which of the following happens in Social Studies classes and in other classes? **Please check the boxes on the left column if you remember doing an activity in Social Studies, and check the boxes on the right column if you remember doing the activity in any other subjects.**

For instance, let's say you remember investigating causes and solutions to international conflicts in a social studies class and doing so to solve climate change in an environmental science class. Then you would check the box on the right column and left column for that item. If you remember doing this only in the environmental science class, then you would only check the box on the right only. would check the

Students...

| | Did This in Social Studies | Did This in All Other classes |
|---|---|---|
| identify and create essential and supporting questions about the United States Constitution, or a big topic | | |
| investigate causes and solutions to social problems (e.g., food waste, pollution) | | |
| use data and research from multiple sources to understand and analyze issues, consider claims and counter-claims, and form an argument | | |
| read and analyze information in the news (e.g., the difference between fact and opinion, how to evaluate information, etc.) | | |
| lead discussions about topics related to civics, government and/or history | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| research, discuss, and write about issues related to elections, community, society and their impact on diverse community members | | |
| regularly make decisions as a group using a range of methods (e.g., debate, deliberation, voting, negotiating, choosing randomly, deferring to experts, etc.) | | |
| share ideas, opinions, and research with authentic audiences (e.g., community members, policymakers) | | |
| propose changes to solve problems in their school or local community | | |

**Q8.1 (For students who answered NO to having taken any Social Studies courses** When thinking about various tasks and activities in which you have done in courses outside of social studies (such as English and Science), which of the following has been part of your learning experience in one or more classes?

Students…

| | I did this in one or more courses |
|---|---|
| identify and create essential and supporting questions about the United States Constitution, or a big topic | |
| investigate causes and solutions to social problems (e.g., food waste, pollution) | |
| use data and research from multiple sources to understand and analyze issues, consider claims and counter-claims, and form an argument | |
| read and analyze information in the news (e.g., the difference between fact and opinion, how to evaluate information, etc.) | |
| lead discussions about topics related to civics, government and/or history | |
| research, discuss, and write about issues related to elections, community, society and their impact on diverse community members | |
| regularly make decisions as a group using a range of methods (e.g., debate, deliberation, voting, negotiating, choosing randomly, deferring to experts, etc.) | |
| share ideas, opinions, and research with authentic audiences (e.g., community members, policymakers) | |

| | I did this in one or more courses |
|---|---|
| propose changes to solve problems in their school or local community | |

**Q12.1** In your current school, did you take a course in English, math, science or another non-social studies class in which you spent time learning about laws, policy, or social issues? (Examples might be: talking about healthcare reform in a health class, food policy in a physical education class, or environmental policy in a science class.)

o      Yes
o      No
o      Don't recall or unsure

**Q12.2** In which non-social-studies class or classes did you learn about laws, policy, or social issues on a regular basis (e.g., once a week or more or a major unit) at your school? Check all that apply:

☐      English/English Literature/Journalism Studies
☐      Math
☐      Science/Technology
☐      Art, music, or theater
☐      Media/Library
☐      Health, Physical Education, or ROTC
☐      World Language/Foreign Language
☐      Other (Please specify) _____

**Q9.1** In your classes **outside of Social Studies** at your school, how often did your teacher encourage students to have discussions around current events <u>where there are different opinions about the issues and that allow them to listen to and understand diverse perspectives</u>? Please make your best guess.

o      Almost every day
o      A few times a week
o      About once a week
o      A few times during the semester or term
o      Never
o      Don't recall or not sure

**Q9.2** In any of the classes in which these discussions occur, did you study a particular issue? Examples might include poverty, the environment, gun control, or a problem facing your local community.

o      Yes

o        No
o        Don't recall or not sure

**Q10.1 In this next section, I would like you to answer questions thinking about all subjects that are offered at your school (including social studies) where activities described below take place. We do want you to think about activities that are part of an academic class only, not after-school activities and clubs.**

**Q10.2** In one or more classes at your school, were you required to keep up with current issues or the news, either by reading the newspaper, watching T.V., or searching the Internet?
o        Yes
o        No
o        Don't recall or not sure

**Q10.3** In one or more of your classes at your school, did you learn how to evaluate the quality of information from diverse multiple sources, based on the quality of evidence presented and diversity of viewpoints among authors?
o        Yes
o        No
o        Don't recall or not sure

**Q10.4** In one or more of your classes at your school, did you learn how to evaluate the quality and credibility of information and seek out diverse perspectives on social media?
o        Yes
o        No
o        Don't recall or not sure

**Q11.1** As part of one or more classes, did you have an opportunity to apply the academic content you learned to real-world challenges through projects and/or service learning?


