

McCormick Foundation Conference Series

Creating A Civic Blueprint for Illinois High Schools



Educating for Democracy

Why

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McCormick Foundation Conference Series

Creating A Civic Blueprint for Illinois High Schools

Civics?

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February 8-10, 2009 / Cantigny Park, Wheaton, IL

For more information on how to become a Democracy School,
visit www.FreedomMuseum.US/DemocracySchools.

**// The qualifications for
self-government in society
are not innate.
They are the result of habit
and long training. //**

Thomas Jefferson

On behalf of the McCormick Freedom Museum, I am proud to present a Civic Blueprint for the State of Illinois, produced as a result of our February 2009 conference, *Educating for Democracy*, held at the former estate of our benefactor, Robert R. McCormick, Cantigny Park in Wheaton, Illinois. Presented in partnership with the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition (ICMC), this gathering of more than 80 social studies educators, students, civic education leaders and elected officials, who believe deeply in the notion that civic education is fundamental to our democracy, is part of the McCormick Foundation Conference Series.

The mission of this conference was to advance the cause of civic education in the State of Illinois at the high school level through the construction of and agreement upon a blueprint for implementation of a civic audit process. Administered by the Freedom Museum through the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition, these audits will clarify the professional development needs of applicant high schools, and Coalition partners will provide the resources necessary for them to become "Democracy Schools." Beginning with the 2009-2010 school year, we hope to add five Democracy Schools to the existing cohort and to continue these efforts moving forward.

We would like to thank Carolyn Pereira, Nisan Chavkin, Dee Runaas and Margie Chan of the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago; without their guidance and support this conference would not have been possible. We also appreciate the contributions of the nine guest speakers who participated in the conference and whose expertise this report embodies, including Hon. Diane P. Wood, Mike Lawrence, Diana Hess, Joe Kahne, Ted McConnell and Jesse Ruiz. Lloyd Sachs served as the conference rapporteur, and his documentation of the conference proceedings precedes the blueprint. Most of all, we commend the social studies teachers and civic education leaders from across the State of Illinois who serve on the front lines in our collective mission to foster civic engagement among our nation's young people.

The McCormick Foundation is deeply committed to advancing the ideals of a free, democratic society by investing in children, communities and country. A fundamental premise of our democratic society is that an informed and educated public has the capacity to solve the problems it confronts. For more than 16 years, the McCormick Foundation Conference Series has provided a forum for the exploration and analysis of complex issues, situations and events affecting our communities and country. It is our hope that this conference report and associated civic blueprint will pave the path toward the restoration of the civic mission of our schools in Illinois and across the nation.

Sincerely,



David L. Grange
CEO and President
McCormick Foundation

1

Educating for Democracy: Why “Civics” Matters

“The philosophy of the classroom today will be the philosophy of government tomorrow,” said Abraham Lincoln. Two hundred years after his birth, it’s no exaggeration to say that Illinois’ success at improving the civic mission of high schools may be a critical factor in its efforts to achieve a more promising future for its citizens. To devise a workable strategy to elevate civic education in Illinois high schools, more than 80 civic leaders, policymakers and teachers convened for the three-day *Educating for Democracy* conference, held by the McCormick Foundation’s Freedom Museum and its partner, the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition.

The climate for reform couldn't be more promising. President Obama has called for a new commitment to service and service learning. U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, is a strong advocate of civic education as is Illinois Governor Pat Quinn.

The conference's keynote speaker, the **Hon. Diane P. Wood**, Circuit Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, addressing a diverse and distinguished group of Illinois policymakers, legislators, civic education leaders, researchers, teachers and students, indicated she could hardly imagine a better time to bring our great democratic tradition alive for high school students.

“ We have just seen a presidential election in which young people from all over the country became deeply involved and learned that their voice matters greatly.

It might seem that the law is too inaccessible, too specialized or too erudite for the average high school student, but that impression would be quite mistaken. In fact, the Supreme Court and the lower federal courts deal regularly with problems that any student would recognize immediately as pertinent to his or her life. Cases addressing fair procedures—as addressed in the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments—the right to free speech under the First Amendment, and the right not to be subjected to unreasonable searches under the Fourth Amendment in one way or another, involve schools. . . .

I invite you to think about ways in which this material might be presented to the students, so that they will begin to understand that law isn't just for lawyers, that the Constitution matters deeply to them, and that they have a responsibility—just as all citizens do—to live up to, and to uphold, its great traditions. . . .

Finally, there is certainly no reason why high school students would not, or should not, be interested in the Supreme Court's business as a whole. Every term, the Court confronts a substantial number of cases of national, and even global, interest. The more intelligent, educated people are watching the Court's work and responding to it critically, the better our democracy will work. ”



Distinguished speakers addressed the conference, including Judge Diane P. Wood.

The need is equally great, according to **Mike Lawrence**, director of the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University, who addressed the theme of *The Importance of Civic Participation*. Lawrence is a former newspaper writer and editor who also served as press secretary and senior policy advisor to Governor Jim Edgar. “Illinois is now facing a budget crisis of unimaginable dimensions. [Pat Quinn] and legislative leaders face excruciating decisions on spending and revenue. But people have no grasp of the scope or scale of the problem,” according to Lawrence.

“ There must be among young people a fundamental understanding of American Government. How can people make public officials accountable unless they have a greater amount of knowledge? We can pass ethics laws to improve the government’s performance. But the only real method of reform is greater civic engagement.

It’s painful enough for us to contend with findings that show U.S. students lagging way behind their counterparts in other countries in science and math—the idea that they may be lagging behind in understanding the principles of democracy is even more unsettling.

We have to seek innovative ways of working civic education into existing programs. We have to involve teachers, technology wizards and the kids themselves. ”



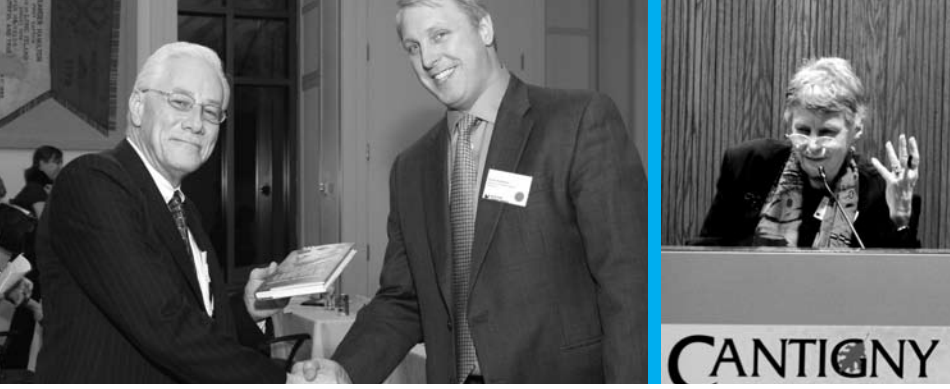
Attendees sought to create a civic blueprint that would resonate with students, teachers and administrators.

Less than 25 percent of students could demonstrate basic proficiency on an elementary test of their civic knowledge, according to the 2006 National Assessment of Educational Progress in civics and government. “This lack of basic civil knowledge imperils our democracy by effectively disempowering its citizens,” said **Ted McConnell**, executive director of the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, a national coalition.

“Young people, not knowing how to engage with the system, become cynical and distrusting of it. Above all, we have to ensure that the lessons are relevant to the students of today – the old textbooks and workshop materials can bore the stuffing out of kids.”

And when students are given a high quality civic education, and the service and experiential learning opportunities that make civics “more interesting and engaging to them,” McConnell said, they are more likely to become active in their community.

Yet according to a study by *CIRCLE*, students who take a civics or government class are more likely than other young people to report that they helped solve a community problem, believe they can make a difference in their community, have volunteered recently, trust other people and the government, have made consumer decisions for ethical or political reasons, believe in the importance of voting and are registered to vote.¹



Ted McConnell (left) and Carolyn Pereira (right) coordinate the campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools nationally and in Illinois.

Kevin Fong, a senior at Kelly High School, campaigned for Barack Obama in Indiana and went to Washington, D.C., to attend his inauguration as part of his experience participating in the Mikva Challenge. The **Mikva Challenge** works with underserved city high schools and involves hundreds of students each year in civic action projects, election campaigns and advocacy on youth-related topics. “Before I participated in the Mikva Challenge, I thought I would study business or engineering. But now I’ve decided to study political science. “That never came across my mind before,” he said, speaking at the conference as part of a student panel.

At **Community High School**, as part of their 60 hours of voluntary community service, students raised more than \$10,000 to build a school in Sakutopi, Angola, in partnership with Rise International, and have shipped backpacks, school supplies, blankets, toys and clothes there. “We utilized things we learned in social studies class,” said **Caitlin Shiga**, a senior at Community High School in West Chicago, who, she said, has been bit by the bug to “do something life changing.”



