

Robert R. McCormick Foundation

Illinois Civic Blueprint



ROBERT R.
McCORMICK
FOUNDATION

Illinois Civic Blueprint, 2nd Edition



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**THE *CIVIC BLUEPRINT FOR ILLINOIS HIGH SCHOOLS*
WAS DESIGNED TO GIVE EDUCATORS, POLICYMAKERS, PARENTS,
AND ALL RESIDENTS OF ILLINOIS:**

- Explanations of promising approaches to high school level civic learning
- Examples of Illinois high schools, educators, and students using these approaches
- Recommendations for implementing these approaches in high schools throughout Illinois
- Resources that support schools and communities in promoting civic engagement among Illinois high school students

Foreword

In 2009, the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, in partnership with the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition and the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago, published a visionary report titled *Educating for Democracy: Creating a Civic Blueprint for Illinois High Schools*. The report captured the proceedings of a February 2009 conference that crafted a *Civic Blueprint for Illinois High Schools*, and articulated a vision for high-quality, school-based civic learning in the state.

Shortly after publication, the Civic Blueprint was endorsed by the Illinois State Board of Education, appropriately on Constitution Day. The Democracy Schools Initiative (DSI) of the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition, a program designed to deepen school-wide commitments to high-quality civic learning, continues to abide by its principles and has proliferated throughout the state. In fact, both houses of the Illinois General Assembly have passed resolutions endorsing the DSI. The Illinois Senate commended the schools that have already completed the process, encouraged others to seek recognition, and recommended this distinction appear on school report cards. As of September 2013, 22 Illinois high schools have been formally recognized as Illinois Democracy Schools, and a growing number of high schools across the state were in various stages of the application process.

In celebrating the successes of the past four years, we are obligated to revisit the initial parameters established in the Civic Blueprint. Research in the field of civic learning and engagement continues to proliferate and inform our work. The Illinois Civic Mission Coalition has grown in size and scope, and the network of Illinois Democracy Schools continues to expand.

Collectively, these dynamics pointed to the need for a revised Civic Blueprint, and the pages that follow reflect this product. In the intervening four years, the promising approaches to high school civic learning became “proven practices,” reflective of the emerging research cementing their effectiveness. The Democracy Schools Initiative has scaled up significantly, and thus new examples of school-wide commitments to civic learning abound.



A thorough review of research on continuous school improvement has demonstrated that while challenging curriculum remains central to Democracy Schools, other essential supports underpin schools that live their civic mission (Bryk et al, 2010; Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2010). These supports include school leadership, staff development, school climate, and school-community relationships. The available resources that support these essential characteristics of Democracy Schools are also broader and present within schools, the programs offered by Illinois Civic Mission Coalition members, and the communities where schools are situated.

In the introduction that follows, Carolyn Pereira, the founding chair of the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition and Emeritus Executive Director of the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago, makes a compelling case for the urgency of high-quality, school-based civic learning in Illinois schools. Carolyn is a true trailblazer in the field of law-related education and continues to play an integral role in advancing civic learning in Illinois and nationally.

Chapter 2 details the benefits of school-based civic learning, and includes a vignette written by Jolie-Grace Wareham, a recent graduate of Glenbard East High School in Lombard, reflecting on the importance of the civic learning opportunities she experienced while in high school.

Chapter 3 is divided into five parts and lays out the common elements for a sustained, school-wide commitment to civic learning. They include:

- Vision and leadership
- Proven civic learning practices
- Staff development
- A reciprocal relationship between schools and their surrounding communities
- School climate

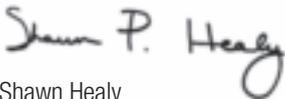
Like the original Civic Blueprint, Chapter 3 articulates indicators of each of these common elements, along with empirical evidence of their effectiveness. It also provides vignettes written by representatives of Illinois high schools and community partners whose practices or programs exemplify the common elements.

Chapter 4 describes the Democracy Schools Initiative in greater detail, including its history and intent. It also includes general information on the application process, and concludes with information on, and a testimonial from, current Illinois Democracy Schools.

Chapter 5 details advocacy efforts of and policy recommendations from the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition. It begins by describing the history of the Coalition and its achievements to date, and then references current and future advocacy and public policy initiatives. It concludes with policy recommendations for various stakeholders, including state and local policy makers, school faculty and administration, postsecondary institutions, scholars and researchers, and funders.

In the conclusion, Darlene Ruscitti, Regional Superintendent of Schools in DuPage County, urges us to make student preparation for civic life a priority. Darlene is a prominent local champion of civic learning, and the large number of Democracy Schools in DuPage County is testament to her leadership in this space.

Thank you in advance for reading the pages that follow and for considering the recommendations embedded within. Our schools have enormous expectations piled upon them at a time when they too often lack necessary support structure to handle their collective weight. However, it is the recommendation of this Blueprint that school improvement processes and school-wide commitments to their civic mission reinforce one another. Preparing young people for their role as citizens of our great democracy should stand alongside college- and career-readiness as the central charges of today's schools.



Shawn Healy
Chair, Illinois Civic Mission Coalition
Civic Learning & Engagement Scholar,
Robert R. McCormick Foundation



Carolyn Pereira
(center left), founding chair
of the Illinois Civic Mission
Coalition, accepts the Illinois
State Board of Education's
endorsement of the
Civic Blueprint on
September 17, 2009,
Constitution Day.

Chapter

1

**INTRODUCTION:
THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCHOOLS**

*Carolyn Pereira, National Liaison and
Chairman Emeritus,
Illinois Civic Mission Coalition*

For several months preceding the 2012 presidential race, I spent a couple of days a week at a campaign call center, not making calls, but taking calls from all over the country. The conversations I had with some of the supporters and opponents of the incumbent President pointed to substantial deficits in citizens' civic knowledge.

For example:

- One caller suggested that, although he really liked the Vice President, the Vice President was too old. He should resign and appoint his son to take his place.
- Several callers insisted that the President had the power to tell gas stations how much to charge for gas or that Medicare was not a government program or that the current President was a Muslim.
- At 6 am central time on Election Day, I took a very angry call from a young man in Illinois. He hadn't received his voter registration card yet and blamed the campaign call center. He said he had been told you didn't need to be eighteen to register to vote. Somehow he missed the part about being eighteen by Election Day!

Callers also were often single-issue folks and had little or no understanding of the complex charge our government has been given in the Constitution. In the Preamble we are reminded of the U.S. government's mission given to it by the people.

We the People, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

In short, not only was the Constitution established for our common good, it gives the government some complex tasks. All citizens, including our elected officials, need to understand this.

Unfortunately, my informal assessment of the lack of civic knowledge among voters and high school students alike is confirmed by many studies including the 2010 National Assessment of Education Progress in Civics, which concluded that most high school students are not proficient in civic knowledge (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

According to a recent national study, most of them have taken American government (Niemi and Smith, 2001) and, if they attended an Illinois school, state law still requires one year of instruction in U.S. history or U.S. history/government and includes a separate test in civics. Because this is not a state test, but one developed and administered by a teacher or school district, it varies widely across the state. Often it is little more than an exercise in factual recall.

Chapter 1 | Introduction

Local school boards, district superintendents, and the local property tax base determine the nature of our schools, often to the detriment of the poor and those of color. Unfortunately, socioeconomic status can be strong indicator of the quality of civic learning opportunities a student receives (Kahne and Middaugh, 2008; Levinson, 2012), but does not have to be (Sporte and Kahne, 2007).

Although the individuals represented in my sample were not knowledgeable, they were civically engaged. Clearly this was not enough. We need to teach both knowledge and engagement. For democracy to thrive, citizens must be knowledgeable about their role and the role of government, and be willing to express and exchange ideas among themselves and with their representatives in government at the federal, state, and local levels. Citizens should be able to identify and analyze problems, deliberate issues with others including those who have a different perspective on the issues, take constructive action individually and together, and be persistent and reflective. Voting, serving on juries, running for public office, and following the news and current events are the beginning of a long list of citizens' roles and responsibilities.

When the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition was formed in 2004, it committed itself to working with high schools to help them fulfill their civic mission. The challenges that schools faced were much the same as they are today—over-testing, under-funding, and a weak state civics mandate. By launching the Democracy Schools Initiative, the Coalition was able to provide small planning and implementation stipends to school teams, who collaborated to identify the ways in which they imparted civic knowledge and provided civic engagement opportunities to their student body. In that way, they assessed their strengths and weaknesses and developed short- and long-term plans—to offer a new civics/government course, to enrich a current one, or to provide professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their content and pedagogical knowledge.

What is even more hopeful and encouraging is that the original Democracy Schools continue to reflect upon and revise their civic learning programs. Teaching effectively about democracy is much like democracy itself. As Vaclav Havel said, “Democracy is the tunnel at the end of the light.” So is teaching about democracy.

Keep in mind that a school's civic mission and its educational mission share the same goals. All students should be engaged and knowledgeable life-long thinkers, who question, discuss, analyze, evaluate, make decisions, and are open to new ideas and information. In addition, schools are responsible for helping students use their thinking skills. Applying these skills to civic life means that students need lessons in advocacy, negotiation, compromise, collaboration, and consensus-building as well—skills not only essential to civic life, but also to the workplace. A school that fulfills its civic mission is also fulfilling its educational mission. Illinois has many such examples. It needs many more.

I know the next time I volunteer at a call center four years from now, the calls from the young voters in Illinois who graduated from Democracy Schools will reflect engaged and knowledgeable voters. It is my hope that the number of Democracy Schools recognized by the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition continues to grow, and that state and local policies are adopted to make these deep school-wide commitments to civic learning the norm across the state, rather than the exception.



Carolyn Pereira, emeritus director of the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago, founded the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition in 2004 and currently serves as its national liaison.

Chapter

2

THE BENEFITS OF SCHOOL-BASED CIVIC LEARNING

*Shawn Healy, Chairman,
Illinois Civic Mission Coalition,
and Civic Learning & Engagement Scholar,
Robert R. McCormick Foundation*

Civic engagement, broadly defined, has both political and community dimensions (Zukin et al, 2006). On the political front, it entails voting, persuading others to do the same, and volunteering for and contributing to political campaigns. The community dimension includes group membership, volunteering for non-political organizations, and fundraising for charitable causes.

Civic engagement also encompasses public voice, which can take the form of contacting public officials or the media, protesting, petitioning, and consumer activism. Finally, civic engagement has a cognitive component, requiring basic knowledge about politics, following government and public affairs, talking about politics with family and friends, and consistent attentiveness to the news.

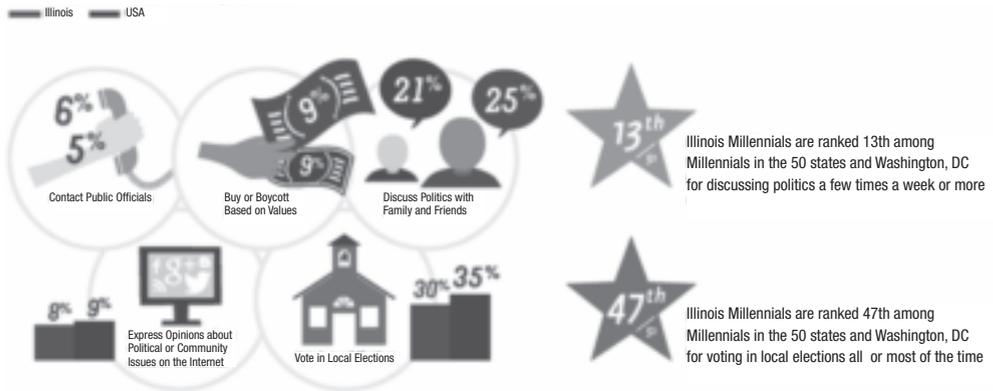
Low levels of civic engagement are well-documented across successive generational cohorts in the United States (Putnam, 2000). Our citizenry is increasingly disconnected from the elected and appointed officials who represent us in government. At the same time, the scale of problems facing our democracy have grown as civil society has shrunk, weakening our collective capacity to address them.

These problems are particularly acute in Illinois, and most pronounced among our youngest citizens. According to the *2012 Illinois Civic Health Index* (2013, McCormick Foundation and the National Conference on Citizenship), Illinois Millennials (ages 18-29) fare poorly when compared to their national peers on several measures of civic engagement. Fewer than three-in-ten vote regularly in local elections (29.8% in Illinois compared to 34.9% nationally), ranking 47th among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Illinois Millennials rarely speak to (29%, 45th) or receive favors from (7.2%, 42nd) neighbors, or work with them to resolve a community problem (2.2%, 48th).