This could include writing letters or meeting with a decision-maker to ask for change, raising awareness about the issue with members of their community, raising money or collecting goods to donate, or conducting and publishing research to inform others;
o        Yes - in one class
o        Yes - in more than one class
o        No
o        Don't recall or not sure

**Q11.2** Which class or classes was this project or projects part of? Check all that apply:
- ☐ Civics, American Government or Government
- ☐ English/English Literature/Writing
- ☐ History
- ☐ Math, science or computer science
- ☐ Art, Music, or Theater
- ☐ Media/Library
- ☐ Health, Physical Education
- ☐ World Language/Foreign Language
- ☐ Capstone or other project-based class
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____


**Q11.3** During the time you were doing the project, how often were you able to make a clear connection between the topics that you read in news and research sources, or discussed in class, with your life and your community?
- o Almost all the time
- o Often
- o Sometimes
- o Hardly ever or never

**Q11.4** When you or your class decided on what types of topics to take on or which action to take for the project, who decided what to do?
- o It was all my teacher
- o It was mostly my teacher
- o About half teacher and half students
- o Mostly students
- o It was all students

**Q11.5** Did you do any of the following as part of your project? (Check all that apply)
- ☐ Play a role in choosing the issue or planning the project
- ☐ Discuss the project with peers in before working in the community
- ☐ Conduct research and analyzed information and data
- ☐ Work closely with people in the community (not just people who were part of my school) on the project
- ☐ After the project, as part of an assignment, spend time writing about what they learned and how it relates to their community

**Q11.6** Did you learn about possible causes of the problems you were addressing in your project?
o     Yes
o     No
o     Don't recall or not sure


**Q12.1** Have you participated in any organized groups or clubs at school such as sports teams, chorus or band, student government, cultural groups, volunteer service groups, or social clubs, in which students meet regularly and sometimes make decisions together?
o     Yes
o     No
o     Don't recall or unsure

**Q12.6** Were/Are any of these groups concerned with social or political issues?
o     Yes
o     No
o     Don't recall or not sure


**Q13.7 Please think about your participation in the school group or club that is most important to you when you answer the following questions. Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.**

My participation in the group or club…


| | Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Somewhat Agree | Agree | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| helped me gain new knowledge, skills, or friends. | | | | | |
| was challenging and helped me learn new skills. | | | | | |
| made me feel that both students and adults in the group were supportive and caring. | | | | | |
| prepared me to be an active member of my community. | | | | | |
| provided me with a deeper understanding of | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| issues facing my community. | | | | | |
| helped me find my voice about issues I care about. | | | | | |
| deepened my understanding of myself and others with different perspectives and experiences | | | | | |
| allowed me to use my voice in school and classroom decision-making or impact my community in positive ways. | | | | | |
| helped me connect more deeply with my roots and community. | | | | | |

**Q14.1** When thinking about your experience at your middle school so far, how do you agree or disagree with each statement below?

At my school, I...

| | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| am encouraged to express opinions in class while respecting others | | | | | |
| feel valued for my experiences, culture and knowledge I have when talking about sensitive or controversial topics | | | | | |
| feel comfortable talking about events that are happening in our school or community with my teachers | | | | | |
| feel like I am in a community with other students who bring different perspectives and backgrounds to enrich my experience | | | | | |

**Q15.1** When thinking about how it feels to be at school and how students interact with adults and peers in the school, how much do you agree with the following statements?

| | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Students can express opinions in a group while respecting others | | | | | |
| Adults value student experiences, culture and knowledge when talking about sensitive or controversial topics | | | | | |
| Students use strategies to overcome learning struggles | | | | | |
| Students who bring different perspectives and backgrounds enrich the learning experience | | | | | |