Teachers, administrators and civic leaders, including Mike Lawrence (right), collectively constructed the civic blueprint.

Participation in the **Illinois Youth Summit** has “helped me use my voice to help make a difference” commented **Ana Popa**, an immigrant student and senior at Mather High School in Chicago. The Illinois Youth Summit, an annual program of the Constitutional Rights Foundation, helps give students an informed voice in decisions about current issues that affect them. More than 1,000 students each year have an opportunity discuss and deliberate current public policy questions with policymakers and conduct service learning projects with thousands of members of their communities.

Laura Saldivar, a student at **Jacobs High School** in Algonquin, worked on a project to help reduce the number of young people killed in motor vehicle crashes through the Project Ignition program. Saldivar said their program received a \$2,000 Project Ignition grant to implement “In the Blink of an Eye-Think Before You Drive” program. Project Ignition is a service learning program sponsored by State Farm and the National Youth Leadership Council. “In the Blink of an Eye-Think Before You Drive” targets the safety of children, parents, students and seniors throughout the community by utilizing more than 30 programs such as Operation Prom, Safety Town, Parent Night and Safety Week. Saldivar said she hopes “to help increase awareness and promote a platform to change teen driving behaviors in a meaningful and educational way.”

2

Educating for Democracy: The State of Civic Education

In Illinois, the law requires civic instruction and “character education,” including the teaching of “American patriotism and the principles of representative government.” But the implementation of civic education is left to school districts and individual schools.

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, only nine percent of high school seniors can identify two ways a democratic society benefits from civic participation.² In addition, according to the 2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation study, 56 percent of young people are unaware that only citizens can vote in federal elections.³

University of Wisconsin-Madison Professor of Education **Diana Hess** offered findings that reveal the scope of the challenge for engaging high school students:

- > More than 35 percent of students said they never followed the news as part of a class assignment.
- > More than 22 percent reported they never learned how government works in class.
- > Nearly 27 percent said they never discussed or debated political or social issues in class.
- > About 25 percent said they were never encouraged to make up their own mind about issues.
- > And, notably, nearly 55 percent said they had never engaged in classroom role playing or simulations, which are widely acknowledged as exceptionally effective methods for teaching the workings of democracy.

“ We have to get young people comfortable with conflict. That’s when they’re more likely to engage politically. If we rely just on families to do this, it isn’t going to happen. Civic education has the potential to tap the openness of young people to arguments on both sides of important issues.

When people have no experience responding to opposing thoughts and ideas they become uncomfortable with them and are less likely to talk to people with whom they disagree. They seek the safety of ideologically homogenous communities, where they are more likely to marinate in an echo chamber of their own views. . . .

And if parents are incapable of or indifferent to the responsibility of making their children comfortable with “cross-cutting political talk,” a skill that doesn’t come naturally, that responsibility falls even more on schools.”

“ Silent citizens may be perfect subjects for an authoritarian ruler—they would be a disaster for a democracy. ”

Robert Dahl, *On Democracy*



Diana Hess (right) argued on behalf of active student engagement with democratic procedures and processes.

Youth civic awareness and engagement is on the rise, according to findings presented by featured conference speaker **Joseph Kahne**, dean of the School of Education and director of the Civic Engagement Research Group at Mills College. Classroom-based civic education can enlighten and open the door for students' lifelong roles as citizens in a democracy, according to Kahne, addressing the theme, *Creating Civic Opportunities in the Classroom*.

“ Families and communities matter, but schools can make a big difference and, in addition, can help offset inequalities that would otherwise exist. ”

Students from poorer communities have fewer civic learning opportunities than other students:

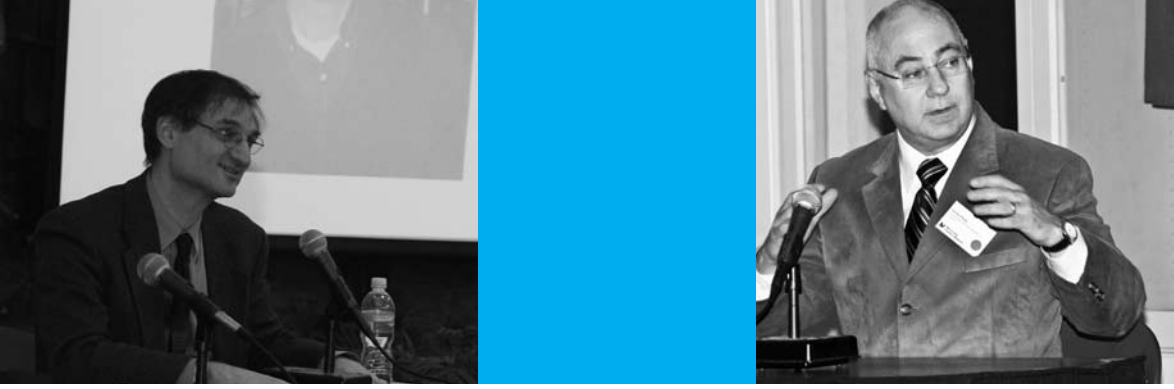
A Tale of Three Students

Percentile Ranking, Civic Commitments

- average income communities
- low income communities
- high income communities



CERG Civic Engagement Research Group at Mills College



Joseph Kahne (left) and James Klenk (right) spoke of the importance of civic learning opportunities in the classroom.

“ There are encouraging signs that young people are becoming more active and aware politically. The number of them going to the voting polls is up, reversing a downward trend. . . .

Recent studies have found that the effective instruction of civics in schools can make a meaningful, and in some cases, life-changing difference in preparing and inspiring students to play responsible and informed roles as citizens.

The kind of curricular opportunities schools provide makes a difference in the level of civic commitments students express.

Where quality classroom civic education and extracurricular experiential learning opportunities are available, students become significantly more involved in community work (Kahne and Spote, 2008). These findings held even in schools and neighborhoods with few adult role models who can be seen dealing with community problems and supporting young people.

In California, we found that students who have ready access to civic education opportunities and service learning become more committed to civic participation. If kids talk about civics and political issues, they are more likely to increase their level of commitment.”

In a perfect world, funding would be immediately available to support civic education and government courses in all high schools. But even where those funds are not forthcoming – and where, as a result, requiring schools to offer American government classes is problematic – there are ways of teaching students the basics of living in and contributing to a democracy.

3

Educating for Democracy: Civic Education in Action

Despite some of the Illinois schools suffering from a lack of or decline in civic education opportunities, a number of high schools and programs offer exemplary models for teaching students the workings of our democracy and inspiring them to participate actively in it. Included in this mix of exemplars are Community High School, Chicago Public Schools, Maine South High School and Glenbard South High School.

At **Community High School** in West Chicago, seniors are required to take a semester-long American Government course in which they simulate the legislative process. Using the House of Representatives as their model, students align themselves with a political party, attend committee sessions, write bills, elect floor leaders and participate in debates linked to various aspects of the Constitution. A judicial review component features teachers as Supreme Court justices. The Legislative Semester course, now in its 17th year, is designed to do more than teach kids about government. Its primary motive is to prepare them to become effective citizens, to become more engaged in the political process, to make informed choices and help others make informed choices. And what better way is there to achieve those goals than to make learning fun? “Students get excited about government,” said **Lisa Willuweit**, American Government teacher and Humanities division head, recalling with a laugh the day they were “fired up debating the flat tax.”

“Strides are being made” by the **Chicago Public Schools** to require a semester-long civic education course, according to CPS social studies manager **Martin Moe**. “The course will integrate more service learning program opportunities including the Mikva Challenge and the Illinois Youth Summit.”

Maine South High School, in northwest suburban Park Ridge, has a Constitution team that has won Illinois’ We The People competition for 12 years running. At Maine South, working from materials provided free through federal funding, students study such topics as the Constitutional Convention, political parties, interest groups and civil liberties. They debate among themselves and against other schools, leading to a simulated congressional hearing in which they debate historical and contemporary issues before a panel of judges. “It’s a powerful program,” said Maine South teacher **Andrew Trenkle**. “The kids are really motivated. And because the students work in teams of four, they learn how to listen and negotiate with each other in arriving at a unified stance.”

At **Glenbard South High School** in west suburban Glen Ellyn, a mandatory semester-long civic education course will be put in place for the class of 2013. The course is the result of a 15-year effort by the Social Studies chairs in the Glenbard school system. While the course will have a national government focus, a high priority will be placed on motivating students to become “engaged in the communities in which they live” and, said **Principal Terri Hanrahan**, acquiring “a true voice in the way we govern our high school.”



These Illinois high school students, including [Laura Saldivar](#) of Jacobs High School (right), embrace their role as citizens in our democracy.

The Illinois Civic Mission Coalition has certified five Illinois high schools as Democracy Schools for providing students with “authentic experiences in the rights, responsibilities and tensions inherent in living in a constitutional democracy.” These schools also work with parents, students and their communities to “develop a civic mission and provide curricular and extracurricular civic learning experiences for all students. These schools provide an opportunity for kids to give back and learn something,” said [Carolyn Pereira](#), chair of the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition and executive director of the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago, which administers the ICMC and the Illinois Youth Summit, an annual initiative that involves high school students in public policy issues that affect them.