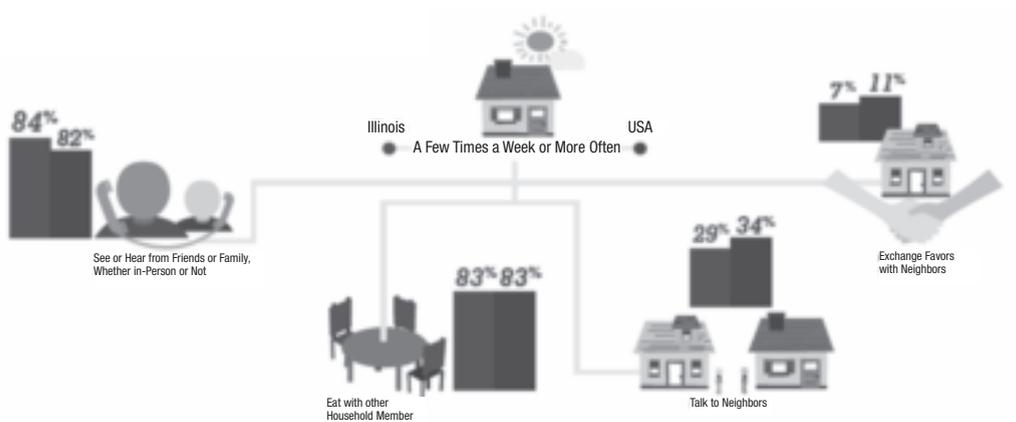
While by no means a panacea, high-quality, school-based civic learning opportunities present a partial solution to what imperils the very state of our democracy. *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools* (Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics, 2011) makes a profound case for the benefits of school-based civic learning, including development of the civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for effective participation in civic life.

According to the *2012 Illinois Civic Health Index*, Illinois Millennials are less likely than their national peers to vote regularly in local elections, speak to or receive favors from neighbors, or work with neighbors to address a problem in the community.

Political Action 2011



Social Connectedness 2011



Civic knowledge includes an understanding of our structures of government at the federal, state, and local levels, along with the related processes of legislating and policy making. Civic skills are integral to democratic participation and include deliberation, information gathering and processing, community organizing, and other forms of collaboration. Civic dispositions invoke duty-based norms of participation, tolerance, concern for the rights and welfare of others, and institutional trust. Collectively, civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions lead to various forms of democratic participation, including voting, volunteering, communication with elected and appointed officials, public demonstrations, community organizing, and coalition building.

Various high-quality, school-based civic learning opportunities (addressed in greater detail in Chapter 3, Section 2) enhance current and prospective political and community engagement among students (Kahne et al, 2013). Jolie-Grace Warham's experience as a student at Glenbard East High School in Lombard (a 2012 Illinois Democracy School) is illustrative of school-based civic learning opportunities translating into broader forms of engagement, in her case serving on the Illinois State Board of Education's Student Advisory Council (see Vignette 2.1 below).

For example, a national survey of youth ages 18–24 after the 2012 presidential election found that those with high-quality high school civic learning experiences were more likely to vote, know campaign issues and facts about United States political system, and form political opinions (Center for Information Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, 2013).

ONE STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL-BASED CIVIC LEARNING

Written by :

*Jolie-Grace Wareham, Student,
Glenbard East High School*



Jolie-Grace Wareham, a recent graduate of Glenbard East High School in Lombard, in conversation at the 2013 annual convening of the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition.

Student's Perspective

Vignette 2.1.: *I was warming up on my trumpet before rehearsal during the spring of my sophomore year when my band teacher walked up to me holding a piece of paper. He looked me in the eyes as he placed that piece of paper on my music stand and suggested that I apply for a position on the Illinois State Board of Education Student Advisory Council, a council I had never heard of before. My band teacher was well aware of my love for public policy, but I found it interesting that a band teacher—not a social studies teacher—had encouraged me to take these passions to the next level. I didn't know it then, but that council I'd never heard of before would truly impact my life, providing me with immense leadership opportunities, the ability to effect change, and the company of great new friends from across the state.*

However, my school's commitment to civic engagement did not stop there. That same spring, due to my involvement with my school's student council, I was asked if I would like to become a student member of my town's Economic and Community Development Committee. I was eager to pursue this opportunity brought about by my school's close relationship with the community, including the village trustee serving as the committee chairman who was looking for a student member. Thanks to my school's deep commitment to civic engagement and partnership with our local government, I was able to learn so much through the countless hands-on civic lessons I had as a result of being on the committee. In addition, many of my peers really began to take their in-school student voice and exercise it in the community.

While many schools require government classes, my school ensures that civic engagement isn't merely a suggestion; it's a requirement in the form of projects consisting of public meetings and online blogs. As a recent graduate of an Illinois Democracy School, I'm honored that my education consisted of the six "proven practices" of civic learning, including in-classroom instruction, a club devoted to debating current events, various service organizations and activities, student voice through student government and advisory committees, and mock elections that involve students of all backgrounds in the democratic

“ With every passing day, it's becoming clearer and clearer just how the civic engagement that my school encouraged my peers and me to take part in will continue to vest itself in countless aspects of our futures.”

Chapter 2 | The Benefits of School-Based Civic Learning

process. My band teacher is a prime example of the importance of civics permeating a school, rather than being tucked away inside social studies classrooms.

As a recent graduate looking back, it's clear to me that my school's civic education—and support thereof—has significantly shaped the past four years of my life. With every passing day, it's becoming clearer and clearer just how the civic engagement that my school encouraged my peers and me to take part in will continue to vest itself in countless aspects of our futures. These opportunities have not only provided me with valuable lessons and experiences, but have forced me to realize just how lucky I am to have had an education in which teachers of all departments see the benefit of civic learning and work tirelessly to achieve a school environment steeped in democracy. They have made me recognize the vitality of civic learning, and I hope that, in the near future, all students will have the educational opportunities my peers and I have enjoyed. Civic learning is vital because it unites the poor student with the rich student, the black student with the white student, the honors student with the student in special education classes; while at the same time embracing each student's unique voice and encouraging them to take their passions to the next level.

The benefits of civic learning transcend strengthened civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Channeling the pioneering work of Harvard Education Professor Meira Levinson (2007, 2010, and 2012), *Guardian of Democracy* argues for equity in available school-based civic learning opportunities. Research suggests that students of color and lower economic strata are less likely to experience them, and unequal learning opportunities lead to a racial and socioeconomic civic achievement gap every bit as stark as those in reading and math. This gap translates into participatory inequalities and related disparities in public policy outcomes. However, research proves that “demographics are not destiny,” and that universally available, high-quality, school-based civic learning opportunities can help to close the racial and socioeconomic empowerment gap that cripples our democracy (Sporte and Kahne, 2007).

Beyond closing the civic empowerment gap, high-quality, school-based civic learning opportunities develop student competencies demanded by the 21st Century workplace. Based on research by Torney-Purta and Wilkenfeld (2009), *Guardian of Democracy* suggests that a combination of traditional and student-centered classroom-based civic learning opportunities build 21st Century competencies like creativity, critical thinking, economic knowledge, global awareness, media literacy, and working collaboratively with peers.

21st Century competencies have a significant online dimension, with important implications for civic learning and engagement according to Cohen and Kahne in their 2012 report titled *Participatory Politics: New Media and Youth Political Action*. They find near universal youth participation on social networking sites. Much of this presence is “friendship-driven” and devoid of politics, but this creates the “weak ties” that Putnam (2000) considers building blocks of civil society. Moreover, a significant number

of youth engage in “interest-driven” online activities, several of which have a political component. Finally, counter to the participatory inequalities referenced above, new media usage transcends racial, ethnic, and economic cleavages, emerging as a tool for greater equity in our democracy.

High-quality, school-wide commitments to civic learning also lead to improved school climate by teaching the importance of community, respectful dialogue, teamwork, and diversity. The benefits of sustained, positive school climate, addressed at greater length in the chapter that follows, transcend civic learning. Positive school climate promotes students’ social-emotional development, which in turn leads to cognitive gains and greater student achievement across subject areas (National School Climate Council, 2007; Cohen, 2006).

Finally, strong, school-based civic learning programs can help raise high school completion rates. While the number of students who graduate from high school on time is at a four-decade high, more than two in ten students still fail to complete high school in four years. The problem is more pronounced for students of color, with one-third of African-American students and three in ten Hispanic students failing to meet this threshold (Layton, 2013).

Bridgeland et al (2006) interviewed high school dropouts, ages 16–25, and concluded that “. . . while some students drop out because of significant academic challenges, most dropouts are students who could have, and believe they could have, succeeded in school.” Many of those interviewed recommended making school more interesting, and suggested that if schools offered experiential civic learning opportunities like service-learning and simulations, linked to the “real world” (detailed in Chapter 3, Section 2), it would have improved their chances of graduating.

Chapter

3

THE COMMON ELEMENTS NECESSARY FOR A SUSTAINABLE, SCHOOL-WIDE COMMITMENT TO HIGH-QUALITY CIVIC LEARNING

*Shawn Healy, Chairman,
Illinois Civic Mission Coalition,
and Civic Learning & Engagement Scholar,
Robert R. McCormick Foundation*

In 2010, the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools published the *No Excuses* report in partnership with the Gates Foundation. The report's subtitle read, in part, *Eleven Schools and Districts That Make Preparing Students for Citizenship a Priority*. Not coincidentally, two of the schools featured in the report are Illinois Democracy Schools, Community High School in West Chicago, and Maine West High School in Des Plaines.

In reflecting upon the seven years since the inception of Democracy Schools and the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition's work to strengthen civic learning in schools throughout the state (see Chapter 4 for additional details), the Coalition concluded that schools needed to do more than engage in the proven civic learning practices at the heart of the first *Illinois Civic Blueprint*. In order for civic learning to live across the curriculum, in co- and extracurricular activities, and in the way a school governs itself, schools must have five "common elements" in place, only one of which is curriculum-centered.

The common elements framework is derived from the explorations by Anthony Bryk and others (2010) of the impact of school reform in Chicago on student achievement in math and reading. While it has not been empirically tested in the realm of civic learning, its central tenets are transferable. Moreover, the *No Excuses* report deduces this framework from a national sample of eleven schools selected on the basis of their deep commitments to civic learning. Collectively, its recommendations mesh well with the current emphasis on continuous school improvement, and present an opportunity to reinvigorate the civic mission of schools at the same time.

The framework encompasses visionary school leadership as the driver of change. Challenging, strategically designed, and innovative curriculum remains central to high-quality civic learning, as does a commitment to staff development from hiring, to evaluation, to ongoing professional development. Schools must also build reciprocal relationships with their surrounding communities where both parties see one another as valuable resources and stakeholders. Finally, in order for students to learn about democracy, they must attend a school which practices it in all facets and maintains a positive overall climate.

This framework is detailed in the sections below. Each section includes a brief description of one of the five component parts, references research-based evidence of its effectiveness, and indicators of its presence in a school setting. One or more vignettes written by representatives of schools and community partners throughout Illinois are included in each section for illustration and potential replication elsewhere.

3.1 Vision and leadership

The current educational reform movement has embraced school leadership as the driver of school improvement, and ultimately, student success (Bryk et al, 2010; Marzano et al, 2005). Given federal policy incentives, much of the empirical evidence focuses on student achievement in reading and math, but through the *No Excuses* report and the Coalition’s experiences administering the Democracy Schools Initiative, school leadership has proven critical to sustained, systemic commitments to civic learning. At a minimum, superintendents, principals, and assistant principals must support the work of their staff to advance civic learning. Ideally, these individuals lead the way.

Moreover, when examining most schools’ mission statements, civic-oriented language emerges. It’s clear that schools value more than the current charge to prepare students for college and career. According to the mission statements of the current Illinois Democracy Schools, these schools also believe deeply in their mission to prepare young people for civic life. Figure 3.1 below captures the civic-themed words common to these mission statements, including “community,” “citizens,” “responsible,” and “society.” The mission statement of Glenbard East High School, a 2012 Illinois

Figure 3.1: Wordle featuring the combined mission statements of current Illinois Democracy Schools



Democracy School, exemplifies this point: “To prepare students to be productive citizens equipped to challenge the future as a knowledgeable person, critical thinker, effective communicator, quality producer, collaborative worker, responsible individual and socially responsible citizen.”

The challenge in the current environment is for schools and their leadership to live up to each of the values expressed in their mission statements. Recall that Bryk et al (2010) identified a central role for school leaders in building essential supports for student learning, calling principals “...catalytic agents for systematic improvement.”

Marzano et al (2005) engaged in a meta-analysis of existing research on the impact of effective school leadership on student achievement. The results were stunning, and the responsibilities of school leaders daunting. Many of these responsibilities mesh well with the specific recommendations of the *No Excuses* report, which situates them in the context of civic learning.

According to Marzano et al (2005), school leaders should establish concrete goals for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, set the bar high for student achievement, and attend continuously to both. In the same vein, *No Excuses* calls for a school-wide commitment to civic learning, achieved through articulation of, and adherence to, clear goals.