**Q16.1** Our school's principal and other leaders...

| | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| regularly refers to the civic mission of education and sets up goals to achieve our civic mission at our school | | | | | |
| seeks out opinions from students from diverse backgrounds, not just those who represent the student body (e.g., student government) | | | | | |
| engages different types of people (teachers, students, families, community groups) to help us achieve important civic learning goals | | | | | |

**Q17.1 In this next section, we will ask you to answer questions about your opinions, attitudes and behaviors related to community engagement and voting and elections. Please choose the option that describes your opinion most closely, and note that there are no right or wrong answers.**

**Q17.2** Do you plan to vote regularly when you become eligible to vote, and/or plan to (or already do) help others become regular voters (for instance by helping others register to vote, giving them information about election and voting, and making people aware of issues)?

- o Agree

- o Somewhat agree

- o Neither agree or disagree

- o Somewhat disagree

- o Disagree

- o I don't know/not sure

**Q17.3** Suppose you found out about a problem in your school or community that you wanted to do something about. Please mark how much you agree or disagree with the statements below.

|  | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I would be able to create a plan to address the issue |  |  |  |  |  |
| I would be able to organize and run a meeting |  |  |  |  |  |
| I would be able to find and examine research related to an issue |  |  |  |  |  |

| | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I would be able to express my views in front of a group of people | | | | | |

**Q17.4** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

| | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | I don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I am interested in societal issues and public affairs. | | | | | |
| I can learn a lot from people with backgrounds and experiences that are different from mine. | | | | | |
| I can learn a lot from people whose opinions differ from my own on societal issues. | | | | | |
| Being concerned with national, state, and local issues is an important responsibility for everybody | | | | | |
| Everyone should be involved in working with community organizations or local governments on issues that affect the community. | | | | | |
| I think it's important to get involved in improving my community. | | | | | |
| Being involved in state and local issues is my personal responsibility | | | | | |

**Q15.5** In middle school so far, have you ever:

|  | Yes | No | I don't recall |
|---|---|---|---|
| Worked to change a school policy or school rule? | | | |
| Participated in a poetry slam, youth forum, musical performance, or other event where young people express their political views? | | | |
| Worked with a group to try to change a policy or law in your community, state or nation? | | | |
| Taken part in a peaceful protest, march or demonstration? | | | |
| Volunteered in your community e.g., by tutoring, mentoring, doing environmental work, working with the elderly, etc. | | | |
| Done something to help raise money or resources for a charitable cause (e.g., participate in a walk/ run/ ride, bake sale, collect materials to donate, etc.) or political candidates? | | | |
| Helped to register other people to vote or encouraged others to register or voter? | | | |

**Q15.6** Thinking of all the civic learning and engagement opportunities at your middle school, have you been able to make a clear connection between the topics that you read in news and research sources, or discussed in class, with your life and your community in each of the following ways? (check all that apply)

☐ prepared you to be an active member of your community by increasing your knowledge of how the government works and your rights and responsibilities.

☐ provided you with a deeper understanding of issues facing your community.

☐ deepened your understanding of yourself and others with different perspectives and experiences.

☐ engaged student voice in school and classroom decision-making.

**Q18.1** What grade are you currently in?

○ 8th

○ 7th

○ 6th

**Q18.2** What best describes your race/ethnicity? (Check all that apply)

☐ American Indian /Native American

☐ Asian

☐ Black

☐ Hispanic or Latino, Latina, Latinx, Chicano

☐ Pacific Islander

☐ White

☐ Two or More Races

☐ Prefer not to say

☐ Other _____

**Q18.3** Which gender(s) do you identify with? (check all that apply)

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Third gender/other – please specify: _____

☐ None of the above

☐ Prefer not to say

**Q18.4** How do you think your grades compare to students in your grade? Please make your guess, noting that this is not a test and we will not check your grades against your response.

o In the top 10%

o In the top 11-25%

o About average (between 26 and 75%)

o In the bottom 11-25%

o In the bottom 10%

o Prefer not to say

**Q18.5** Thinking about an adult in your household (parents, guardians, foster parents, step-parents etc.), what is the highest level of education anyone has achieved?