Ultimately, the single most important factor in training students to become effective, informed and engaged citizens is the quality and dedication of the teaching. “How do we build better teachers – that’s the key challenge facing us,” said [John Lapham](#), an attorney and college lecturer who serves as social studies curriculum consultant for Chicago Public Schools. “How do we strengthen the resolve, the will power, the abilities of our newest teachers, so they can go into underperforming schools and not let the rough system beat them down?”



Kevin Fong, Caitlyn Shiga (left) and Alexis Gonzalez (right) are emblematic of young people across the nation who celebrate the virtues of civic engagement.

To support similar efforts throughout the state, Illinois State Board of Education Chairman **Jesse Ruiz** called on conference participants to develop an actionable plan in civic education.

“ Creating a Civic Blueprint is an important initiative – I’m glad you are doing it because, frankly, you are helping us. The learning standards are being revamped – they haven’t been revamped in a while – so the iron is hot for striking and it is a critical point in time that you are doing this.

You all have great reach and breadth and you have a great group of stellar public officials who are aligned and if they haven’t explicitly given you their outright endorsement and support – they should!

There are a lot of opportunities – this is a timely effort to start planting some seeds. You have to get additional support and get this on the education agenda. You have a fan and supporter with me.

You need an actionable plan and the students will reap the benefits.”

The result is *The Civic Blueprint for Illinois High Schools*.

References

1. “Themes Emphasized in Social Studies and Civics Class: New Evidence,” p. 5, CIRCLE, 2004.
2. “The Nations Report Card: Civics 2006,” p. 24.
3. “A Detailed Look at How Youth Participate in Politics and Communities,” p. 24.

Schools and Civic Engagement

{Blueprint}

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Introduction

The *Civic Blueprint for Illinois High Schools* is designed to give educators, policymakers, parents and all residents of Illinois:

Explanations of promising approaches to high school level civic education
Examples of Illinois high schools, educators and students using these approaches

Recommendations for implementing these approaches in high schools across Illinois

Resources that support schools and communities in promoting the civic engagement of Illinois high school students

Quality civic education opportunities are vital for all students and should be part of every student's school experience at every grade level. The Illinois Civic Mission Coalition (ICMC) has focused the *Civic Blueprint* on approaches and resources focused specifically on what high schools in Illinois can do for students in our state. ICMC hopes that similar efforts will be addressed at the primary, elementary and middle grades.

Schools and Civic Engagement

The Goals of Civic Engagement

Public schools were created in America with the primary purpose of preparing children to participate constructively as adult citizens in our democracy. However, recent school reform efforts have focused primarily on improving student achievement in reading, math and science. As a result, the historical function of the American public school—to educate students for democratic participation and citizenship—has been pushed aside. Like millions of their peers across the country, most Illinois high school students lack sufficient formal instruction and opportunities for the development of civic engagement.

The strength of Illinois and our nation depends on civic education opportunities for today's youth. The 2008 presidential election demonstrated record levels of enthusiasm among young people, and this excitement offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to channel this interest into a lifetime of civic participation. Civic education in schools can play a vital role in encouraging today's youth to become the active and informed citizens our democracy requires.

**Schools and
Civic Engagement
(continued)**

A Working Definition for Citizenship

“The overall goal of civic education should be to help young people acquire and learn to use the skills, knowledge and attitudes that will prepare them to be competent and responsible citizens throughout their lives” (*The Civic Mission of Schools, 2003*).¹

The defining characteristics of citizen competency and responsibility include:

Civic and Political Knowledge—Information about our history and government; basic understanding of democracy and democratic principles; information and resources for electoral participation; and the understanding of institutions and important current events.

Civic and Political Skills—Skills necessary to participate in civic and political life including speaking and writing, critical thinking, an ability to listen to other perspectives, a sense of social capital and a comfort with the give-and-take process of consensus-building in a democracy.

Civic Attitudes—Respect for diverse viewpoints; belief in the importance of participation in political processes and civic life; understanding of the common good; sense of social and civic efficacy; appreciation of participation in public and civic life; an interest in politics with an intention to vote; and an openness to political persuasion.

Political Participation—Engagement in traditionally political activities such as voting, attending public meetings, education and advocacy on public issues and voicing opinions through letters to elected officials or the media.

Community Participation—Active participation in voluntary organizations such as churches, neighborhood associations, youth groups, etc.

Civic Commitments—A sense of personal responsibility in society; a willingness to participate in mutual endeavors and to address common needs; and a commitment to making change to promote or maintain equity and fairness.

Promising Approaches for Citizenship Development in Schools

The Civic Mission of Schools outlined six promising approaches whereby schools can help develop competent and responsible citizens:

- 1** Formal instruction in U.S. Government, history, law and democracy using interactive methods and opportunities to apply learning to “real life” situations
- 2** Discussion of current local, national and international events that students view as important to their lives and of controversial political and social issues within political and social context
- 3** Service learning linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction
- 4** Extracurricular activities that encourage greater involvement and connection to school and community
- 5** Authentic voice in school governance
- 6** Participation in simulations of democratic structures and processes

Benefits of Citizenship Development

The benefits of effective civic education may be summarized as follows:

Approach	Civic and Political knowledge	Civic and Political Skills	Civic Attitudes	Political Participation	Community Participation
Formal Classroom Instruction in Government, History, Law and Democracy	●	●		●	
Discussion of Current Events and Controversial Issues	●	●	●	●	
Service Learning		●	●		●
Extracurricular Activities		●		●	●
Authentic Student Voice in School Governance		●	●		
Participation in Simulations of Democratic Structures and Processes	●	●	●		

Adapted from The Civic Mission of Schools 2003

Part A

Building Effective Citizens: Lessons from Illinois High Schools

The following sections present information about six promising approaches outlined in *The Civic Mission of Schools* for the development of effective and competent citizens. Each section features the same basic components:

Description of the promising approach

Indicators that this approach is featured or promoted in a school setting

Evidence (with citations) supporting the value and effectiveness of this approach.

Exemplars of what implementation of this approach looks like in Illinois

The Illinois Exemplars featured in this part of the *Civic Blueprint for Illinois High Schools* represent some of the finest civic education programs in our state. They are distinguished by careful and comprehensive planning and execution, whether they are conducted by a specific school district, non-profit or community organization.

Each promising approach is illustrated by at least two Illinois Exemplars. While most Exemplars incorporate multiple promising approaches, the descriptions highlight only the featured promising approach. Additional information about the Illinois Exemplars is available by contacting their host school or organization. A listing of contact information for each Illinois Exemplar is included at the end of the *Civic Blueprint*.

Part A

Building Effective Citizens: Lessons from Illinois High Schools (continued)

1

Formal Classroom Instruction in Government, History, Law and Democracy

Classroom-based education about the government, history, laws and democratic institutions of the United States is vital. Much of the important foundational information about our system can be taught in a classroom setting. If students learn about democratic systems, history and current events in a well-structured curriculum, they may retain that information into adulthood.¹

Indicators

A well-structured curriculum features instruction in the following areas:

- > U.S. Constitution and its principles as applied to the past and the present
- > U.S. History, both at home and abroad, and its major themes
- > Structure and processes of government and elections over time
- > Powers and limitations of different branches of government at the federal, state and local levels
- > Realistic depiction of legal and political systems that illustrates how society has changed and can change to reflect “a more perfect union”
- > Explicit connections between formal instruction and concrete actions in students’ lives
- > Material not contained in a text book—particularly primary source materials and visits from experts and other resource people in the community—to learn about important events, ideas, and issues affecting students, their communities, the nation, and the world
- > Key democratic knowledge, skills and concepts, including the role of citizen as the most important role in a democracy

Evidence

Classroom instruction matters. After nearly three decades of uncertainty about the benefit of government and civics courses, new research demonstrates classroom-based education does make a difference.

- > Students who have had courses in government and history perform better on tests designed to measure civic knowledge.⁷
- > More knowledgeable adults vote more consistently and vote on issues rather than personalities.²
- > Preliminary research from *We the People: the Citizen and the Constitution* demonstrates that alumni are more likely to vote, pay attention to political issues and work for political candidates or issues.³

Illinois Exemplar

We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution **(Center for Civic Education)**

We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution is a nationally acclaimed constitutional study program for students in grades 4-12 that promotes an understanding of the history and philosophy of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and an understanding of democracy and its institutions.

At the high school level in Illinois and across the nation, students study the *We the People* curriculum to enhance their understanding of the institutions of our constitutional democracy and to identify the contemporary relevance of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Critical thinking exercises, problem-solving activities and cooperative learning techniques help develop the participatory skills necessary for students to become active, responsible citizens.