Karen Boran, Principal at John Hancock College Prep High School in Chicago, is a visionary school leader. As evidenced by the vignette she wrote below (see Vignette 3.1a), Boran seeks alignment between curricular and extracurricular programs, elevates the voices of students and their parents, and helps build a school climate where students feel safe to practice democracy in the surrounding community.

**LEADING A VISION FOR
A SCHOOL'S CIVIC MISSION**

Written by:

Karen Boran, Ed.D, Principal,

John Hancock College

Prep High School in Chicago

Leading a Vision

Vignette 3.1a.: *At John Hancock College Prep, a neighborhood high school on Chicago’s southwest side, Freshman Connection, our summer transition program for our incoming 9th grade students (co-sponsored by GEAR UP with a focus on literacy, math, and college counseling) was ending. The accompanying Parent University was ending, too. Summer recovery concluded in a few days, and our summer enrichment programs were wrapping up as well.*

A group of students in the one of the classes organized a service-learning project to raise awareness and a campaign to contact our legislature regarding the Dream Act. Fifteen percent of our student body is undocumented. The team went around the school and personally invited everyone—from the front office to the parent university—to come to their Dream Act program.

As the video was set up, the high school kids polished off the remains for the parent feast from their closing celebration held earlier in the day. Finally, the video started and 100 parents, students and teachers watched together a documentary on the Dream Act. The library was packed.

I sat surrounded by parents and little children along the back window ledge of the darkened library and took in the amazing power a group of students had to galvanize a room and get us motivated to pick up the phone, or access a Facebook page.

This is democracy in action. This is what grass roots change is all about. As a school leader, it’s my job to make sure that the parents know that I value their trust in me, and that my building is their building. It’s my job to listen for well-conceived plans, to push for alignment with other programs, and to say “yes” as often as I can. Grassroots change is where kids feel safe enough, passionate enough, to take a class project and launch it out to the world. Grassroots change is where a community of teachers, students, and parents came together to take action on social change.

““ *Grassroots change is where kids feel safe enough, passionate enough, to take a class project and launch it out to the world.*””

No Excuses also prioritizes teacher autonomy, enabling them to experiment with “thought-provoking” civics curricula and instructional methodologies. School leaders should inspire teachers to strive for goals beyond their grasp, and exude optimism about the staff’s potential to “accomplish substantive things” (Marzano et al, 2005). Jaclyn Orlov, a social studies teacher at Lakes Community High School in Lake Villa, Illinois, felt empowered by administrators in her district and school to pursue Democracy School recognition in 2011. Her story, which follows in Vignette 3.1b below, is illustrative of how school leaders can support teachers to strengthen the civic mission of an entire school.

Vignette 3.1b.

Empowering Teachers to Strengthen a School’s Civic Learning Program.

Written by Jaclyn Orlov, Social Studies Teacher, Lakes Community High School in Lake Villa

In the summer of 2011, I attended a summer institute for teachers sponsored by the McCormick Foundation, where I learned about the Democracy School application process through the school-wide civic assessment. The more I learned about the assessment and application process, the more I felt that Lakes Community High School embodied the proven practices that promote high-quality civic learning. Within my school, there is a dedication to civic learning that is highlighted in our mission statement: “Lakes Community High School, being a community of learners with a vision of excellence, is committed to providing an educational experience that encourages all learners to develop to their fullest potential, to engage in lifelong learning, and to be responsible members of society.” Therefore, I felt confident that administrators in my school would support the huge undertaking that is the Democracy School assessment and application process.

I approached my department chair with this proposal and she encouraged me to take this risk. I followed this conversation with a meeting with our principal, and he also backed me in this undertaking. I felt comfortable approaching these administrators and even taking it to our co-superintendent because administrators in my district support teachers taking risks. I was nervous about the huge job that lay ahead of us, but I was confident that my administrative leaders would support me throughout the process, whether or not we came out of it successful. This administrative team not only had confidence that I could take on this task, but they wanted me to lead the assessment and application process.

I started by presenting the idea for the Democracy School civic assessment to our building leadership team. The goal was to create buy-in so that each department would be ready to participate in the assessment process. Next, I created a presentation and documentation to share with each department and tried to tell each department why we embody the principles of Illinois Democracy Schools. Once I presented the information to the department and set deadlines, the assessment process was underway.

As a faculty, we put students first, and this became abundantly evident through the school-wide civic assessment process. The part of this process that made me most proud is that we have great examples of civic engagement happening all over our school and this process gave us a chance to showcase them. We have a strong foundation of civic learning that has been enhanced by this Democracy School application because in this organized manner, we have created a systematic approach to improving civic engagement throughout our school.

School leaders should be knowledgeable about curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and monitor the effectiveness of these practices on students' academic achievement. When it comes to students' civic learning, school leaders must not sacrifice the long-term benefits of civic learning (see Chapter 2) for short-term gains on high-stakes standardized tests where the social studies, and civics specifically, are excluded. The Common Read Program at Carbondale Community High School, a 2013 Illinois Democracy School, exemplifies the potential of aligning improved literacy among students with a school-wide civic learning experience. Principal Daniel Booth details this pairing in the vignette that follows (Vignette 3.1c).

Vignette 3.1c.

A Common Civic Learning Experience through Literacy

Written by Daniel Booth, Principal, Carbondale Community High School

At Carbondale Community High School we have begun to take on the process of incorporating civic learning head on. During the 2012–13 school year the entire school took part in a Common Read Program that was designed to have all students and faculty read the same book, A Long Walk for Water by Linda Sue Park. The book is about a young woman in south Sudan who has to walk several miles each day to obtain clean water for her family. After reading the book, our student leaders began to ask questions about how the school could help the people in Africa in their daily struggle for water. These conversations led to several student-led fundraisers that eventually raised \$4,000, which equates to 10 water wells, for the people of Africa. It was truly amazing to see our student body come together for a common cause, and find ways to make a difference on a global level.



Jaclyn Orlov, a social studies teacher at Lakes Community High School in Lake Villa, accepts a banner recognizing her school as a 2012 Illinois Democracy School.

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Daniel Booth, principal and Carbondale Community High School, rallies his staff and students through a common reading program that inspires subsequent civic engagement.

I must say that these things would not have been possible without an open mind and constant communication with the student body from the administration. As the principal, I began the year by letting the faculty and administration know that our theme for the year would be, “If we’re growing, we’re always going to be out of our comfort zone (John Maxwell).” This theme was put to a true test throughout the year as students began to come up with more and more ideas on how to raise money for the water wells.

If being out of our comfort zone is a measurement of growth, I have to say that the faculty and administration at CCHS grew exponentially during the 2012–13 school year. Teachers were very creative in tying the book in across the curriculum, which assisted in expanding the theme to all levels of students. These cross curricular connections not only connected the reading to the classroom, but also fueled the students’ fire in fund-raising for this cause.

At Carbondale Community High School we made the commitment to take the education of our students out of the classroom and into a broader spectrum. Doing this allowed our students to truly understand how to problem solve, take on a task, and make a difference. The end result of us taking this risk was an unforgettable experience for our entire school. I look forward to leading our administration, faculty, staff, and most importantly our students into continued civic learning opportunities.

Similar to recognizing the long-term importance of civic learning in an era where standardized testing predominates, school leaders must actively protect instructional time and teachers from both internal and external disruptions (Marzano et al, 2005). Also, school leaders must ensure that their staffs are intellectually stimulated. This may come through continuous exposure to, and regular, facilitated discussions of current research and theory. Finally, in order for students’ optimal civic development, school leaders should ensure that teachers have adequate resources and professional development opportunities to support civic learning in their classrooms.

3.2 Curriculum

While this revised *Illinois Civic Blueprint* is partially an attempt to situate proven civic learning practices in the larger context of the school setting and the national reform movement, the practices themselves remain central to the high-quality civic learning opportunities every student should experience throughout their educational careers. In this spirit, the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools updated its own report on the proven practices in the 2011 release of *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools* (Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics).

Schools should use combinations of all six proven civic learning practices throughout the formal curriculum, in co- and extracurricular activities, and in school governance policies. Immediately below are selected indicators of these practices pulled from the Guardian report. Additional indicators drawn from the No Excuses report follow, contextualizing the proven practices in a school setting in which multiple pressures are placed on faculty, staff, and administration.

Formal instruction in government, history, law and democracy: Whereas three high school civics courses were once the national norm, only American government remains of a trio that previously included current events and civics courses (Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics, 2011). However, Illinois is one of ten states that do not require a civics or government course, and its two-credit graduation requirement for social studies is among the lowest in the nation (Godsay et al, 2012).

It goes without saying that simply teaching civics overtly is half the battle, and research suggests that formal instruction, paired with the more interactive, experiential approaches that follow, lead to growth in students' civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions, which collectively facilitate lifelong civic engagement (Torney-Purta and Wilkenfeld, 2009; Burns et al, 2001).

Selected indicators of formal instruction include:

- Courses reflecting key democratic knowledge, skills, and concepts
- Courses making explicit connections between formal instruction and concrete actions
- Students engaging in critical analysis of political information

A few of the themes that formal instruction should address are:

- The Constitution and its fundamental principles as applied to the past and present
- The powers and limitations of branches of government at the federal, state, and local levels
- Ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic

Teaching with current and controversial issues: Our country is deeply polarized politically, and regular political discussion is thus rare (Mutz, 2006). To the extent that we do discuss political issues with our fellow citizens, it tends to be with those with whom we agree, and this can further amplify our views to the extremes (Bishop, 2008). Respecting those who have different viewpoints than ours is central to a democracy in which the value of free speech aims to drive a wide spectrum of dialogue about issues important to us.

Schools are uniquely positioned to bridge these divides and make crosscutting political conversation the norm. They are hosts to ideologically heterogeneous student bodies, and many of these young people have yet to develop the hardened political views of adults. Most importantly, they take courses led by professional educators with the skills, or at least the potential, to make structured discussion of current and controversial issues a class staple (Hess, 2009).

Classes centered on current and controversial issues bring civics curricula to life. They speak to the relevance of the material students are mastering, and help connect the theories and institutions emphasized in the previous indicators of formal instruction with civic and political life.

The news media represent important sources of current and controversial issues and structured examination of these sources promote critical news media literacy. These competencies include conscious “thought-processing of news,” awareness of media’s controlling influence, and knowledge of media institutions and content production (Craft et al, 2013).

Selected indicators of teaching with current and controversial issues include:

- Courses exploring issues that present meaningful and timely questions about public problems
- Learning materials providing necessary background information and the best arguments on varying sides of an issue
- Developing ground rules to ensure inclusive and productive discussions occur in a climate of respect and civility
- Students understanding an issue or event well enough to form their own opinions

Service-learning linked to the formal curriculum and classroom discussion: Service-learning has evolved from community service and voluntary activities to a more structured experience premised upon a strong link between service and classroom learning objectives. Its contributions to youth civic development can be powerful.

For example, Spote and Kahne (2007) found that in-class learning experiences and service-learning opportunities were the strongest predictors of students' civic commitments in a longitudinal study of Chicago Public Schools high school freshmen and juniors. Moreover, Billig et al (2005) reported that students who participate in service-learning programs show higher civic knowledge and dispositions, a greater tendency to value school, and an increased likelihood to vote as adults.

The promise of linking the formal curriculum to student-led service projects that address authentic social and political issues must be balanced with the reality that it is rarely realized. Schools have become great facilitators of community service, and this has value in its own right, but when divorced from the curriculum, it isn't service-learning and therefore doesn't yield the full benefits of this method of teaching and learning.

Jon Schmidt, the Democracy Education and Student Leadership Manager within Chicago Public Schools, has led the district's service-learning initiative for the past decade. This proven practice, among others, is deeply embedded in the CPS Global Citizenship Initiative, which is described by Jon in Vignette 3.2a below. Jon has moved the district from an hours-based service-learning requirement to a project-based system in alignment with best practices. During the course of CPS high school students' career, they will complete three service projects, the final one a capstone project prior to graduation.

When done well, service-learning brings the formal curriculum to life, enabling students to learn through experience and examine the root causes of the issues they tackle. It allows students to reflect upon these experiences throughout their project, and to make connections to the larger political dynamics in play.

Selected indicators of service-learning linked to the formal curriculum and classroom discussion include:

- Service-learning has an intentional focus on civic outcomes and encourages civic commitments
- Service-learning projects are of sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet specified outcomes
- Service-learning is used intentionally as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards
- Service-learning experiences incorporate multiple challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself and one's relationship to society
- Service activities promote understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants
- Students have a strong voice in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning experiences with guidance from adults

THE CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP INITIATIVE

Written by:

*Jon Schmidt, Democracy Education
and Student Leadership Manager,
Chicago Public Schools*



Students at CPS GCI schools who participated in a Spring 2013 service-learning experience in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood.