- o Less than middle school

- o Middle school diploma or equivalent (like GED)

- o Professional certificate (e.g., EMT, Licensed electrician etc.)

- o Associate's degree (community college) or college courses

- o Bachelor's degree

- o Graduate school

- o I don't know

**Q18.6** How often have your relatives and your parents engaged in political activities beyond voting? By political activities, we mean activities that promote specific political parties, rules, or candidates such as  signing a petition, volunteering for a campaign, advocating for workers' rights through union organizing, and attending political rallies and demonstrations.

- o Never/I can't recall a time

- o One time

- o Once a year

- o A few times a year

- o Once a month

- o More than once a month

**Q16.7** How often does your family discuss politics or social issues?

- o Never or almost never

- o About once a month

- o About once a week

- o A few times a week

- o Everyday or almost everyday

**Q16.8** How often do you and your friends discuss politics or social issues?

o Never or almost never

o About once a month

o About once a week

o A few times a week

o Everyday or almost everyday

## Principle 1: Excellence for All

**Teacher Moves:**
- AFFIRM diverse identities and provide inclusive instruction and examples.
- COMMUNICATE clear expectations and express support and care to students.
- PROVIDE opportunities for students to deepen and synthesize learning.
- DIFFERENTIATE and scaffold instruction to ensure accessibility for all learners.

**Student Moves:**
- TAKE ownership and responsibility for learning.
- CONNECT content with relevant experiences and interests to deepen learning.
- DEVELOP an understanding of themselves, including their identities, interests, strengths, and areas for growth.
- EXPLORE diverse perspectives outside of your own lived experiences, while seeking opportunities to see and understand others.
- RECOGNIZE the possibilities for all people in the United States to participate in American constitutional democracy.

**School and Staff Moves:**
- UTILIZE concrete strategies and suggestions to design learning opportunities that enable all learners to engage in civic life.
- CONSIDER the diversity of learners and develop clear expectations of success for all learners.
- BUILD systems that ensure all students have access to effective learning experiences.
- COLLABORATE with families and community members to learn and incorporate local context into student learning opportunities.

**Community and Family Engagement Moves:**
- SEEK out opportunities to expose students to different perspectives.
- INCORPORATE diverse student voices in community planning and development initiatives.
- CREATE an inclusive mission statement that recognizes the importance of schools to community and family success.
- ENGAGE community and families in conversations about how they can support student success and continual school improvement.
- DEVELOP inclusive programs and supports that reach out to the diverse families the school serves while embracing diverse family structures and considerations.

## Principle 2: Growth Mindset and Capacity Building

### Teacher Moves:
- ENGAGE in professional development about the important role of schools to prepare students for college, career, and civic life
- BE ACTIVE IN professional learning communities focused on support, sharing resources, and mentoring to promote a continuous cycle of improvement and courageous engagement in dialogues and discussions that result from civic learning across disciplines.
- GATHER formal and informal student feedback on their learning experience to understand individual needs and strengths. Engage in self-reflection to identify and address implicit biases and practices that may interfere with some students' learning processes.
- SEEK out professional development and utilize resources to provide a civic and social context that is inclusive of historically underrepresented and economically excluded groups.
- ENCOURAGE students to reflect on and improve their work by creating opportunities for revising and revising their prior work and learning and feedback. (see Principle 6).
- SHARE timely and relevant feedback on student work using formative assessments and other tools.
- LEARN about activities to cultivate student motivations to improve and develop a growth mindset.

### Student Moves:
- REFLECT, RELEARN, REVISE, AND REVISIT learning to solidify content acquisition and ability to analyze, evaluate, and apply their knowledge.
- MAINTAIN expectations to continuously improve their work and develop content expertise with civic purpose.
- GIVE feedback about the learning experience and advocate for the support needed to achieve excellence.
- LEARN AND USE strategies for persisting and overcoming learning struggles and leverage assets.

### School and Staff Moves:
- OFFER evidence-based instructional training and mentoring to all teachers to strengthen content knowledge and instructional strategies to facilitate engaged and effective learning (e.g., culturally responsive strategies, formative assessments, social-emotional learning).
- ENHANCE  opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration among teachers to integrate civic learning across disciplines and grade bands.