The culminating activity is a mock congressional hearing where students demonstrate their skills and knowledge of past and present constitutional issues by testifying before a panel of judges. Classes can also participate in a competitive version of the hearings; the class that wins the state-level competition in Illinois joins other state winners in Washington, D.C. for a national competition.

The Center for Civic Education's *We the People* in Illinois program provides professional development opportunities for teachers. North Park University in Chicago is a strategic partner and hosts the *We the People* Summer Institute. In addition, *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution* provides a free set of classroom books to teachers. In Illinois, teachers of all grade levels can participate in training workshops, receive free textbooks and attend summer institutes. Over 500 sets of books have been distributed to 983 Illinois schools since 2003.

Illinois Exemplar

Choices for the 21st Century Education Program **(Choices Foundation)**

Choices for the 21st Century Education Program is a national education initiative that is used extensively in Illinois high schools. Choices provides curriculum resources and professional development designed to engage students at the secondary level in substantive deliberation on contested international issues—current and historical—from multiple perspectives.

Choices' curricular materials and pedagogical approach empower young people with the skills, habits and knowledge necessary to be engaged citizens who are capable of addressing international issues through thoughtful public discourse and informed decision-making. At the center of each printed unit is a framework of alternative policy options that challenges students to consider multiple perspectives and to think critically about the issue at hand. All units include readings and detailed lesson plans. More than 30 titles are

currently in print. A variety of digital resources and activities are available at www.choices.edu and are aligned with print materials. Digital resources include *Scholars Online* video interviews with scholars and *Teaching with the News* lessons that connect the content of the classroom to the headlines in the news.

Choices materials are integrated into a range of social studies courses, including U.S. history, world history, international relations, American studies, government and current issues courses. Choices materials meet the state's standards for social studies education.

Illinois Exemplar

Integrated Civic Curriculum

(Community High School, West Chicago)

Community High School in West Chicago uses an integrated approach to civics education in the classroom. The curriculum is designed to provide students with numerous opportunities to engage in activities embedded in democratic principles and knowledge. Community High School's philosophy is to create effective citizens who positively contribute to the global community.

The integrated approach to civic education provides more depth than traditional social studies courses; follows themes throughout; reflects educational research on best practices; scaffolds essential themes and knowledge, sequences content and skills, is used as a model for other schools; and includes a variety of lesson strategies.

The social studies department curriculum is organized around the question of *What is an effective citizen in a global community?* Each course has a guiding question related to that question which corresponds with the course of study. Each unit of study also has a guiding question related to the course question. The questions provide opportunities for in-depth study, rather than simple memorization of facts and dates, as well as a historical context for current issues.

The four year sequence builds off the knowledge learned in the previous course and simultaneously prepares students for the next course in the sequence. The sequence starts with a broad look at the world and narrows to look at U.S. Government:

- > Freshman – World Geography (*How do different aspects of the global community interact with each other?*)
- > Sophomore – World History (*How does history impact the global community?*)
- > Junior – American History (*What does it mean to be an American?*)
- > Senior – American Government (*What is an effective citizen?*)

Part A

Building Effective Citizens: Lessons from Illinois High Schools (continued)

2

Structured Engagement with Current and Controversial Issues

Students (like many adults) often retain information better if it is connected to real world events. Encouraging discussion of current events in the classroom allows teachers to demonstrate concepts they are discussing. It also allows students to learn about current affairs and wrestle with the complexities of making decisions about important issues.

Indicators

Quality classroom engagement with current and controversial issues features:

- > Discussion of controversial public issues (local, national and international)
- > Information about public issues is provided through a variety of sources including newspapers and other media
- > Discussion is balanced and does not indoctrinate
- > A focus on an interpretable text, issue or idea
- > Open-ended (authentic) questions are asked for which there are no obvious answers
- > Relevant background knowledge, including life experience, is used in a logical way
- > Different opinions are expressed, heard, respected, understood and analyzed
- > Participation is not centered on any one person
- > Students have opportunities to listen, speak and feel welcome to participate from a variety of perspectives in a supportive environment
- > Students are engaged intellectually and emotionally
- > Students develop reasoned positions using ideas and arguments presented in the discussion
- > Students have license and opportunity to change points of view or reach different conclusions based on evidence and insights offered during a discussion

Evidence

Research tells us that open discussion of current events is as important as it is rare.

- > Fourteen-year-olds in “open” classrooms around the world indicate they are more likely to plan to vote than their peers in more traditional classrooms.⁵
- > Students who discussed issues in class were more likely to say they had participated in civic activities than students who had no opportunity in class to think through and discuss public issues.²⁰



52%

The percentage of voters between 18 and 29 rose steadily from 37 percent in 1996 to 52 percent 2008.

- > Students who have the opportunity to discuss controversial public policy issues in a supportive atmosphere are more likely to express higher levels of political efficacy, interest, trust and confidence than their peers without such experiences.²¹
- > An open classroom climate for discussion is a significant predictor of civic knowledge, support for democratic values, participation in political discussion and political engagement.⁵

Illinois Exemplar

Capitol Forum on America's Future (Choices Program)

Capitol Forum on America's Future is a year-long civic education initiative of the Choices Program at Brown University. Administered in Illinois by the Illinois Humanities Council and drawing on the teaching resources of the Choices Program, Capitol Forum raises international awareness and promotes educated civic exchange among high school students statewide.

Participation in the Capitol Forum program educates Illinois high school students about controversial international issues and difficult choices facing America. Participating teachers receive Choices materials free for use in the program. Guided by their social studies teachers, students read, analyze and discuss core issues – nuclear proliferation, human rights/genocide, immigration, global economy and environment – in preparation for a public forum in Springfield, where they deliberate and debate these issues and other concerns with peers from across the state. In their classrooms, students research, analyze and deliberate their topics in preparation for the culminating event, the Capitol Forum, in Springfield. There, in the Capitol's House Chamber, representatives from schools across the state engage in extended dialogue with each other and with Illinois policy makers, and craft a "future" direction for U.S. foreign policy in the 21st century. Immediately following the Forum, teachers and delegates lead classmates in a review of the issues and in completion of the Student Ballot on America's Future, results of which are compiled and sent to Illinois high schools, area media and state officials.

The Capitol Forum gives students of History, Government, World Affairs, International Relations, Economics and American Studies a voice in consideration of current U.S. foreign policy issues, and helps them develop a foundation for long-term civic engagement.

Deliberating in a Democracy**(Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago)**

Deliberating in a Democracy (DID) is a project directed by the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago (CRFC) in partnership with the Constitutional Rights Foundation in Los Angeles (CRF) and Street Law, Inc. It is a major six-year international initiative designed to improve student understanding of democratic principles and the skills of civic deliberation. In 2007–2008, over 200 teachers engaged more than 5,000 high school students in authentic civic deliberations across the United States and in Eastern Europe, Russia and Azerbaijan.

Deliberating in a Democracy's overall goal is to increase the knowledge, ability and dispositions of teachers and students to effectively participate in deliberations related to democratic principles as applied in their countries. The emphasis is on a direct person-to-person exchange of ideas and experiences to give people a much clearer picture of democracy in action.

Deliberating in a Democracy is a teacher-focused initiative designed to improve teaching and learning of democratic principles and the skills for civic deliberation. Major activities associated with the project include: (1) teacher staff development workshops, (2) classroom deliberations, (3) an online discussion board for students and teachers, (4) a teleconference between students in partner sites and (5) a teacher exchange.

The two overarching goals of the project are to provide: (1) a model for secondary teachers to learn and appreciate among themselves the power of deliberation in their classrooms; and (2) a platform for engaging secondary students in discussions of substantive content on the institutions, governmental systems and basic principles of a democratic constitutional state. To date, more than three dozen teachers at 25 Illinois high schools have been trained in DID methods and use DID materials with students.

Facing History and Ourselves**(Facing History and Ourselves)**

Facing History and Ourselves strives to promote dialogue in the classroom and beyond, encouraging young people to think critically about issues that unite and divide society. For 32 years it has offered teachers and students ways to confront prejudice, apathy, fear and violence. By teaching students to think critically, empathize, recognize moral choices and make their voices heard, it puts in their hands the possibility—and the responsibility—to do the serious work demanded of us all as citizens.

Focusing on examples of collective violence, Facing History provides teachers with the tools and support necessary to connect the lessons of history to the challenges of an increasingly interconnected world. Facing History engages

students in the classroom, fosters learning and dialogue among teachers, students and communities around the world and invigorates teachers' commitment to teaching. Its mission is to engage teachers and students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice and anti-Semitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry.

In Illinois, Facing History is working in partnership with the Chicago Public Schools. The Choices In Little Rock CPS/ Facing History and Ourselves Initiative uses the Facing History resource guide, *Choices in Little Rock*. The guide teaches civics and history through an examination of the 1957 integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. While eighth-grade students are examining this particular historical period, they are encouraged to make connections between the choices people their age faced in the past and the choices they face in their own lives today. After looking at their own identities and examining the past, students reflect on how they can be active participants in our democracy. As ninth-graders, students will study *Holocaust and Human Behavior* in world history, carrying over a common language around Facing History themes.