Global Citizenship

Vignette 3.2a. *Chicago Public Schools launched the Global Citizenship Initiative (GCI) in 2012. The GCI is designed to be a response to the civic achievement gap (Levinson, 2011) and the recommendations of the Guardian of Democracy Report (Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics, 2011). During the 2013–14 academic year, 16 CPS high schools signed on to pilot GCI.*

The initial commitments of schools during the pilot phase include offering at least one section of a Civics/Financial Literacy senior level capstone course, developing and facilitating a Student Voice Committee at their school, and utilizing service-learning and civic action pedagogy strategically throughout the Social Science department.

The Civics/Financial Literacy course is designed as a student-centered curriculum that reflects the “new civics” (Baumann and Ryan, 2013) with emphasis placed on project-based and interactive learning that aligns with Common Core Standards and engages students in the real issues of their communities. The course embeds authentic simulations and discussion of current events and controversial issues. For example, Jessica Marshall, a Civics teacher at Alcott High School for the Humanities, created a Super PAC simulation that taught students about the role of money in elections.

Christine Laadimi from Bogan High School leads a highly interactive and student-centered Financial Literacy course. She reports much higher rates of student attendance, completion of homework, and phone calls from parents asking why their children are suggesting that they avoid the high fees for cashing checks or taking loans at currency exchanges.

Student Voice Committees have created opportunities for students to identify school improvement issues and work together with their principals toward generating solutions. David Gonzalez, a history teacher at Steinmetz Community Academy, worked with his students to identify a malfunctioning metal detector as a source of student tardiness—and

““ GCI schools are asked to build civic practices that are responsive to the civic achievement gap and proven civic learning practices in ways that fit the individual character of the school, its culture, programs, and community context.””

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get if fixed; repaired water fountains with the help of school engineers; and developed a plan to address school security issues. None of these issues, all of which were important to students, were being addressed until student voice was engaged by the principal in a collaborative fashion.

GCI schools are asked to build civic practices that are responsive to the civic achievement gap and proven civic learning practices in ways that fit the individual character of the school, its culture, programs, and community context. As schools build strategies for GCI implementation, Chicago Public Schools is creating a K–12 Civics Framework that asks all grade levels to engage their students in civic learning.

Finally, schools develop civic practices and projects that emerge authentically from teachers and students in their specific communities as well as through partnerships with external civic and community organizations. Emerging projects reflect the dynamic civic opportunities that exist through the electoral process (Get Out The Vote, Election Judges, Voter Registration), public policy issues, and organizations engaged in various social movement issues.

Simulations of democratic structures and processes: Preparing young people for their civic roles and responsibilities in our democracy takes practice. Indeed, student athletes and band members practice regularly for hours throughout the school year with equipment and instruments in preparation for the big game or performance. Students must also experiment with the instruments of democracy in preparation for the civic equivalent of the big game or performance, namely informed, engaged citizenship.

School classrooms are important venues for simulations of democratic structures and processes, be they voting, legislating, or litigating. They provide a safe environment for students to experiment authentically with the levers of democracy and develop transferable knowledge, skills, and dispositions for “real world” application tomorrow and throughout their lives.



The Legislative Semester is a culminating civic learning experience for seniors at Community High School in West Chicago.

Perhaps the most prominent home grown simulation in Illinois is the Legislative Semester example of United States government at Community High School in West Chicago, Illinois. Government Teacher Mary Ellen Daneels helped develop the course and continues to teach it two decades later. Her description of the Legislative Semester follows in Vignette 3.2b below.

Vignette 3.2b.

Exploring Effective Citizenship in our Global Community through the Legislative Semester

Written by Mary Ellen Daneels, Social Studies Teacher, Community High School in West Chicago

Students can make democracy work! As a teacher, it is my responsibility to provide a safe environment for students to engage in democratic practices and “do democracy.” With administrative support and investment by external partners, what began over twenty years ago as a one-week “committee hearing experience” in one classroom has evolved into a comprehensive program that meets content standards while utilizing Common Core skills that promote college, career, and civic success.

The Community High School Legislative Semester is the senior capstone experience of a four-year social studies program that intentionally infuses the six proven practices of civic learning while students explore the central question, “What does it mean to be an effective citizen in a global community?” Students research, advocate and initiate civic action as they build their civic muscles in an egalitarian classroom where “no citizen is left behind.” As one student shared, “I think it (the simulation) has made me more aware of different issues, and has made me more confident in discussing issues with people I wouldn’t have even thought of before.”

I often tell my students, “We build the car, but you have to drive it.” While effective classroom instruction and modeling help students learn the “rules of the road,” it is when students “take the wheel” and make decisions about policy, coalitions and their own voice that the abstract becomes real.

As one student reflected “. . . I think kind of being part of it and seeing it more close up, you have more respect for the people who run our country, just all of the long drawn-out processes that have to go on. Sometime we bash the people that run our country, when actually, it is not an easy job and there is so much behind the scenes work that goes on that nobody knows about until you kind of experience something like this.”

Louis Ganzler (2010) did an intensive study of the Legislative Semester, and found that students became more comfortable with conflict as a result of the simulation experience. Students were also more confident in speaking before their peers, and felt that their classroom environments supported open discussion.

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Selected indicators of simulated democratic structures and processes include:

- Students practicing citizenship by role-playing and learning important civic content and skills
- Students acting in fictional environments in ways that would be impossible for them in the real world
- Simulations requiring advanced academic skills and constructive interaction with other students under challenging circumstances
- Simulations including applicability to both civic and non-civic contexts, such as public speaking, teamwork, close reading, analytical thinking, and the ability to argue both sides of a topic
- Simulations incorporating technology as a powerful tool for teaching students about democratic processes

Extracurricular activities that facilitate greater involvement and connection: School-based extracurricular activities have long been a channel for students to further explore interests inspired by teachers and content encountered in the classroom with their peers. Civics and government are often included in a school's mix of extracurricular offerings, including student government, Model UN, and debate teams.

Other extracurricular activities also have a civic dimension, such as student media and service organizations. Research suggests that instrumental organizations of this nature further develop students' civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions, which translate into higher levels of civic engagement throughout life (Kirlin, 2003).

Expressive organizations like athletics and school plays have less compelling civic outcomes, although even here there is evidence that these activities develop personal connections and outward views that translate into adult engagement in the community (Thomas and McFarland, 2010).

Selected indicators of extracurricular activities that facilitate greater involvement and connection include:

- Providing a forum in which students can use skills and knowledge in purposeful experiences that have both meaning and context
- Helping students to develop a sense of agency as a member of one's community
- Permitting student membership in a socially recognized and valued group that they join voluntarily because of genuine interest
- Facilitating student development of support networks of peers and adults that can help in both present and future
- Fostering teamwork and collaboration

- Providing opportunities for students to engage in challenging tasks that promote learning of valued skills, form strong social bonds with adults outside of the family and like-minded peers, and develop and confirm positive personal identity
- Activities are intensive, long-term, and require student effort
- Activities are structured, organized, scheduled regularly, and adult-led

Authentic opportunities for student leadership and decision-making: Despite the civic learning opportunities presented to students in the classroom and extracurricular activities, these lessons are too often undermined in school hallways as students experience school governance practices antithetical to democracy.

For most students, school is a major part of their daily lives. While family, peer networks, and other activities may take a portion of their time, the greater part of every student’s day is spent in school. As a result, much of their world, including friends, responsibilities, and problems, is related to school. In order to encourage young people to assume responsibility for their communities, providing leadership opportunities at their school is a logical step.

Flanagan et al (2010) write, “While instruction is important in advancing the civic mission of schools, knowledge alone cannot promote civic interest, action, and commitment. Students also need opportunities to work together, to voice their views, and to hear those of fellow students.” Multiple opportunities exist for students to understand school issues and make and execute decisions about school activities, from day-to-day planning to peer mediation, organizing, and fundraising. Encouraging student participation in school governance can extend well beyond the few who are typically involved in school government.

The Superintendent’s Youth Advisory Council (SYAC) in Decatur, Illinois, exemplifies these best practices, and engages students from both high schools in the district in conversations with the superintendent about authentic issues of concern to the respective student bodies. In its decade-plus of existence, the SYAC has addressed a myriad of issues, the most prominent of which was advocating for a student seat on the school board.

After experiencing early resistance from the sitting school board members, SYAC members went to their State Senator for help. The students asked for a change to the state law regarding school boards that would allow a “youth advisory member” to serve on a school board, and eventually went to Springfield to testify before the House of Representatives Committee on Education in support of their bill. The bill passed the General Assembly, and the law now enables a school board to appoint a youth advisory member to serve without voting privileges. While this change created an opportunity that many school districts have taken advantage of across Illinois, Decatur is still working toward a student seat on the school board.

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The Decatur SYAC is described in greater detail in Vignette 3.4a.

Selected indicators of authentic opportunities for student leadership and decision-making include:

- Student government, not limited to social planning, stimulates and engages large numbers of students in school and community service activities and provides a forum for student voice on questions that impact them.
- Students' decisions must have real effects.
- Students have opportunities to discuss school policies, present their viewpoints and positions, and be heard respectfully.
- Students are informed of their rights and responsibilities in school.
- Students have opportunities to work with others (peers, parents teachers, etc.) to address school problems
- School governance activities engage student interest.
- Programs facilitate school-wide democratic deliberation on school issues as a way of fostering civic skills and dispositions among all students.
- The school has established mechanisms and processes by which to gauge and respond to student voices.

In addition to weaving proven civic learning practices across the curriculum, co-and extracurricular activities, and in school governance policies, schools must contextualize their commitments to civic learning within a standards-driven, high-stakes testing environment that privileges college- and career-readiness (Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2010).

Rather than addressing civic learning in a single civics, government, or even United States history course, high-quality civic learning opportunities should be integrated throughout students' four-year high school career. Just as college and career preparation occurs over the course of a students' entire Pre-K-12 experience, the same is true for developing the civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for effective engagement in our country's civic life.

Some of the best civic learning opportunities in Illinois high schools are developed organically by faculty and staff. These innovations are made possible by school-wide commitments to civic learning, including the allocation of staffing, time, and money, coupled with sufficient autonomy, to ensure that high-quality civic learning is institutionalized.

Staff development is the subject of the section that follows, but teachers' role in the design and execution of a school's civic learning program cannot be underestimated. At the heart of exemplary school-wide commitments to civic learning are enterprising teachers who go beyond the call of duty and take initiative to present their students with creative, engaging means of developing civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Illinois is home to nationally-renowned organizations that provide exemplary civic learning opportunities for teachers and students alike. A comprehensive list of these organizations and their web sites are available in Appendix A. Schools should supplement home-grown civic learning programs with resources from outside providers.

Finally, a school-wide commitment to civic learning need not come at the expense of meeting state and national standards in other subject areas, namely reading and math. Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts include writing standards for history and social studies, among other subjects. Academic subjects, civics included, are best taught in integrated ways which develop important 21st Century skills like creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. These subjects provide context through which students can become proficient readers, writers, and communicators.

A few examples of the civic learning dimensions of English Language Arts Common Core follow. First, through reading comprehension, students can develop content knowledge specific to "democratic ideals, processes, and institutions." Second, by listening for understanding, students are able to encounter multiple points of view on public issues and eventually take informed positions themselves. Third and finally, multiple forms of writing (informative, explanatory, and persuasive) foster students' capacity to "...analyze information, deconstruct complex ideas, and articulate arguments in an organized, coherent manner" (Herczog et al, 2011).

3.3 Teacher hiring, assessment, and professional development

Teachers play a central role in students' civic development, and schools must prioritize civic learning through the hiring process, regular performance reviews, and ongoing professional development programs. The cycle begins by hiring mission-driven staff, and is institutionalized via schools' consistent attention to staff development throughout their tenure (Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2010).

Maine West High School in Des Plaines, Illinois, exemplifies these best practices in staff development, and as a result, their social studies staff, and civics teachers in particular, is second-to-none. Vignette 3.3 features select quotes from administrators at Maine West who pay consistent attention to their teachers' professional development, and also faculty members who are the beneficiaries of this school-wide commitment to civic learning.

Vignette 3.3.

Select Quotes from Administration and Faculty at Maine West High School in Des Plaines on their School's Commitment to Staff Development

"Maine West has worked diligently to insure we offer the best professional development for our teachers, so that they can improve their civic content knowledge. This, in turn, helps our students be more civic-minded, responsible young adults."—Principal Dr. Audrey Haugan.

"Maine West High School values civic learning as seen through its support of professional development and embedded collaboration time. As the Social Science Department Chair, I encourage teachers to increase their knowledge and skills related to civic learning by seeking out and recommending high-quality professional development opportunities. They are encouraged to share and implement successful teaching strategies in the classroom that foster civic engagement in students."—Susan Gahagan Mueller, Social Science Department Chair.

"Teachers in our department are involved in a vast array of civic professional development programs from Facing History and Ourselves institutes to Mikva Challenge programs to collaboration in countless forms through the Teaching American History grant. What magnifies the impact of this is that we share so much of what has worked for us individually through both informal collegial conversations and formal Professional Learning Teams."—Melissa Riley, Social Studies Teacher.