- MAKE a significant and long-term investment in civic learning across disciplines.
- ADOPT student growth mindset across academic and social contexts in the school and the community.
- INCLUDE a diverse group of students in decision-making and create more opportunities for student leadership in the classroom, school, and community
- AIM for civic learning across disciplines across districts to enhance student learning.
- ENGAGE educators, students, and families in opportunities for civic learning both in and out of school.
- SOLICIT  student, family, and community feedback in curriculum development processes.

## Community and Family Engagement Moves:
- ENCOURAGE self-reflection and support students to achieve excellence in the school and community.
- REFLECT on personal backgrounds and experiences that influence how you see communities near and far.
- CREATE opportunities for community and family members to learn about growth mindset and how it works in your school.

## Principle 3: Building Culture and Support for Civic Learning Across Disciplines

## Teacher Moves:
- STRIVE to build relationships with and among students by showing interest in learning more about students and their families and communities .
- CREATE opportunities through a variety of discussion structures and protocols for students to understand diverse perspectives.
- ENGAGE students in discourse that seeks to solve challenges through productive disagreements and conflict-resolution.
- SUPPORT students to process emotionally difficult events using different modes of expression including dialogue, writing, and creating art.

## Student Moves:
- BUILD self-management, empathy, and relational skills to develop social-emotional competencies and character strength.
- DEVELOP AND EXERCISE voice and choice in the classroom.
- PARTICIPATE in classroom conversations to solve challenges through productive disagreements and conflict-resolution.
- ENGAGE collaboratively with peers and learn to take various roles in team dynamics.

- LEARN to make constructive compromises.

**School and Staff Moves:**
- ESTABLISH a culture of rigorous learning, including social emotional learning, as a schoolwide priority.
- ENGAGE in continuous development of a positive school climate using data, resources, and tools provided by stakeholders at multiple levels .
- UTILIZE a learning environment self-assessment tool for district teams.
- USE Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) tools and practices into school disciplinary policies to support students social and emotional development.
- INTEGRATE student voice and feedback to inform school disciplinary policies to ensure academic excellence and enhance their school experience.
- CREATE opportunities for all staff and student voice through working groups and committees. Set up a system for leveraging student expertise and inputs, especially from those who are challenged by the school climate.
- IMPLEMENT leadership and opportunities for collaboration through mechanisms like a faculty senate, instructional leadership teams, subcommittees, and unions in order to help all staff develop skills needed to create an environment for school wide civic learning
- BUILD relationships with community organizations, extracurricular programs, local government, and families.
- ENGAGE families as active participants in their students' civic development.

**Community and Family Moves:**
- PARTNER with other schools, students, community leaders, and families  to develop civic relationships.
- BE RESPONSIVE to opportunities and efforts made by families and community members to shape and strengthen civic learning and engagement.
- PARTICIPATE in opportunities to give constructive feedback at school board meetings or town halls .
- BE ACTIVE in school parent teacher organizations, when available.

**Principle 4: Inquiry as Primary Mode of Learning**

**Teacher Moves:**
- DESIGN lessons that uncover the complexity of disciplinary content providing mirrors to understand themselves and windows to understand others.
- INCORPORATE opportunities to analyze diverse forms of evidence, including images as well as texts.

- EMBRACE students lived experience and background as a critical starting point for inquiry.
- INTRODUCE new concepts by building on background knowledge and experiences.
- ENGAGE students in critical thinking skills, centering student voice in asking questions to guide the inquiry process
- BUILD student engagement with media literacy to help students be wise producers and consumers of information.
- FACILITATE opportunities for students to engage with various forms of media and to think critically about their sources.

### Student Moves:
- EVALUATE the strengths, weaknesses, and factualness of varied sources.
- ASK questions and apply critical thinking skills during analysis and investigation of content and sources.
- DEVELOP written and oral argumentation skills and ability to use evidence.
- SEEK to understand the perspectives of others as part of making an informed decision.
- ENGAGE with competing perspectives and be open to revise their own.
- SHARE lived experiences and knowledge with members of the community, both inside and outside of school.