Illinois Exemplar

Timely Topics in Freedom

(McCormick Freedom Museum)

Timely Topics in Freedom is a teacher seminar series presented by the McCormick Freedom Museum that addresses a variety of First Amendment and freedom-related issues. Through the series, the museum strives to underscore the contemporary, personal and societal relevance of the First Amendment, and the role it plays in an ongoing struggle to define freedom.

The Timely Topics in Freedom series focuses on complex, controversial topics that directly impact students' lives. At each seminar, participants learn with content experts about the historical and political contexts of each issue. Teachers also receive a corresponding lesson plan and classroom resources to support instruction and make content accessible to students. Every lesson plan is centered around an open-ended critical engagement question that encourages students to interpret and discuss multiple perspectives in order to develop their own reasoned positions. The lesson plan also features recommended extensions that provide opportunities for authentic civic engagement. Recent seminars have included *To Keep and Bear Arms: An Individual or Collective Right?* and *What is an American? An Immigration Policy Seminar*.

Since 2006, over 350 middle and high school teachers from throughout the Chicago area have participated in seminars presented by the Freedom Museum.

Part A

Building Effective Citizens: Lessons from Illinois High Schools (continued)

3

Service Learning Linked to the Formal Curriculum and Classroom Instruction

Service learning has evolved from community service and voluntary activities to a more structured experience that includes a strong relationship between service and classroom learning objectives. Such experiences enable students to venture into the community and perform work that is explicitly connected to their academic work through writing, discussion and reflection. Service experiences help reinforce classroom learning and allow students to make connections between what is being learned and the world they will enter as adults.

Indicators

Successful integration of service learning in schools is marked by the following indicators:

- > Part of the broader educational philosophy of the school, reflected in the school's mission statement, and linked to academic learning and the broader curriculum
- > Intentional focus on civic outcomes and encourages civic commitment (i.e., taking action to solve problems; participating in civic dialogue; working for the common good)
- > Meaningful student work on public issues with a chance of seeing positive results
- > Student role in selecting and designing their projects and strategies and reflecting on their experiences and work
- > Focus on increased student knowledge of the community (i.e., identifying key organizations and individuals in the community; policies and issues that affect the community; and the community's strengths, needs and challenges)
- > Opportunities for student assessment of political problems and pursuit of political responses within a non-partisan classroom setting

Evidence

Since civic engagement is most likely to occur during adult years, and service learning programs and research are still relatively young, we do not have the same compelling evidence about relationships to civic behaviors that we do for other promising approaches. However, research suggests that:

- > Carefully structured service learning does appear to enhance civic attitudes; especially those related to tolerance and respect for others' opinions.⁶

- > Service learning with a more explicitly political focus appears to produce better civic engagement results than those that are more apolitical.¹
- > Service learning is most effective when students have a legitimate voice in the project, supporting the point that civic skills (communication and collective decision making) can be learned through service learning.⁸

Illinois Exemplar

Service Learning Initiative (Chicago Public Schools)

The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has a service learning graduation requirement for all high school students. Students must complete 20 hours of service in order to be promoted to junior status and 40 hours in order to graduate. CPS defines service learning as a teaching strategy that connects classroom curriculum with service projects.


The Service Learning Initiative of the Office of Teaching and Learning expects that all high school students will participate in quality service learning projects that are integrated with classroom learning. Each service learning experience will have a preparation, action and reflection component. The goal is to provide every student with two-to-three structured service learning project experiences that are connected to classroom curriculum resulting in academic achievement, social/emotional development and civic preparation.

The initiative operates intensively in 15 high schools to strategically build service learning opportunities into classroom instruction. Each school works with teachers and administrators to place these opportunities strategically across curriculum and grade levels to enable all students to participate in high quality, curriculum-integrated service projects.

The initiative provides multiple opportunities for professional development. Additionally, ten teachers trained as professional development providers conduct annual “Service Learning 101” workshops in each of the six high school regions.

The initiative uses curriculum to help teachers plan lessons and activities for student service projects. CPS has developed 25 field-tested projects in seven content areas that enable teachers to tie service to learning. These resources enable teachers to make links to state learning standards across multiple content areas, connect with community partners, brainstorm potential projects and introduce students to social issues.

The Service Learning Initiative networks with hundreds of community partners to generate project opportunities for students, project partners for teachers, and quality links between classroom learning and real world experiences. Community partners provide a range of opportunities from individualized service opportunities to classroom-based projects with curricular resources and support.

A grayscale photograph of a young woman with a bright smile, looking slightly to the left. A large, solid blue circle is overlaid on the right side of her face. Inside the circle, the text '27%' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font. Below the circle, there is a short paragraph of text. At the bottom of the image, a white card is partially visible with the text 'ng' and 'h School' on it.

27%

Nearly 27 percent of students said they never discussed or debated political or social issues in class.

Illinois Exemplar**Community Leadership Program****(Community High School, West Chicago)**

The *Community Leadership Program* is an elective course to help students in grades 10-12 become effective citizens. The focus question for this course, “What is an effective citizen in a global community,” allows students to apply the knowledge gained from Social Studies courses to real life. Students learn leadership skills, identify local and global areas of need, plan solutions and take action.

Through participation in this program, students volunteer at a community organization for 60 hours a semester. To participate, students:

- > Choose an area of service that interests them with approval from the instructor
- > Serve a local, non-profit organization or institution
- > Receive no payment for service
- > Complete at least 15 hours of service for each progress report marking period
- > Keep a journal of their experience
- > Research a problem/issue associated with their area of service and produce a final report
- > Engage in seminars with community leaders to explore central questions of the program

The entire class also chooses a class service project to work on in addition to their individual, local project. The class service project engages the entire student body with the community leadership students applying their leadership skills learned in class. They plan lessons and activities related to the class project for implementation in the advisory periods.

Illinois Exemplar**SEEDS Project****(Maine West High School, Des Plaines)**

The goal of *SEEDS (Students Educating for Equity in a Diverse Society)* is for students to see that while knowledge and wisdom is great to pursue, they lack power and meaning without putting them into action. SEEDS is designed to help students learn that they too have the power to make change in our world.

Connecting these ideas to research methods, students select an issue and conduct research using the Pathfinders tool developed by the Maine West High School Library. Students organize their research around three questions: *What is the problem? What are the causes? What are the solutions?* After completing their research, students are required to identify with an action plan to put their new knowledge into a format that actively informs others. This also challenges students to think creatively. Students then share their projects at an open house, where having all the projects in one location allows the students to also learn about the issues other students studied.

SEEDS is offered each year in all sections of the freshman World Cultures class as the final project at the end of the course. Students choose from areas already studied in class. SEEDS also is the assessment tool that introduces students to research methodology. Participation is required and is part of students' assessment grade. Approximately 150 students participate each year.

While the ideas and student guides were created for Maine West students, many ideas came from the *Active Citizenship Today: Field Guide* (1995: Constitutional Rights Foundation and Close Up Foundation). SEEDS has taken many different formats and has changed from year to year in an effort to make it better and better, but the goal remains consistent: to let students feel empowered and motivated to be active citizens for life.

Illinois Exemplar

Civic Action Program

(York High School, Elmhurst)

The *Civic Action Program (CAP)* is part of a required American Government course for sophomores at York High School. Looking for a way to integrate civic involvement and responsibility into the curriculum, York teachers felt that students needed to understand and experience government on a personal level to find out what it means to be a good citizen.

Through the Civic Action Program, students begin by identifying an issue or topic of interest to them and then submitting a research proposal. Each student's proposal must contain the following: history of the issue/topic, legislative research, legal research, ideas for field research, ideas for political action and source documentation. Once their proposal is accepted, they move on to the next steps. All students must complete a traditional research paper on their issue or topic which includes research, field research and eventually an action plan.

During the field research process, students are required to make a minimum of three contacts with outside organizations, government officials and/or citizens who are involved with their particular issue. This field experience provides hands-on, practical learning about the issue identified in the proposal and helps the students formulate an informed action plan. Documentation is part of each step and helps the students to create or revise their action plan. Their action plan must address their problem by trying to promote change or make a difference, and the plan needs to be supported by evidence through their documentation.

The last phase of the program is to complete a portfolio which records all steps of the students issue/topic. Once the portfolio is completed, each student will give an oral presentation of his/her work and highlight what they learned about their project.

Part A

Building Effective Citizens: Lessons from Illinois High Schools (continued)

4

Extracurricular Activities that Encourage Greater Involvement and Connection to School and Community

Extracurricular activities—after-school activities such as clubs, student-interest groups, newspaper, yearbook, debate or school governance—allow young people the chance to work toward a common interest. These activities provide opportunities for students to develop personal and social responsibility. Such activities are usually run by schools, but can also be provided through non-profit and community organizations.