"I have been very fortunate to have the support from my department chair, building administration, and my district in pursuing civic learning opportunities for students and civic learning professional

development for myself. My district paid for me to attend the Street Law Inc. and Supreme Court Historical Society Supreme Court Institute in Washington, D.C. I was able to share what I learned at that Institute with my colleagues and with other teachers when I presented at the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago's (CRFC) Law-Related Conference. My district, building administration, and department chair also have supported me in taking students to various civic learning programs sponsored by the CRFC."
— Kelly Pecak, Social Studies Teacher.

"At Maine West, civic learning is promoted through travel subsidies to conferences and teacher attendance at workshops put on by organizations such as the Constitutional Rights Foundation. Also, Maine West supports and sustains dynamic partnerships with the city of Des Plaines through its participation in a clinical government summer program and its annual Des Plaines Government Day event. Through all of these activities Maine West has shown an enduring commitment to giving teachers and students opportunities for engaged civic learning."
— Dan Fouts, Social Studies Teacher.

"The culture at Maine West is to always strive to be ahead of the curve and work to engage kids through experiential opportunities. The values in these experiences is internalized at the building level so our approach is always, "How can we do this?" regardless of any challenges that may seem to others as obstructive. Teachers view each other as dynamic and thoughtful resources to help develop ideas about deepening student involvement. The sharing of knowledge and experience is part of our culture."— Gwynne Ryan, Social Studies Teacher

Unfortunately, Maine West's staff development practices are the exception rather than the norm. Once hired, few teachers report opportunities to observe or be mentored by "strong civic educators." Moreover, high-quality civic learning opportunities are rare for in-service teachers, particularly for those seeking to integrate civics in multiple subject areas (Hess and Zola, 2012; Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2010). Hess and Zola (2012) report that fewer than half of all teachers find their professional development experiences useful, and a similar number report little or no control over the types of professional development opportunities they receive. Ideally, professional development opportunities enhance teachers' knowledge and skills, and also affect changes in classroom practice. Best practices in professional development, backed by empirical research, delineate a path forward to these ends.



Members of Maine West's Social Science Department stand proudly before their banner at the 2011 Illinois Democracy Schools recognition ceremony.

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From a structural standpoint, research suggests a move away from stand-alone workshops and towards professional development integrated into the school setting, and even the regular school day. This shift is most responsive to how teachers learn and may have more influence on changing classroom practice (Garet et al, 2001). However, stand-alone professional development opportunities can yield benefits if followed by ongoing support from the provider (Darling-Hammond, et al, 2009).

Professional development opportunities should also be of significant duration (both time span and contact hours), which allows for greater depth and testing of content and practices in the classroom. A school's commitment to teacher professional development must be ongoing, supported by administration, and reinforced by structures for continuous improvement (Hess and Zola, 2012). This may take the form of setting aside time for ongoing democratic reflection and empowering teachers to make changes to classroom practice when necessary (Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2010).

These opportunities should be extended to cohorts of teachers from the same school, subject area, or grade, rather than just solo practitioners. This cohort model enables participants to debrief their experiences, share materials and assessments, discuss students' needs across classes and grade levels, and sustain these practices in schools in spite of teacher mobility (Hess and Zola, 2012). Simply stated, teachers who work side-by-side in the same building are great sources of learning for one another (Danielson, 2007).

Beyond the structural features of effective teacher professional development programs, content should be a core focus. The content presented should be "rigorous, accurate, and balanced," connected with the subjects and curricula taught, embrace controversy, and value depth of understanding over breadth (Hess and Zola, 2012).

Professional development programs should also provide teachers with opportunities to observe other teachers and be observed, develop and experiment with curricula, review student work, and lead discussions (Garet et al, 2001). Moreover, these programs should seek coherence by making connections with broader school goals and activities, along with alignment to state and district standards and assessments. Coherence can also be achieved through ongoing communication among a network of teachers, which sustains motivation among participants.

Finally, professional development programs should account for school and community context. Goals, materials, and learning experiences must factor in the racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, political, and religious context in which teachers operate. Similarly, the availability of resources, technological in particular (the number of computers, access to the Internet, etc.), must be considered. Ultimately, presenters and support personnel that facilitate professional development programs should reflect the demographics of the school and surrounding community (Hess and Zola, 2012).

3.4 School-Community Connections

The communities that surround schools impact adolescents' political development and, ultimately, their civic engagement throughout life (Gimpel et al, 2003). For example, high local voter turnout and partisan diversity produce competitive elections, which are accompanied by a richer information environment ripe for youth learning about politics. Even in areas with relatively homogeneous partisan identification and elections, high voter turnout still benefits young people, providing "... adolescents with clear and consistent examples of what good citizenship looks like."

Gimpel et al (2003) write, "If one could choose one place to live in order to produce politically knowledgeable, efficacious children, the best places to move would be jurisdictions exhibiting high turnout, regardless of whether the turnout was the result of competitive elections or simply high levels of adult engagement." Schools' support for civic learning is a reflection of community norms, which in turn shape their "civic climate" (see Section 3.5 for further details). The impact of schools' civic climate is long term. For instance, students who experienced a healthy civic climate in school were more apt to vote fifteen years later (Campbell, 2007).

A positive relationship between a school and the community where it is located is not pre-destined. Instead, it is a product of continuous engagement and reciprocity. The *No Excuses* report of the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools (2010) suggests that this reciprocity takes the form of an expectation of mutual benefit, where schools and their communities are resources for each other.

For example, schools may invite speakers from the community to augment classroom instruction or address issues of concern to students. Schools may also assist students and their families in connecting them to available public services. In turn, community members may call on schools to request student involvement in service projects in a collective attempt to resolve genuine problems facing the community.

This reciprocal relationship is nurtured through established protocols to account for the interests of all stakeholders. Schools can take the lead in standardizing procedures for engaging with the broader community and ensuring that it plays a meaningful role in its academic and extracurricular programming.

Amy Leman, the 4-H Youth Development Educator at the University of Illinois Extension in Decatur, Illinois, facilitates the local Superintendent's Youth Advisory Council. As she writes in Vignette 3.4a below, her independence from Decatur Public Schools provides students with a community advocate who can assist with their pursuit of policy changes that may be controversial within the school community.

THE DECATUR SUPERINTENDENT'S YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

Written by:

*Amy Leman, 4-H Youth Development Educator,
University of Illinois Extension*



Amy Leman of University of Illinois Extension leads a partnership with Decatur Public Schools through the Superintendent's Youth Advisory Council.

Youth Advisory Council

Vignette 3.4a. *A group of students in Decatur, Illinois, met in 2002 to discuss what they thought were important issues impacting their lives as part of the National 4-H Conversation on Positive Youth Development. One of the issues that came to the forefront in this activity was a need for youth voices in local government. The students felt strongly that their thoughts and opinions were important to the decisions happening in their community, be it the city, school district, or other form of government or organization.*

With the help of a grant from National 4-H Council and the Mitsubishi Electric Foundation, the students approached their Superintendent of Decatur Public Schools and got approval to form a youth advisory council to work with the Superintendent on issues important to the students of the community's two high schools. Ten years later, Decatur Public Schools, District 61 is proud to still support the Superintendent's Youth Advisory Council (SYAC) under the direction of Superintendent Gloria Davis.

The mission statement of SYAC centers upon "...a partnership working to make positive changes in our community." This recognizes both the partnerships between youth and adults within the school district, as well as partnerships within the community. It was also written to address changes in the "community" as opposed to "school" to recognize the role that school districts play in the larger community.

The SYAC includes approximately thirty students representing both high schools. Students represent all four grade levels within the schools. The group meets monthly with the Superintendent to discuss issues deemed important.

To join SYAC, students must submit an application to the SYAC contact for each high school. The membership goal is not to choose students that are already involved in student government, but to choose students with varying interests and levels of involvement within the school system. The SYAC is facilitated as a partnership between the school district and University of Illinois Extension. This partnership allows for the students to see individuals not directly affiliated with their school support their efforts and ideas. It also allows for an outside voice and different perspectives on issues that may be controversial within the school community.

“ The SYAC is facilitated as a partnership between the school district and University of Illinois Extension. This partnership allows for the students to see individuals not directly affiliated with their school support their efforts and ideas. ”

Chapter 3 | The Common Elements

At the beginning of the school year, SYAC members complete a brainstorming activity to come up with issues that they would like to address in the coming year. SYAC also serves as a sounding board for ideas and projects of Decatur Public Schools. For example, when the school district decided to implement school uniforms, SYAC students served on the committee to develop the plan.

Many of the initiatives that the SYAC supports must be taken before the school board. This process introduces the students to their governing body and the workings of adult groups and committees. They learn that the process of change is not always a straight line and the art of compromise is important.

SYAC member Jordan Stewart, in reflecting upon his experience, stated, “By being a part of SYAC, I have been able to voice my opinion on school matters. It has also taught me that making change is possible when you apply yourself. I will be able to use the things I’ve learned here in many other aspects of my life.”

School-community partnerships are furthered when schools dedicate a staff member to fostering community relationships. The arrangement works best when this partnership is written explicitly into their job description. For example, Josephinum Academy, an all-girls Catholic high school in Chicago, employs a full-time Community Outreach Coordinator, who identifies community partners and builds relationships with organizations in the surrounding community. Vignette 3.4b below demonstrates Josephinum’s deep community ties with the explicit intention of preparing students for civic life.

Vignette 3.4b.

A school woven deeply into the fabric of its surrounding community

Written by Michael Dougherty, President, Josephinum Academy in Chicago

At Josephinum Academy, building reciprocal relationships with local the community is a foundational value expressed in the school's mission. Josephinum consistently strives to create and sustain partnerships with community organizations in order to enrich its educational program and leverage the school's impact in the local community. The school's exemplary commitment to active engagement in the community serves to educate students by example and inspires them to become socially aware and civically active citizens.

Josephinum strives to ensure the affordability of its program for all students, and depends upon donations to fund eighty-five percent of its operations. The school's strategy is to focus its resources on its core academic program, while partnering with community organizations that provide students with services and opportunities that complement their educational experience.

Though its partnership with Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center, Josephinum's health office is staffed by medical professionals and students can receive free medical care at school. The school's Arts programming is built through partnerships with the National Museum of Mexican Art, Street-Level Youth Media, and Polarity Ensemble Theatre. Each of these organizations offer their services to Josephinum free of charge, and they in turn benefit from the opportunity to demonstrate their own commitment to educational outreach.

Josephinum partners with more than thirty different community organizations that provide a wide range of services. In order to manage these relationships, a full-time Community Outreach Coordinator has the responsibility of identifying potential community partners and building relationships with local organizations. Many partnerships begin through the school's service-learning program, which offers an easy opportunity for organizations to build a relationship with the school.

The key to Josephinum's success with community partnerships has been a clear focus on building mutually beneficial relationships. Building lasting partnerships requires significant investment in time and energy, but if the partnership truly meets the needs of both organizations, the benefits of working together create a synergy where the sum is greater than the parts.



Josephinum students engage in a service project in their surrounding community.

3.5 School climate

According to the National School Climate Council (NSCC, 2007), “school climate refers to the quality and character of school life.” Positive school climate supports student achievement and healthy youth development. It is characterized by collaborative learning communities which improve teacher practice, and in turn, student learning.

School climate is intimately connected to the previous common element, school-community relations. In fact, one measure of school climate is how connected people feel with one another and their school, and how connected the school is with the community.

The intentional, non-cognitive, social-emotional development of students is fundamental to positive school climate. Illinois blazed a path for the rest of the nation in adopting social-emotional learning standards in 2004 and requiring that all state schools incorporate them into their educational programs (Cohen, 2006). Beginning in 2013, Illinois schools now measure school climate every other year, assuming continued state funding, via the “5 Essentials Survey” (Rado and Truong, 2013).

School climate has an important civic dimension. In order to prepare young people for their roles as citizens in our democracy, schools must practice it in classrooms and corridors alike.

The NSCC points to national interest in promoting schools’ civic mission, but laments, “...few educators are prepared to engage their students in educational experiences that foster the knowledge, skills, and dispositions young people need to become active and contributing citizens.” Fostering a healthy school climate is one such mechanism, and it can be achieved, in part, by developing the skills and dispositions necessary for students to participate effectively in our democracy.

The *No Excuses* report of the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools (2010) details four indicators of a healthy school climate that supports students’ civic learning. First, schools must offer a clean, welcoming environment with visual reminders of its civic mission. This may take the form of publicly displayed school mission statements, or hallways and classrooms decorated with work reflective of teachers’ and students’ civic engagement.

Second, teachers and administration should serve as role models of civically engaged citizens. This is achieved through their positive daily interactions with students, and also by modeling and sharing examples of their own civic engagement.