### School,Staff, and District Leader Moves:
- STRIVE to understand the process of civic learning across disciplines and advocate for multidisciplinary and collaborative civic teaching and learning in your own school or district.
- REACH out to families and local stakeholders and explain the nature of civic learning across disciplines and why it is important to student civic development.
- ENCOURAGE—by providing resources and time—multidisciplinary and cross-grade learning experiences.
- MODEL inquiry by engaging staff voice and agency in professional development.

### Community and Family Engagement Moves:
- PRACTICE discussion and joint decision making when interacting with community and family life.
- MODEL lifelong learning and critical thinking using assets available in the community (i.e. local library, historical sites, cultural festivals, etc.).
- PROVIDE multiple sources of information and media that have different perspectives in the home and community.
- ENCOURAGE cyber safety in the consumption and production of media to enhance digital citizenship.

**Principle 5: Practice of Constitutional Democracy and Student Agency**

**Teacher Moves:**
- PROVIDE students the opportunity to practice democratic skills in the classroom and school.
- FACILITATE opportunities for students to interact with community leaders, initiatives, and issues.
- FACILITATE opportunities for students to take informed action in their communities.
- DESIGN lessons to support student research skills including data collection, conducting interviews, and reporting findings.

**Student Moves:**
- IDENTIFY AND RESEARCH issues that are central to students' communities.
- ENGAGE with peers around current and controversial issues facing the school and the community.
- EXPLORE diverse perspectives surrounding an issue and reflect on personal opinions, experiences, and related challenges. Before addressing an issue.
- DEVELOP an asset map of community resources that promote and advance  Civic learning across disciplines
- COLLABORATE with school administration to address issues facing the school and community

**School and Staff Moves:**
- EXPRESS strong support for student engagement and authentic student involvement in school governance and decision-making process.
- ELEVATE classroom success in promoting civic learning across disciplines
- PROVIDE students the opportunity to practice civic skills in the school community (e.g., participatory budgeting, student government, and student newspapers).
- INCORPORATE multiple ways to leverage youth inputs and prior knowledge to inform decisions.
- COORDINATE with local government, community organizations, and extracurricular programs to increase equitable access to civic engagement opportunities.

**Community and Family Moves**:
- CREATE authentic opportunities for youth to observe, learn about and participate in community decision-making processes.
- EXPAND opportunities for youth input in meetings held by local stakeholders.
- INVEST time and energy into the creation of a youth led council to inform decisions in the school and community.

- EDUCATE parents and community members on the importance of place-based learning to develop civic competencies.

## Principle 6: Assess, Reflect, and Improve:

### Teacher Moves
- CHECK for understanding and depth of comprehension throughout lessons/units among all students.
- REVIEW AND REFLECT on student performance data to identify where instruction can improve.
- IDENTIFY how instruction can be scaffolded and differentiated to serve all students' needs using feedback from students.
- USE formative and summative assessment and share feedback with students to help them improve their own learning.
- SOCIALIZE continuous improvement for students by sharing timely feedback and giving them opportunities to improve their work.

### Student Moves:
- ENGAGE in continuous growth through assessment, feedback, and revision.
- PARTICIPATE in peer review/assessment processes to provide substantive and constructive feedback to others.
- PRACTICE self-reflection and self-assessment of work and track growth/learning over time.
- STRIVE to improve the quality of academic work by reflecting on strengths and weaknesses and revising the work when there is an opportunity.

### School and Staff Moves:
- ALIGN instruction and curriculum within and between grades and across disciplines by creating regular opportunities for educators to engage in collaboration and conversations.
- FACILITATE opportunities for educators to collaborate and analyze student work and quality of learning across disciplines and grades.
- CREATE opportunities for students to share reflections about their learning with families and community.
- IDENTIFY connections between civic learning and other school and district initiatives

### Community and Family Moves:
- PARTICIPATE in school wide systems and protocols such as public forums, family surveys, and schoolwide celebrations to provide feedback and support decision making

- COLLABORATE , when possible, with school, families, and students to address student growth by communicating and providing opportunities to serve on committees and in working groups such as parent engagement programs, parent nights, open houses, and parent teacher conferences.

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