Indicators

- > Multiple opportunities for involvement in school or community
- > Support and encouragement for students to take advantage of these opportunities

Evidence

- The relationship between extracurricular activities, especially during adolescence, and later political and civic engagement is one of the most striking of all the promising approaches.
- > Nearly a dozen studies have been conducted and all demonstrate strong links between certain types of extracurricular activities and civic engagement.⁹
 - > The structure of the organization seems to matter. Organizations that involve working on a collective outcome (such as yearbook, student government or even a chess club) have much stronger results than those that are related only to enhancing individual interests. Those with a collective focus seem to be better able to develop the civic skills mentioned above.¹⁰

Illinois Exemplar

Illinois High School Mock Trial Program (Illinois State Bar Association)

The *Illinois High School Mock Trial* program provides an opportunity for students to experience what it is like to prepare and present a trial. Mock trials are structured like a “real” court trial and follow very similar rules. High school students of all ages and abilities receive a hands-on learning experience while playing key roles in a legal setting. This simulation helps students understand how the legal system works and what roles judges, lawyers, bailiffs, juries and witnesses play in the system.

Mock Trial helps foster understanding and respect for the legal system and the rule of law by:

- > promoting greater understanding and appreciation for the law, court procedures and the American judicial system;
- > improving basic life skills, such as critical thinking, communication and advocacy skills;
- > improving communication and cooperation among community members including students, teachers, government leaders, law professionals and citizens;
- > increasing appreciation for the principle of equal justice for all;
- > promoting an awareness of current legal issues;
- > promoting the exchange of ideas among students from throughout Illinois while providing a fun, rewarding and memorable experience; and
- > fostering teamwork, collaboration and cooperation among young people of diverse interests and abilities.

Though mock trials can be conducted in the classroom any time throughout the year, the Illinois State Bar Association sponsors an annual mock trial tournament for high school students. Teams of students are coached by attorney volunteers and teachers and must work together to prepare their presentations from case materials provided by members of the State Bar of Illinois's Law-related Education Committee. The winning school represents Illinois at the National Mock Trial Championship in May.

Illinois Exemplar

Mikva Challenge **(Mikva Challenge)**

Mikva Challenge involves young people in direct participation in the democratic process through its *Issues to Action* classroom-based project and *Elections in Action* extra-curricular program.

Issues to Action is a community organizing 101 curriculum that walks students through 6 steps: analyzing community, choosing an issue, conducting issue research, analyzing power, action planning and taking action. The program culminates with a Civic Action Fair where student leaders present their work to community leaders.

Elections in Action brings young people in direct contact with political candidates and campaigns. Students hold candidate forums and then select a candidate to volunteer for at least 20 hours during the campaign season. Teachers organize reflection activities weekly at the school and use students' campaign experiences to inform and excite their classroom instruction. In addition, *Elections in Action* mobilizes over 2,400 students each election to serve as election judges in Chicago. These young people have transformed Chicago elections with their energy and tech-savvy skills.



22%

More than 22 percent of students reported they never learned in class how government works.

Part A

Building Effective Citizens: Lessons from Illinois High Schools (continued)

5

Authentic Opportunities for Student Leadership and Decision-making

For most students, school is a major part of their world. While family 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, problems and issues, is related to school. In order to encourage young people to learn how to assume responsibility for their communities, providing leadership opportunities for their school community is a logical step.

Myriad 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 formal student government.

Indicators

Authentic student leadership and decision-making opportunities include:

- > Opportunities to discuss school policies, present their viewpoints and positions and be heard respectfully
- > Information about student rights and responsibilities in school
- > Opportunities to work with others to address school problems
- > Established processes for students to air their grievances, including issues of fairness
- > Meaningful decision-making roles for addressing facets of school life that are important to students
- > Authentic student roles in resolving tensions and issues in school
- > Established school mechanisms and processes by which to gauge and respond to student voices

Evidence

- > There is a strong, consistent relationship between those who participate in student government and adults who are politically and civically active.¹⁰
- > Students who believe their student government matters indicate they are more likely to vote as adults, even if they are not involved in student government themselves.¹²
- > Fourteen-year-olds who believe they can make a difference in their school—and those who believe their student council has an impact on school policies—are more knowledgeable about politics and interested in current events than other youth.¹¹

Illinois Exemplar

Illinois Youth Summit

(Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago)

The *Illinois Youth Summit* is a semester-long program of the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago (CRFC) devoted to giving students an informed voice in decisions about current public policy issues that affect them. The Summit provides an opportunity for students to explore and discuss these issues as participants in our democratic society. Approximately 1,000 students participate each spring in Northern Illinois.

Student representatives from participating high schools meet and select three issues that they believe are important to understand and address. Based on their decisions, CRFC creates an interactive student curriculum. A critical form of participation in the Summit is discussion, and the curriculum is designed to foster these vital conversations and to help students explore, discuss and take a position on the Summit issues. In their classes, students study and assess three focus issues; survey other students about the issues; write a position paper on one or more of the issues; and conduct a service project to teach one or more of these issues to other students.

Student delegates from each school meet with state and federal policymakers to share their thoughts and experiences on these issues at a culminating Summit. Delegates then report back to their classes.

The Illinois Youth Summit helps students:

- > Analyze the facts and discuss different viewpoints relating to the focus issues;
- > Practice discussing and deliberating current public policy issues;
- > Conduct an educational service project in their community based on a Summit issue;
- > Develop with other students a short position paper on one or more of the focus issues;
- > Become actively involved in the culminating Youth Summit, either as a delegate or in helping to prepare a class delegation; and
- > Share learning from the Summit with other students.

Youth Policy Councils**(Mikva Challenge)**

Mikva Challenge facilitates three issue-based *Youth Councils* for the City of Chicago on the issues of youth safety, teen health and education. The youth councils made up of Chicago high school students meet with key Chicago decision-makers such as the CEO of the Chicago Public Schools or the Health Commissioner on a quarterly basis and provide policy recommendations and feedback on current youth issues. The Youth Councils also work every summer to research and deliberate on their subjects and to create a set of policy recommendations that they advocate for during the school year. The Councils use the media to highlight their policy ideas and raise awareness (i.e., the Teen Health Council has a monthly radio show with the Health Commissioner on WVON).

In addition, this youth policymaking process is used by Mikva Challenge staff to facilitate six *Peace and Leadership Councils* in high-need high schools. These Peace and Leadership Councils create policy recommendations to improve their school community, and they work in collaboration with the school principal to address safety and school climate issues. Students in these councils also survey fellow students, create peace projects and engage in dialogue every couple of months with their principal regarding school matters.

Part A

Building Effective Citizens: Lessons from Illinois High Schools (continued)

6

Participation in Simulations of Democratic Structures and Processes

Several programs exist that allow students to take on roles that simulate democratic processes and procedures. They exist in formal curricular models such as *We the People* and *Equal Justice Under Law*, and through extracurricular activities such as Boys and Girls State, YMCA Youth and Government and Model United Nations programs. Often students must research current events and persuade their peers to vote with them. Other programs model city or national governments, court proceedings or the United Nations. In many of these simulations, students also provide leadership for the proceedings.

Indicators

- > Students practice democratic roles and processes in a safe way
- > Students learn important civic content and skills

Evidence

- > Research on *We the People* demonstrates the power of simulating government processes. Alumni are significantly more engaged in civic and political life than their peers.¹³
- > Research about CityWorks, a classroom-based simulation, shows that students who participated were more committed to participatory citizenship, more interested in service and had a greater sense of political efficacy than peers who did not participate in CityWorks.⁴
- > Research demonstrates clear relationships between adult civic and political engagement and participation in the YMCA Model Legislature.¹⁴


Illinois Exemplar

Legislative Semester

(Community High School, West Chicago)

Community High School requires a semester-long American Government course for seniors, representing the capstone Social Studies experience for students. All American Government sections collectively participate in the *Legislative Semester*, an in-school simulation that recreates the structure and politics of the legislative process in the House of Representatives. Approximately 250 seniors participate each semester.

Students begin the semester by debating current issues, identifying their place on the political spectrum, declaring a political party and electing party leadership. Elections are governed by the student-run Election and Rules



35%

More than 35 percent of students said they never followed the news as part of a class assignment.

Committees (each class section elects a representative for both committees). Students work in groups of four to identify, research and present an issue and then write it into a bill. All bills address student-generated issues, from school policies to international relations. Bills are assigned to committees and half-day Committee Hearings are held for all students, where students serve as Committee Chairs and Clerks. Throughout this process, the simulation is supplemented with activities on the Constitution, political spectrum, voting, legislative process, and judicial review.

Bills passed in committee by majority vote are presented at a two-day reenactment of a full House session, involving all students. Each issue group presents their bill before the Speaker opens the floor for debate and then calls a vote. Students acting as the Speaker, Floor Leaders and Whips run the sessions and each student votes on the bills. Upon passage of a bill, the student Chief Executive either signs it into law or vetoes it. Students may subsequently challenge the constitutionality of any passed bill and request judicial review. Government teachers act as a Supreme Court and render decisions consistent with current constitutional standards and decisions.