Third, students should possess the skills, opportunities, and confidence to make a difference in their schools and communities. A byproduct of a larger school-wide commitment to students' civic learning, students must develop a sense of civic responsibility and feeling that they can make a difference through democratic participation.

Fourth and finally, school policies, practices, and infrastructure should support a set of civic norms and values. School-wide commitments to civic learning must be both deep and wide, allowing them to endure regardless of administrative, staff, or student turnover. This can be fostered through continuous education of new staff on the school's strong commitment to its civic mission.

Metea Valley High School in Aurora captures school climate in its mission statement, mentors incoming freshmen in its civic culture, and engages its faculty in conversations about supporting civic learning across the curriculum and through activities like a Day of Service and Remembrance. Donald Pankuch, Metea's Social Studies Department Chair, documents his school's deep commitment to building and maintaining a positive school climate as a means of living its civic mission in Vignette 3.5.

**POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE A WAY OF LIFE
AT METEA VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL**

Written by:

*Donald Pankuch, Social Studies Department Chair,
Metea Valley High School in Aurora*



Administration, faculty, and students of Metea Valley High School in Aurora celebrate their school's recognition as a 2011 Illinois Democracy in a ceremony at the DuPage County Complex.

Positive Way of Life

Vignette 3.5. *At Metea Valley High School we have used our mission statement as a driving force of modifying school climate. LIFE (Live with integrity, Inspire a passion for learning, Foster positive relationships, Expect equity and excellence for all) is displayed throughout the building and in each classroom.*

We implement a freshman mentoring program using juniors and seniors to help incoming freshmen learn about LIFE at Metea before school starts. Throughout the year, LIFE lessons become the focus of monthly Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) lessons for all grades with topics related to improving the school. Students and staff help plan these lessons and each lesson involves a discussion period where students share their own insights on the topic. We are firm believers that teaching students how to behave as good citizens is just as important as the subject matter they study each period.

To help develop the civic-centered climate in all staff, we start each year off with a civic mission update. This involves time during our faculty meetings in which we share success stories from previous years regarding civic engagement. In addition, staff members are reminded of the proven practices of quality civic learning and are asked to find additional ways to implement “civic learning.”

Finally, staff are provided a list of upcoming activities that they might want to participate in or connect to their lessons. For example, on 9/11 many staff implemented the Day of Service and Remembrance into their writing, art, and music for the day. A school-wide focus builds momentum and energy that impacts the school climate so that the whole experience provides amazing depth and value for students.

“ We are firm believers that teaching students how to behave as good citizens is just as important as the subject matter they study each period.”

4

THE DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

*Shawn Healy, Chairman,
Illinois Civic Mission Coalition,
and Civic Learning & Engagement Scholar,
Robert R. McCormick Foundation*

*Janice Belzowski,
Civic Learning Coordinator,
Robert R. McCormick Foundation*

4.1 History and intent

The Illinois Civic Mission Coalition (ICMC, discussed at greater length in Chapter 5) was formed in 2004, inspired by *The Civic Mission of Schools* report released by the Carnegie Foundation the previous year. The report launched the National Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, which provided grant money to state campaigns to implement its recommendations. Carolyn Pereira and the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago successfully applied on behalf of the State of Illinois, and the ICMC met to discuss how to best advance the report's recommendations statewide.

They first focused on the development of a prototype American government course reflective of promising civic learning approaches detailed in the CMS report. Deciding that civic learning should span more than a single course, they then developed modules with the promising approaches embedded as an alternative.

Concurrently, the ICMC established a program that became the Democracy Schools Initiative, which recognized schools that were already deeply committed to civic learning. Representatives from elected schools participated in summer institutes in 2005 and 2006, where a rubric to measure the promising approaches was developed and completed by attendees.

The first four Illinois Democracy Schools emerged from this cohort and were subsequently recognized by the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition in the fall of 2006. A fifth school joined the ranks in 2008, an additional three in 2009, followed by a single school in 2010, two in 2011, six in 2012, and five in 2013, bringing the combined total to 22. At the time of publication, a cohort of prospective Democracy Schools stands at various stages of the application process.

The DSI has evolved significantly since 2006. Prospective applicants are now recruited throughout the state, with an emphasis on improving civic learning within schools, moving beyond rewarding schools with strong programs already in place. Presently, schools provide evidence of civic learning across the curriculum and not solely in the social studies.

The promising approaches from the original CMS report were later dubbed “proven practices” by a follow-up report released in 2011 titled *Guardian of Democracy*, and the indicators within the application, as reflected in Chapter 3, Section 2, were updated to reflect recent research summarized in that publication.

Chapter 4 | The Democracy Schools Initiative

Schools that successfully complete the application are provided funding in order to pursue future plans articulated within. Finally, the McCormick Foundation allocated staffing and additional financial resources to support teams throughout the application process.

To date, most Democracy Schools are located in suburban Chicago. The ICMC and the McCormick Foundation are committed to building Democracy Schools throughout the state, including within the City of Chicago and in Southern Illinois, and has made significant headway in these regions in recent years. Moreover, they seek to build a network of Democracy Schools whose student bodies collectively represent statewide demographics including race, ethnicity, income, and English Language Learners.

Illinois Democracy Schools are secondary schools recognized for providing students with authentic experiences in the rights, responsibilities, and tensions inherent in living in a constitutional democracy. Through these experiences, they equip students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for informed, effective engagement in our democracy.

Reflective of the common elements necessary for sustained, school-wide commitments to civic learning detailed in Chapter 3, Illinois Democracy Schools live their mission to provide high-quality civic learning opportunities for all students. Their leadership emphasizes civic learning in both the hiring and staff development process, and civics is woven throughout the formal curriculum embracing proven civic learning practices. Democracy Schools create a school climate that nurtures and models civic dispositions, and build a reciprocal school-community relationship in which each serves as a resource for the other.

Democracy Schools provide numerous opportunities for students to participate in the democratic process through a range of classes and clubs. From class discussion on current issues and democratic simulations to extracurricular and service-learning opportunities, students are able to experience firsthand the critical role they can play in shaping their government and society.



Faculty and administration from Glenbard East High School in Lombard at a 2012 recognition ceremony held during a Glenbard Township High School District Board Meeting.

4.2 **Becoming a Democracy School**

Prospective Democracy Schools begin by forming a team of faculty members and administrators to plan and orchestrate a school-wide civic assessment, appraising the indicators detailed in Chapter 3 in their school. By assessing and aligning their current practices with the framework, teams propose ways to deepen their school's commitment to civic learning and strive for recognition as an Illinois Democracy School.

School teams who satisfactorily complete the civic assessment and develop a strategic plan for future school-wide civic learning commitments are eligible for funding to strengthen proficiencies in identified areas. Schools interested in Democracy School recognition must complete a two-part process—assessment and application.

In the assessment phase, schools use the indicators to reflect on the state of civic learning at the school. In this reflection, there is room to identify and discover examples of high-quality civic learning. Additionally, this civic assessment helps Illinois high schools identify where they can better align their curriculum, standards, and extracurricular activities to meet their civic mission and identify opportunities for advancing high-quality civic learning.

Chapter 4 | The Democracy Schools Initiative

In the application phase, schools draw on their findings from the assessment to produce examples of high-quality civic learning opportunities offered to students. In those cases, schools provide evidence (course descriptions, assessment strategies, student work, etc.) of how a course, activity, practice, or policy aligns with selected indicators from Chapter 3. The application summarizes and highlights the high-quality civic learning opportunities found through the assessment, and builds a case for Democracy School recognition.

The application also asks teams to identify gaps and opportunities to improve the quantity, quality, and access to civic learning at the school. A reflective evaluation of relative strengths and gaps in any program, and across the school, only strengthens the integrity of a school's application. Schools then articulate strategic future plans that identify opportunities for improvement based on the school's priorities to further develop the prevalence and/ or access to high-quality civic learning at the school.

Applications are reviewed by members of the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition (ICMC) as convened by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation. A school visit and final interview with the team are also considered during the application review.

Notification of recognition is made and announced in September of each calendar year. If not recommended for recognition, schools are given detailed feedback and may submit a revised application.



Faculty and administration from Glenbard East High School in Lombard pose with ICMC Chair Shawn Healy (center left) at a 2012 recognition ceremony held during a Glenbard Township High School District Board Meeting.

The McCormick Foundation Civics program provides trainings and workshops for prospective Democracy School teams, helping them begin their assessment planning. Interested Democracy School teams may also request ongoing support from McCormick Foundation Civics program liaisons who can guide teams through the civic assessment, application, and future planning activities at their school. Assessment tools, application materials, and training on their administration can be requested from the McCormick Foundation Civics program.

Sharon Smogor, a social studies teacher at Carmel Catholic High School in Mundelein, led her school's successful Democracy School application process in 2011. In Vignette 4.2, Sharon details a journey of continuous school improvement at Carmel Catholic in pursuit of its civic mission. This ongoing quest was facilitated by the application process, and reinforced by the recognition that followed, along with membership in the Democracy Schools network (see Section 4.3).

OUR JOURNEY TOWARDS DEMOCRACY SCHOOL RECOGNITION

Written by:

*Sharon Smogor, Social Studies Teacher,
Carmel Catholic High School in Mundelein*



Carmel Catholic Social Studies Teacher Sharon Smogor (back left) poses with her students during a visit from Freedom Express, a traveling museum run by the McCormick Foundation that offers visitors an opportunity to explore First Amendment freedoms.

Our Journey

Vignette 4.2. *I have always been passionate about the importance of civic learning, both as a student growing up in Chicago in the turbulent 1960s and as a social studies teacher in the Chicago area since I began my career in 1974. My involvement with the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition has presented an opportunity to advocate for civic learning in a variety of settings.*

Civic learning and service to the community are integral parts of the mission of our school. When the invitation to apply for recognition as a Democracy School was offered in 2011, I asked our school administration if we could begin the application process. With their full support we presented the following questions to the faculty and staff: “What is civic learning? How do we do it? How can we improve it? Why is it important?”

We set up a steering committee composed of one member of each academic department, organized the questions and guidelines in the school-wide civic assessment, set up a timetable for the application process, explained the process to school community, and began the civic assessment. The goal of the assessment was not to test the civic knowledge of students, but rather to help our school explore opportunities for civic learning and identify where we could better align curriculum, standards, and extracurricular opportunities to meet our civic mission.

The committee met regularly to review the information from each department. It was an efficient and effective way to prepare the civic assessment. The Student Activities Director, club moderators, athletic directors, student services, campus ministry, and service project coordinators also completed the assessment of civic engagement and proven practices in their areas. This truly was a community effort.

Teachers from other Democracy Schools were most helpful throughout the application process. They answered many questions and offered helpful suggestions and much appreciated moral support.

“ The civic assessment was an excellent self-study. We discovered our strengths and weaknesses and developed an improvement plan. ”

Chapter 3 | The Common Elements

The civic assessment was an excellent self-study. We discovered our strengths and weaknesses and developed an improvement plan. We are currently working on curriculum re-alignment, revision of our strong Christian Service program to incorporate more elements of service-learning, and with some seed money from the McCormick Foundation, we have launched a Youth and Government program. The journey will continue and we look forward to working with other Democracy Schools in the network.

As a Democracy School, Carmel Catholic High School is a model school and mentor for other schools applying for the recognition. It is more than recognition; it is a challenge to continue to grow and improve, and a responsibility to maintain our focus and vision. It is affirmation of our civic mission and its importance for our students and the community. All of us, regardless of our professions, are citizens and members of our communities and the knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens.



4.3 The Democracy Schools Network

In order to sustain and continue to support the gains that each of the existing Democracy Schools have made since completing the assessment and application process, the McCormick Foundation formalized a network of representatives from each of these schools in 2012. Through regular in-person meetings and an online platform, Democracy School teachers and administrators are able to highlight the exemplary practices in their schools as well as learn about other opportunities from their peers. They continue to develop their knowledge and skills of civic content and proven practices, and serve as a source of mentoring for prospective Democracy Schools. They are also advocates for civic-learning in their schools and beyond.



5

ADVOCACY AND POLICY

*Shawn Healy, Chairman,
Illinois Civic Mission Coalition,
and Civic Learning & Engagement Scholar,
Robert R. McCormick Foundation*

*Maryam Judar, Executive Director,
Citizen Advocacy Center*

5.1 The Illinois Civic Mission Coalition

Formed in 2004, the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition (ICMC) is part of the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, a national initiative to restore, as a core purpose of education, preparing America's children and youth to be informed and active participants in our democracy. Originally convened as a vehicle for identifying the professional development needs for schools interested in advancing the cause of civic learning at the high school level, the Coalition both advocates for stronger school-based civic learning programs and pursues policy changes at both the local and state levels to forward this cause.