Throughout the Legislative Semester, students research, debate and write about the issues. They prepare legislation, speeches, talking points, critiques and rebuttals. Students use technology on a daily basis, posting messages and engaging in discussions with other students on blackboard.com and using the Library's online databases for research.

Illinois Exemplar

Equal Justice Under Law

(Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago)

Equal Justice Under Law is a fall-semester program conducted by the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago (CRFC) that helps Illinois high school teachers of law and government classes connect important constitutional questions to public policy. The program, conducted in parallel tracks downstate and in the Chicago area, provides students with an opportunity to make this connection by studying a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision and then applying that understanding to a related public policy question.

In their classes, students examine case facts, review the constitutional issue, consider the arguments they find persuasive and analyze a related law or public policy using CRFC materials. The program culminates in two parallel Equal Justice Under Law Student Conferences held in Springfield and in Chicago. At each conference, students deliberate the constitutional issue and discuss the related policy questions with peers, legal experts and policymakers. Following the conference, students offer their perspectives in op-ed pieces, letters to legislators or position papers.

Part B

Policy Recommendations For Illinois

1

Formal Instruction in American Government, History, Law and Democracy

The Problem. In 2006 the U.S. Department of Education reported that only 27 percent of high school seniors were proficient or advanced in Civics as measured in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Civics Assessment.¹⁵ While the 1999 International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Civic Education Study found that U.S. ninth-graders scored significantly higher than the international mean in civic knowledge and skills, it also found wider gaps in civic knowledge and skills among students in the United States than in comparable countries.¹⁶

Why This Issue Matters. Formal instruction in U.S. government, history and democracy increases civic knowledge. If students learn about democratic systems, history and current events in a well-structured curriculum, they are better positioned to retain that information into adulthood. A 2008 survey conducted by the National Conference on Citizenship found that 67 percent of Americans favored requiring high school students to pass a new test on civics or government.¹⁷

Recommendation 1. Provide Formal Instruction in American Government, History, Law and Democracy in Illinois High Schools by:

- > Requiring formal instruction in American government, law, and democracy along with formal instruction in U.S. History as integral to a comprehensive social studies program
- > Recommending civic knowledge instruction that is interesting, relevant, realistic and interactive, and that favors discussion and critical thinking rather than memorization
- > Encouraging local school boards to develop clear statements concerning the importance of learning about American government, history, law and democracy and its inclusion in the social studies program
- > Conducting a meaningful statewide survey of subject-matter that supports civic learning at the secondary level to provide critical information for policymaking
- > Including civic education experts and advocates on the committee revising the Illinois Learning Standards for Social Studies

2

Discussion of Current and Controversial Issues

The Problem. The proportion of young adults (ages 18 to 25) who claim they follow public affairs most of the time has fallen over the last four decades; by 2000, just five percent said that they regularly followed public affairs. Similarly, the percentage of incoming college freshmen who say that they discuss politics declined from over 30 percent in 1968-1970 to 16 percent in the late 1990s and 2000.¹ Research shows that discussions of controversial or political topics can have a positive impact on student interest in politics and social issues. Yet in many schools, teachers fear criticism or even litigation if they address such topics.²²

Why This Issue Matters. Like adults, high school students often retain information better if it is connected to real world events. Encouraging discussion of current events allows students to learn about current affairs and wrestle with the complexities of making decisions about important issues. Effective discussion of current and controversial issues necessarily includes the teaching of respect for democratic processes, specifically a tolerance for differing opinions.

Recommendation 2. Promote Structured Engagement with Current and Controversial Issues in Illinois High Schools by:

- > Endorsing the discussion of controversial issues in the classroom
- > Encouraging local school boards and schools to formulate clear guidelines for discussing controversial issues and to develop transparent procedures for addressing concerns expressed by all stakeholders
- > Providing professional development to help teachers better handle controversial issue discussions

Part B

Policy Recommendations For Illinois (continued)

3

Service Learning Linked to the Formal Curriculum and Classroom Instruction

The Problem. Confidence that government officials listen to “people like me” has eroded over the past half-century, especially among young people who used to be more confident in the government than their elders. Yet Americans ages 15 to 25 are more likely than any other age group to report participation in some form of service; nearly 40 percent say that they have volunteered at some point in their lives. A 2008 MacArthur Foundation study identified this “profound generational shift” from understanding citizenship as a matter of duty and obligation among older Americans and an “actualizing citizenship” where individuals are more responsible for defining their own identities.¹⁸ Connecting this desire to serve with both formal and informal civic structures is critical to maintaining a vibrant democracy and a responsible citizenry.

Why This Issue Matters. Service learning offers structured experiences that link service and classroom learning objectives and allow students to venture into the community. Students perform work that is explicitly connected to their academic work through writing, discussions and reflection. Service learning helps reinforce classroom learning and allows students to make connections between what is being learned and their community. Such experiences foster academic achievement as well as social, emotional and civic development.

Recommendation 3. Provide Illinois High School Students Service Learning Opportunities by:

- > Revising teaching standards to include service learning as part of the certification requirement
- > Endorsing the inclusion of service learning as an effective teaching tool
- > Encouraging project-based service learning experiences over a specific number of student service hours
- > Encouraging both group-based and individual student service learning experiences where students have a legitimate voice in the project
- > Promoting service experiences connected to a formal classroom curriculum
- > Encouraging the allocation of sufficient time for individual reflection on service experiences

4

Extracurricular Activities that Encourage Greater Involvement and Connection to School and Community

The Problem. Research shows that school-based extracurricular programs can be fruitful opportunities for children to gain civic skills and attitudes and to participate in activities with a civic element such as student government, school newspapers and volunteering. Yet such programs are often the first targets of budget cutbacks. The decades since the 1960s have seen steep declines in student extracurricular participation.¹

Why This Issue Matters. Extracurricular activities—after-school activities such as clubs, student-interest groups, newspaper, yearbook, debate or school governance—allow young people the chance to work toward a common interest. These activities provide opportunities for students to develop personal and social responsibility. Such activities are usually run by schools, but can also be provided through non-profit and community organizations.

Recommendation 4. Offer Extracurricular Activities For Illinois High School Students That Encourage Greater Involvement and Connection to Their Schools and Communities by:

- > Encouraging schools to conduct a baseline assessment of their current extracurricular activities —using the Illinois Civic Audit or a similar instrument—to determine how these activities advance larger civic outcomes
- > Endorsing the creation of extracurricular civics or civic engagement clubs at high schools to give students an opportunity to take a look at local issues
- > Encouraging schools to conduct an annual audit of resources and activities in their local communities

Part B

Policy Recommendations For Illinois (continued)

5

Authentic Opportunities for Student Voice

The Problem. Efforts to promote democratic practices in school governance are difficult in schools where students have no voice in the administration; school policies are presented without student input; disciplinary decisions are made in arbitrary ways; or publications are subject to prior review. Key factors—including “zero tolerance” policies; the standardization of school structure and discipline plans; state and union requirements governing the allocation of student and teacher time; and fear of litigation—complicate efforts by schools to promote democratic skills or attitudes to young people.¹⁹

Why This Issue Matters. Civic education works best when schools are structured as communities that value student participation and grant students appropriate rights. Students who believe they can make a difference in the way their own school is run—and those who believe their student council has an impact on school policies—tend to be more knowledgeable about politics and interested in current events than other youth, even at schools where most students are not college-bound. Students also have good ideas about how to improve their high schools—the community that matters most to them at this age—as places for civic life and learning. Creating opportunities to participate can and should extend well beyond the few who are typically involved in formal student government.

Recommendation 5. Encourage Illinois Student Participation in High School Governance by:

- > Endorsing the creation of a student seat on local school boards or local school councils
- > Endorsing the creation of student advisory councils, representing all elements of the student body and with access to the principal and/or school governance structures
- > Encouraging administrators to support the creation by students of a High School Bill of Rights and Responsibilities subject to annual student amendment and administrative review

6

Participation in Simulations of Democratic Structures and Processes

The Problem. High school students cannot effectively understand or appreciate American political institutions without learning how these institutions work. Although most students cannot vote in an actual election or serve on a real jury, they can learn and practice the necessary arts of research, deliberation and advocacy through simulations of these structures and processes.¹⁹

Why This Issue Matters. Numerous programs exist that allow high school students to take on roles that simulate democratic roles and processes in a safe way. As part of these programs, students must research current events and issues, present their positions and persuade their peers to vote with them. As they work with other students and with policymakers, students learn important civic content, structures and skills in an authentic setting that is often directly related to real-life issues. Practice in democratic processes also promotes internalization of democratic norms, such as respect for majority decision-making and minority rights.