Today the ICMC is a broad, nonpartisan consortium that includes K-12 educators and administrators, students, university staff, funders, elected officials, policymakers, and representatives from the private and nonprofit sectors. Membership is open to those who commit to attend an annual spring convening, summer and fall business meetings, and engage in designated work groups throughout the year. Coalition members share a common belief in the importance of high-quality, school-based civic learning opportunities for all students in Illinois.

5.2 Accomplishments to date

The Illinois Civic Mission Coalition has advocated for state and local policies supportive of high-quality civic learning since its inception. Recognizing that civic learning is highly localized, the Coalition's primary efforts to date have been the establishment and expansion of the Illinois Democracy Schools Initiative (see previous chapter).

In 2005, the Illinois State House of Representatives approved a resolution (HR 509) endorsing the Coalition's Democracy Schools Initiative, recommending its implementation "by school boards, principals, teachers, students, parents, and the community as models for a place in which the rights, obligations, and responsibilities of citizenship are fostered and in which student leadership is encouraged."



ICMC members (left to right) Jill Bass of the Mikva Challenge, Monica Swope of Chicago Public Schools, and Pat Usher of Carl Sandburg High School in Orland Park, participate in a panel discussion at the 2011 annual convening of the Coalition.

Two years later, in 2007, the General Assembly passed the Civic Education Advancement Act, and it was signed into law by the Governor. The Act authorizes an annual appropriation for teacher professional development in order to enhance the quality and quantity of school-based civic learning in Illinois high schools. In order to qualify, school districts need to successfully complete a school-wide civic assessment administered by the ICMC under the auspices of the Democracy Schools Initiative. Funding for the program is disbursed by the state's regional superintendents, with districts eligible to receive up to \$3,000 every other year. However, an initial appropriation of \$750,000 was line-item vetoed by then-Governor Blagojevich, and it has remained unfunded.

The ICMC convened in February 2009 to draft a blueprint for implementation of its civic assessment process for achieving Democracy School recognition; the first edition of *Creating a Civic Blueprint for Illinois High Schools* was released in May 2009. The ICMC adopted as its framework for the first edition of the Blueprint the “six promising approaches to civic education,” which were first outlined in the Civic Mission of Schools report, published in 2003 by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. Aligned with the work of the ICMC, this report embraced the shared vision of democracy in the United States “in which all citizens understand, appreciate, and engage actively in civic and political life” and emphasized the importance of the school as a venue for civic learning due to its captive young audience.

In addition to conveying several recommendations to stakeholders (including schools, school administrators, the federal government, schools of education, researchers, and funders) for creating more effective school-based civic learning programs, the Blueprint's designation of the “six promising approaches” challenged the notion of the stereotypical civics class in which rote memorization without application is the norm. The Illinois State Board of Education passed a resolution on Constitution Day, September 17, 2009, supporting the work of the Coalition in developing the Blueprint and the recommendations included within to advance school-based civic learning throughout Illinois.

As the Democracy School Initiative grew to recognize nine schools by 2011, the Illinois State Senate passed their own resolution (SR149) commending these schools for their commitments to civic learning and “encourag(ing) all secondary schools in the State to become Illinois Democracy Schools.” The resolution also called for Democracy School recognition to be designated on school district report cards, which will come into fruition in the fall of 2013.

While acknowledging the efforts of previously recognized Democracy Schools, the initiative has evolved to address the common elements necessary for sustainable, school-wide commitments to high-quality

civic learning. As described in Chapter 3, the five common elements necessary for effective civic learning include: (1) vision and leadership; (2) proven civic learning practices; (3) teacher hiring, assessment, and professional development; (4) school-community connections; and (5) school climate.

Broadly speaking, the Democracy Schools indicators value the promotion of civic engagement among all students, encourage an intentional focus on fostering participatory citizenship, and place an emphasis on helping students understand how the fundamental ideals and principles of our democratic society relate to important current problems, opportunities, and controversies.

5.3 Current and future activities and initiatives

While the Coalition has continued to develop and support the scalability and sustainability of the Democracy School Initiative, a broader push to holistically address civic learning in Illinois has been recognized through the presentation of current research on civic learning and engagement at ICMC convenings and workshops. The ICMC recognizes that the civic knowledge and engagement gaps in Illinois are more efficiently addressed through statewide reform of school-based civic learning rather than through a piecemeal, school-by-school approach.

The first step towards creating a comprehensive reconstruction of school-based civic learning in Illinois begins with an examination of current practices in Illinois, and the Illinois General Assembly, through the active support of the ICMC, created a task force on civic learning for this purpose. The task force will conduct public hearings throughout the state, gather testimony, and examine best practices in other states. Ultimately, the task force will make policy and funding recommendations to the Illinois General Assembly no later than May 31, 2014.



ICMC members (left to right) Terry Pastika of the Citizen Advocacy Center, John Sirek of the McCormick Foundation, Marc Kiehna, formerly regional superintendent of schools in Randolph and Monroe Counties, and Benjamin Ghesse of the Human Resources Development Institute, strategize on the future direction of the Coalition at the 2011 annual convening.

5.4 Policy recommendations

The challenge before us is significant, requiring decades of civic disengagement be replaced with healthy civic habits grounded in early, hands-on civic learning opportunities so that “practicing democracy” becomes routine. Civic engagement goes beyond the accumulation of knowledge; it is a collection of skills that must be taught. Just as we teach our youth to develop healthy eating and exercise habits, it is incumbent that we teach them healthy civic habits.

The principles of participatory democracy must be conveyed to primary school students, and every student’s education should build upon the principles that define the roles and responsibilities of the civically engaged individual. In order to achieve this, Illinois must restore the original civic mission of public schools by mandating civic learning begin in elementary school.

Despite the fact that civic skills are learned behaviors, just like reading, math, science, or the arts, and that civics is a subject in itself, civic learning has been a low educational priority for decades. Currently, Illinois’ achievement goals for civic learning are grossly insufficient and merely require rote memorization. All students are expected to learn about civics and patriotism and must take only two years of high school social studies, including one year focused on the United States history or government. And while all school districts may offer a Voluntary Service Credit Program, which “enables secondary students to earn credit towards graduation through performance of community services,” this program is not mandatory.

In recent years in Illinois, the responsibility for teaching civics has fallen largely on dynamic educators who are willing or able to go beyond the standard curriculum, as well as school districts that prioritize civic learning, and civic organizations that focus on promoting civic engagement and supplement school efforts to impart civic knowledge. These dynamic educators are well-poised to take on the Democracy Schools assessment and application process, but this is far from a systemic solution to the state’s ailing civic health.

However, the growing network of Democracy Schools model deep, school-wide commitments to their civic mission. State and local policy can institutionalize best practices common in Democracy Schools to scale high-quality civic learning opportunities for all students in schools throughout the state. Considering that Illinois graduates nearly 85.6% of students from high school, and implicitly an even higher percentage from middle school, Illinois has a significant opportunity with a captive audience to build healthy civic habits in formative years of development.

Excellence in civic learning requires a statewide commitment to supporting high-quality teaching and learning, evaluating related outcomes, and introducing our youth to healthy civic attitudes and behaviors at an early age.

All Illinoisans have a role to play in achieving high-quality, school-based civic learning to prepare our students for civically active and fulfilling lives. More specifically, recommendations for different segments of the population, including state and local policy makers, superintendents, administrators, teachers, postsecondary institutions, researchers and scholars, and funders follow. They are adapted from the *Guardian of Democracy* report (2011) with permission from the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools.

It must also be stated that students can play a definitive role in advocating for high-quality, school-based civic learning, along with democratic reforms that reinforce it. Look no further than Adlai Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois, where social studies teachers Andy Conneen and Dan Larsen engaged their students in an effort to pass a state law allowing seventeen-year-olds to vote in primary elections that precede general elections when they will have turned eighteen. While they failed in their first attempt in 2009, they succeeded four years later, and come March 2014, high school seniors across Illinois will have a say in determining party nominees for the November midterm election. Please read Vignette 5.5 below for a full account of Stevenson's successful push for "Suffrage at 17."

Recommendations for State Policymakers:

- Encourage universal student access to all of the proven civic learning practices detailed within this document (see Chapter 3, Section 2).
- More specifically, require formal instruction in American government, law, and democracy as integral to a comprehensive social studies program in both middle and high school.
- Revise the Illinois Learning Standards for Social Studies, informed by the recommendations of the *The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* endorsed by the Council for Chief State School Officers, and include civic learning experts and advocates in the revision process.
- Measure students' civic learning outcomes by including civics in state assessments and other accountability measures.
- Utilize alternative forms of required state assessments, including project and portfolio-based assessments.
- Identify and include indicators/metrics for state longitudinal data systems specific to civic learning.
- Include social studies/civic learning in district and school "report cards" and other public reports of school achievement.
- Endorse the discussion of controversial issues in the classroom with an affirmative statement in the Illinois School Code.

Chapter 5 | Advocacy and Policy

- Revise teaching standards to include training on proven civic learning practices for all disciplines and grades as part of the certification requirement.
- Support high-quality, ongoing professional development on proven civic learning practices for all teachers.
- Make democracy more accessible for young people by reforming governmental institutions, including:
 - Adopt measures to increase voter registration and turnout like pre-registration at sixteen and same-day voter registration (see Vignette 5.5 on how teachers and students at Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois, successfully pushed for “Suffrage at 17”).
 - Further implement the student election judge program in counties and municipalities statewide.
 - Support the creation of student seats on local school boards, as allowed by current Illinois statute, and empower student representatives with authentic voice and responsibilities in the governance process.
 - Reform the process by which legislative districts are drawn in Illinois to insure competitive elections, which, in part, inspire learning of and participation in the political process (Gimpel et al, 2003).

Recommendations for school boards, superintendents, administrators, and teachers:

- Integrate civic outcomes into each school's mission statement and build and maintain deep commitments to civic learning.
- Dedicate specific funding in school budgets supportive of civic learning.
- View civic learning as an interdisciplinary subject that can and should be employed across the curriculum and woven throughout students' Pre-K-12 experience.
- Frame and align civic learning as a natural extension and application of critical information literacy skills; for example, news and other relevant nonfiction texts.
- Require formal instruction in American government, law, and democracy.
- Formulate clear guidelines for discussing controversial issues and develop transparent procedures for addressing concerns expressed by all stakeholders.
- Encourage project-based service-learning experiences connected to the formal classroom curriculum.
- Endorse the incorporation of simulations and real-world application of democratic processes as part of curriculum.
- Utilize technology as a means of facilitating students' civic engagement, including blogs and online discussion forums, social networking sites, and computer-based games.
- Invite and engage elected and appointed public officials in school classrooms and activities.
- Create extracurricular civics or civic engagement clubs in both middle and high school to provide students with opportunities to grapple with local political issues.
- Establish a student seat on local school boards or local school councils, and ensure authentic participation in board governance responsibilities.
- Create student advisory councils, representing all elements of the student body, with access to the principal and school governance structures.
- Develop a mentoring program that facilitates teachers' acclimation in a school's civic mission.
- Support high-quality, ongoing professional development opportunities and insure that all teachers participate.
- Connect civic learning and engagement to other school-wide initiatives centering on the development of 21st Century skills, drop-out prevention, or anti-bullying initiatives.
- Develop a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing, and sustaining a positive school climate (National School Climate Center).
- Create partnerships with colleges, universities, nonprofits, and other community organizations that support students' civic engagement in school and the surrounding community.

Recommendations for postsecondary institutions:

- Incorporate evidence of prospective students' civic learning and engagement into admissions criteria.
- Require all students, regardless of major, take at least one course where civic engagement is a central outcome.
- Establish an interdisciplinary civic engagement minor (McCartney et al, 2013).
- Strengthen teacher preparation by including all of the proven civic learning practices in this report, and ensure that every prospective teacher has competencies in the use of each practice.
- Ensure that all school of education graduates possess civic knowledge and skills.
- Partner with Pre-K-12 schools to develop and implement civic learning programs and encourage postsecondary students to volunteer as "civics mentors," especially in disadvantaged Pre-K-12 schools.
- Integrate civic engagement experiences into internships and study abroad programs (McCartney et al, 2013).
- Encourage meaningful student participation in school governance to build students' civic competencies. This can occur through organizations such as student senates, student-led courts, and campus-wide referenda on major issues of concern to students.

Recommendations for scholars and researchers:

- Develop and implement rigorous studies on innovative civic learning approaches that produce empirical evidence of the effectiveness of teaching strategies, civic learning programs, and other practices.
- Expand research on the impact of civic learning standards, assessments, and district and state policies and practices on students' civic development.
- Promote research alliances among and between researchers, practitioners, policymakers, institutions, and organizations and across disciplines, including political science, psychology, and education.
- Develop research that both documents the extent of and offers solutions to the disparity of civic learning opportunities in schools.

Recommendations for funders:

- At this time of diminished public resources, foundations and other private funders (including corporations) should support
 - Innovative, scalable, high-quality civic learning programs
 - Studies of these programs that generate evidence-based proof of best practices
 - Civic learning programs with outcomes that transcend students' civic development like building skills transferrable to the 21st Century work place, including digital literacy
 - Professional development programs centering on proven civic learning practices for both pre- and in-service teachers
 - Student programs developed to foster civic learning and engagement

A deep commitment to high-quality, school-based civic learning programming is essential to students' preparation for informed, effective engagement in the civic life of our communities, state, and nation. A reciprocal commitment from state and local policymakers to civic learning opportunities for all students from Waukegan to Cairo can help restore Illinois' civic health.

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS LEAD SUCCESSFUL PUSH FOR SUFFRAGE AT 17

Written by:

*Andrew Conneen, Social Studies Teacher,
Adlai Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire*



Social studies teachers Andy Conneen and Dan Larsen (back row left) and their students pose in the Capitol Building and Springfield with Governor Pat Quinn (3rd from left, back row) and “Suffrage at 17” sponsor, Representative Carol Sente (D-Lincolnshire, back row right).

Push for Suffrage

Vignette 5.1. *The 2013 passage of “Suffrage at 17” legislation in Illinois actually began with a civics field trip to Iowa in 2004. Stevenson High School government teachers took more than 40 students to Davenport High School as student observers of the 2004 Iowa Caucus. In that crowded gym, we observed dozens of young caucus participants and discovered Suffrage at 17. We learned that Iowa, and a dozen states at that point, allow any eligible general election voter to select their preferred candidates in primaries and caucuses . . . even at age 17.*

That civics field trip led to a new civic mission as my students and I began researching the prospects of pressing for a similar law in Illinois. Suffrage at 17 legislation was first introduced in 2009 and we had more than 600 Chicagoland students show support by joining a Suffrage at 17 Facebook group within weeks. But when my students testified in support of that bill, we discovered that our idea did not have bipartisan support and, even worse, faced serious questions about its constitutionality. By the time a supportive legal memo was written with well-documented research about the bill’s constitutionality, legislative momentum was lost and Suffrage at 17 died.

We continued advocating for the idea of empowering 17-year-olds in Illinois primaries as we watched even more states adopt similar laws. We also began reaching out to key legislators of both parties with civics organizations like the Mikva Challenge and the McCormick Foundation to rebuild support. When Rep. Carol Sente filed Suffrage at 17 as HB226 in April 2013, we had an established network not only of students and teachers, but also civics groups, lobbyists, and legislative leaders.

Within a month, HB226 passed committees in both chambers with no opposing votes and hundreds of supportive witness slips from students, teachers, and civic leaders from across the state. It passed both floors, and The Chicago Tribune (May 27, 2013) called on the Governor to sign our bill into law. Suffrage at 17’s passage into law is not the final chapter of this story. Through the process, we built new civics networks and discovered new legislative ideas to keep students engaged for years to come.

“ We learned, firsthand, that active citizenship creates new opportunities for active citizenship so that civics becomes a lifestyle for our students, not just another class. ”

Chapter

6

CONCLUSION: MAKING STUDENT PREPARATION FOR CIVIC LIFE A PRIORITY

*Darlene Ruscitti,
Regional Superintendent of Schools,
DuPage County*

I planned to start this closing essay by asserting that never before in our nation's history has civic learning been more critical. Upon reflection, I'm not sure that statement is true. It may be more accurate to say that civic learning has always been of the utmost importance to the safety, security, and success of the United States. Our forefathers instituted public education for the express purpose of having an educated electorate who could make informed decisions about their leaders. From the founding of our nation to today, the importance of that concept has never wavered.

Civic engagement is a learned skill just like reading, math, science, and art, and, as such, civic skills must be practiced regularly in order for youth to develop proficiency, confidence, and a greater understanding of how to harness their civic power. Students need to be taught the techniques of a healthy democracy— participation, consensus building, compromise, civility and rational discourse. They need to know what it means to be a citizen of this great land—being informed, volunteering, speaking out, asking questions, writing letters, signing petitions, joining organizations, building consensus—working in small and large ways to improve our communities and to enrich the quality of life for all of us.

Most importantly, when we fail to provide high-quality, school-based civic learning programs to all students, we deny our youth important opportunities, as active civic participation helps them reach their full potential, and provides better communities and a better country for us all.

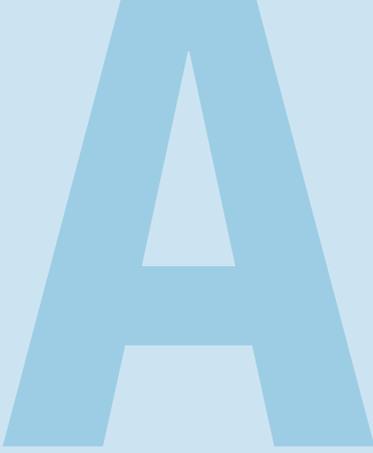
High-quality, school-based civic learning opportunities produce in children a sense of belonging to something larger than themselves by connecting them to the endless splendor of our democracy. Civic learning fosters positive social interaction with friends, within schools, and in our communities. Civic learning also challenges young people to take a stand, speak in public, ask a question, develop an idea, and determine what they believe and why.

Civic responsibility means not only possessing knowledge of government, but learning about processes and institutions that are effective in improving community conditions and economic development, building skills necessary to participate in the policymaking process, and developing a mentality that includes performing lifelong service for the common good. Civic learning and engagement is one of the most fundamental elements of a healthy democracy and a strong economy.

Our system of education shoulders the noble burden of educating youth about society and their relation to it. Educating youth about the responsibilities of citizenship and helping youth to understand the value of living in a democratic society are enticing and necessary endeavors.

In a democracy where governance is supposed to be of the people, by the people, and for the people, civic learning is not a luxury, it is a necessity.

Appendix



**CIVIC LEARNING PROGRAMS OFFERED BY
ILLINOIS CIVIC MISSION COALITION MEMBERS**

**American Bar Association Division
for Public Education**
www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education.html

**Capitol Forum on America's Future/Illinois
Humanities Council**
www.prairie.org/programs/capitol-forumamerica-039-s-future

Chicago History Museum
www.chicagohs.org

Chicago Metro History Education Center
www.chicagohistoryfair.org

Chicago Votes
<http://chicagovotes.com>

Citizen Advocacy Center
www.citizenadvocacycenter.org

Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago
www.crfc.org

Dirksen Congressional Center
www.dirksencongressionalcenter.org

Facing History and Ourselves
www.facinghistory.org

iCivics
www.icivics.org

Illinois Campus Compact
www.illinoiscampuscompact.org

Illinois Journalism Education Association
ijea.net/wordpress

Illinois Resource Center
www.thecenterweb.org/irc

Illinois State Bar Association
www.isba.org/teachers

Illinois YMCA Youth & Government
www.ilymcayg.org

League of Women Voters of Illinois
www.lwwil.org

Mikva Challenge
www.mikvachallenge.org

News Literacy Project
www.thenewsliteracyproject.org

Our American Voice / Barat Education Foundation
www.thebaratfoundation.org/programs/our-american-voice

Paul Simon Public Policy Institute
<http://paulsimoninstitute.org>

Robert R. McCormick Foundation
<http://mccormickfoundation.org/civics>

University of Chicago Institute of Politics
<http://politics.uchicago.edu/>

UIC Institute for Policy and Civic Engagement
<http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/ipce/>

We the People
<http://new.civiced.org/program/wtp>

B

INNOVATIVE STATE POLICIES SUPPORTIVE OF SCHOOL-BASED CIVIC LEARNING

B1 Florida's Justice Sandra Day O'Connor Civics Education Act

Florida's recent experience in attempting to increase civic engagement among its residents illustrates the stops and starts inherent in implementing new educational policies in a state public school system. This civic learning initiative was first forged in 2006 by former Congressman Lou Frey and then U.S. Senator Bob Graham, who in a white paper called for revised state social studies standards, the addition of civics to standardized tests, professional development for both pre- and in-service teachers in civic learning, improved civics curricular materials, and the creation of a statewide center for civic education.

The latter was achieved in 2007, when two Florida universities subsequently signed a memorandum of understanding to create the Florida Joint Center for Citizenship that would partner with the school districts and coordinate legislative strategy. It was funded through a \$7 million endowment from the State of Florida. Simultaneously, the Helios Education Foundation pledged more than \$500,000 to launch a two-year middle-school civics teacher professional development program, and the Knight Foundation provided almost \$500,000 to launch a three-year district-wide K-12 civic education initiative in the state capitol's county.

The following year, bills introduced in both houses of the Florida legislature added civics to statewide testing; and the fiscal analysis projected \$1 million per grade level per year for test administration and \$3.5 million for test development. Both bills died in committee in a climate of a declining housing market, a suffering tourism industry, and a budget shortfall estimated at over \$3.5 billion.

The next year, 2009, the Florida Bar and allies invited retired Justice Sandra Day O'Connor to Florida and the legislature asked her to address a joint session; and despite a strong House bill, changes in the Senate version caused the supporters to withdraw. This was an important lesson: the sponsors withdrew the bill when it was weakened by the State Senate to allow for "voluntary" instead of mandated testing.

In 2010, the Florida legislature unanimously adopted The Justice Sandra Day O'Connor Civics Education Act despite a large budget deficit and legislative leadership that disavowed any new expenditures. It contained four provisions for improving civic learning in the state: (1) all students must complete at least one semester of civics in middle school; (2) in the 7th grade, all students must pass a statewide end-of-

course civics examination in order to be promoted to high school; (3) student scores on the 7th grade examination will be included as a factor in the Florida Department of Education's assignment of school grades; and (4) civics content must be integrated in reading and literature classes in kindergarten through 12th grade.

Florida is currently transitioning more than 3,000 teachers from world history and geography to civics and challenging more than 65,000 elementary teachers to teach content area reading. The Joint Center received a recurring \$400,000 annual grant to support these aforementioned, ongoing teacher professional development needs.

B2 Tennessee's Project-Based Civic Assessments

In 2012, the Tennessee General Assembly passed a law that requires school districts throughout the state to assess students' civic learning in both middle grades and high school. While civics is assessed in a minimal way on standardized tests in social studies during grades 3–8, and a United States Government course is required in high school, this represents Tennessee's first mandatory civics assessment.

The new assessment is unique in two ways. First, unlike other statewide civic assessments, the Tennessee law leaves implementation up to individual school districts rather than requiring a standardized test developed by an outside vendor. Two, the assessments must be project-based, featuring "student-driven projects that are both central to the curriculum and rooted in the 'real world,' involving complex tasks based on challenging questions or problems" (Potts and Bergfeld, 2013).

The project-based assessments are "designed to measure the civic learning objectives contained in the social studies curriculum and to determine understanding and relevance to public policy, the structure of federal, state, and local governments, and both the Tennessee and United States constitutions." The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) recommends (but does not mandate) that students complete the project-based assessments in 4th Grade and the required United States Government course in 11th Grade. Regardless, school districts must demonstrate use of these assessments to the TDOE.

The Tennessee General Assembly allocated \$100,000 for implementation of the law. In turn, the TDOE retained the Tennessee Center for Civic Learning and Engagement (TCCLE) to assist with teacher professional development on project-based assessments in civic learning. The TCCLC is led by Janis Kyser, who spearheaded the successful push for project-based assessments in Tennessee.

This recent breakthrough comes on the heels of a flurry of state legislation in Tennessee over the past decade-plus addressing school-based civic learning. Previous public acts addressed course content, including the founding documents of both Tennessee and the United States (2011); local, state, and national government (2011); and government institutions and citizens' role in the democratic process (2010). Other acts explored character education (1985, 1999, 2004, and 2008), the American Flag and Pledge of Allegiance (1999 and 2002), and a commission on civic education (2006).



Janis Kyser, Executive Director, Tennessee Center for Civic Learning & Engagement, shares her strategies for civic learning advocacy at the state level with attendees at the 2013 annual convening of the ICMC.

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Illinois
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About the Robert R. McCormick Foundation

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation is committed to fostering communities of educated, informed and engaged citizens. Through philanthropic programs, Cantigny Park and museums, the Foundation helps develop citizen leaders and works to make life better in our communities. The Foundation was established as a charitable trust in 1955, upon the death of Colonel Robert R. McCormick, the longtime editor and publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*. The McCormick Foundation is one of the nation's largest foundations, with more than \$1 billion in assets. To learn more about the McCormick Foundation visit McCormickFoundation.org, follow us on Twitter at [@McCormick_Fdn](https://twitter.com/McCormick_Fdn), or like us on Facebook.

About the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition

The Illinois Civic Mission Coalition is a broad non-partisan consortium including educators, administrators, students, universities, funders, elected officials, policymakers and representatives from the private and non-profit sectors. Formed in 2004 by the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago, the Illinois Coalition is part of the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, a national initiative to restore a core purpose of education to prepare America's youngest citizens to be informed and active participants in our democracy. The Robert R. McCormick Foundation has convened the Coalition since 2010.