Recommendation 6. Encourage Illinois High School Students to Participate in Simulations of Democratic Processes and Procedures by:

- > Endorsing the incorporation of simulation and/or real-world application of democratic processes as part of curriculum
- > Integrating democratic simulations in the classroom with real-life experiences
- > Encouraging teacher and student involvement with independent programs and organizations, such as those offered by members of the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition, that offer models and opportunities to practice democratic structures and processes
- > Supporting the invitation and involvement of elected and appointed public officials in school classrooms and activities

Part C:
Funding
Recommendations
For Illinois

1. Professional Development Programs Led by School Districts and Non-Profit Civic Organizations

Illinois currently has outstanding models and programs for the promotion of the civic mission of its high schools.

We recommend funding to promote opportunities offered by school districts and non-profit organizations in order to introduce and promote promising civic practices in high schools across the state.

2. Baseline Statewide Audit and Annual Assessment of Civic Progress among Illinois High Schools

Illinois currently has no baseline for assessing the overall level of civic instruction and activities in its high schools.

We recommend funding to create an inaugural statewide audit of civic instruction and activities to be conducted with all Illinois high schools. We further recommend funding to permit an annual statewide assessment of civic progress among Illinois high schools. We envision both the initial audit and the annual assessment as diagnostic, non-evaluative instruments for the promotion of the civic mission of Illinois high schools.

3. Parallel Efforts to Promote the Civic Mission of Elementary and Middle Schools in Illinois

The Illinois Civic Mission Coalition and the signatories of the *Civic Blueprint* have focused solely on Illinois high schools.

We recommend funding to promote a parallel effort for the promotion of the civic mission of elementary and middle schools in Illinois.

Illinois Democracy Schools

Illinois Democracy Schools are accredited secondary schools that provide students with authentic experiences in the rights, responsibilities, and tensions inherent in living in a constitutional democracy. These schools consciously promote civic engagement by all students, have 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.

Illinois Democracy Schools collaborate with parents, students and their communities in developing a civic mission and in providing curricular and extra-curricular civic learning experiences for all students. They engage their students in a continual process of improving and increasing civic learning. Evidence of these characteristics can be found in students' classrooms and formal learning opportunities, in their interactions with school governance structures, and in the opportunities for civic growth provided through service learning and extra-curricular activities.

Since 2006, the following have been recognized as Illinois Democracy Schools:

Bartlett High School

701 West Schick Road
Bartlett, IL 60103
www.u-46.org/bhs
Contact: Larry Pahl
LarryPahl@u-46.org
630.372.4700 ext 4093

Glenbard North High School

990 Kuhn Road
Carol Stream, IL 60188
www.glenbardnorthhs.org
Contact: Lori Keough
lori_keough@glenbard.org
630.681.3147

Community High School

326 Joliet Street
West Chicago, IL 60185
www.district94.dupage.k12.il.us
Contact: Lisa Willuweit
lwilluweit@d94.org
630.876.6450

Lake Park High School

500 West Bryn Mawr Avenue
Roselle, IL 60172
www.lphs.org
Contact: Keith Matune
kmatune@lphs.org
630.295.5368

Geneva High School

416 McKinley Avenue
Geneva, IL 60134-1104
www.geneva304.org
Contact: Susan Khalaieff
skhalaieff@geneva304.org
630.463.3940

For more information or to apply for certification as an Illinois Democracy School, visit www.FreedomMuseum.US/DemocracySchools.

**Illinois Exemplar
Programs:
Contact Information**

Chicago Public Schools

(Service Learning Initiative)
125 South Clark Street, Floor 12
Chicago, IL 60603-4042
www.cps.k12.il.us
Contact: Jon Schmidt
jjschmidt@cps.k12.il.us
773.553.3425

Choices Program

(Choices for the 21st Century
Education Program; Capitol Forum)
Illinois Humanities Council
17 North State Street, Suite 1400
Chicago, IL 60602-3296
www.prairie.org
Contact: Kristina Valaitis
kav@prairie.org
312.422.5580

Constitutional Rights

Foundation Chicago

(Deliberating in a Democracy;
Illinois Youth Summit; Equal Justice
Under Law)
407 South Dearborn, Suite 1700
Chicago, IL 60605-1119
www.crfc.org
Contact: Carolyn Pereira
pereira@crfc.org
312.663.9057

Facing History and Ourselves

(Facing History and Ourselves)
200 East Randolph Street,
Suite 2100
Chicago, IL 60601-6432
www.facinghistory.org
Contact: Bonnie Oberman
bonnie_oberman@facing.org
312.726.4500

Illinois State Bar Association

(Illinois High School Mock
Trial Program)
424 South Second Street
Illinois Bar Center
Springfield, IL 62701
www.isba.org
Contact: Donna Schechter
dschecht@isba.org
800.252.8908

Illinois We the People Program

(We the People: The Citizen and
The Constitution)
660 Stanford Circle
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007
www.ilciviced.org
Contact: Patton Feichter
pfeichter@comcast.net
847.228.7718

Maine West High School

(SEEDS Project)
1755 South Wolf Road
Des Plaines, IL 60018
www.maine207west.k12.il.us
Contact: Gwynne Ryan
ggryan75@sbcglobal.net
847.803.5856

McCormick Freedom Museum

(Timely Topics in Freedom)
435 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60611
www.FreedomMuseum.US
Contact: Shawn Healy
info@FreedomMuseum.US
312.222.4860

Mikva Challenge

(Mikva Challenge, Youth Councils)
25 East Washington Street,
Suite 1806
Chicago, IL 60602
www.mikvachallenge.org
Contact: Brian Brady
mikvachallenge@aol.org
312.863.6346

York High School

(Civic Action Program)
355 West St. Charles Road
Elmhurst, IL 60126
www.elmhurst205.org
Contact: Nicole Anderson
nanderson@elmhurst205.org
630.617.2400

**West Chicago Community
High School**

(Integrated Civic Curriculum;
Community Leadership Program;
Legislative Semester)
326 Joliet Street
West Chicago, IL 60185
www.district94.dupage.k12.il.us
Contact: Lisa Willuweit
lwilluweit@d94.org
630.876.6450

**Resources from
the Illinois Civic
Mission Coalition**

Resources from the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition
Civic Audit for Illinois High Schools
www.crfc.org/pdf/civicaudit07.pdf

American Bar Association Division for Public Education
www.abanet.org/publiced

Chicago Public Schools
www.cps.edu

Choices Program/Illinois Humanities Council
www.prairie.org/programs

Consortium on Chicago School Research
<http://ccsr.uchicago.edu>

Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago
www.crfc.org

Close-Up Foundation
www.closeup.org

Facing History & Ourselves
www.facinghistory.org

Illinois Association of School Boards
www.iasb.com

Illinois General Assembly
www.ilga.gov

Illinois Resource Center
www.thecenterweb.org/irc

Illinois State Bar Association
www.isba.org

Illinois State Board of Education
www.isbe.state.il.us

Illinois We the People
www.ilciviced.org

League of Women Voters of Illinois
www.lwwil.org

McCormick Freedom Museum
www.FreedomMuseum.US

Mikva Challenge
www.mikvachallenge.org

University of Illinois at Springfield
www.uis.edu

**Additional
Resources**

California White Paper: *Promising Approaches for
Strengthening Civic Education*
www.cms-ca.org/CMS%20white%20paper%20final.pdf

Center for Civic Education
www.civiced.org

Civic Mission of Schools Report
www.civicmissionofschools.org/site/campaign/cms_report.html

Constitutional Rights Foundation (Los Angeles)
www.crf-usa.org

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Credits

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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, 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 Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago serves as convener for the Coalition.

The *Educating for Democracy: Creating a Civic Blueprint for Illinois* conference was a program of the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition. Major support for the conference was provided by the McCormick Foundation, a non-profit organization committed to strengthening our free, democratic society by investing in children, communities and country. Additional support was provided by the Center for Civic Education. The views expressed as part of this program do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the McCormick Foundation or the other sponsors.

Notes

McCormick Foundation Conference Series

For more than 16 years, the McCormick Foundation Conference Series has provided a forum for the exploration and analysis of complex issues, situations and events affecting our communities and country. Through balanced and challenging discussions, the Conference Series brings together people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives to reach new levels of understanding and develop long-term solutions.

The McCormick Foundation is deeply committed to strengthening our free, democratic society by investing in children, communities and country. Our founder, Robert R. McCormick, believed that an informed and educated public was the backbone of a strong democracy. Through the Conference Series, we strive to develop and enable more active and engaged citizens and improve our nations civic health.

We welcome submission from academic institutions, policy experts, and public, nonprofit and private sector professionals from all fields.

For details on the 2010 call for proposal deadline or to print a copy of this report visit McCormickFoundation.org.

About the McCormick Freedom Museum

The McCormick Freedom Museum inspires generations to understand, value and protect freedom. Through extensive outreach initiatives citizens gain a greater understanding of the struggle for freedom in the United States and the role the First Amendment plays in society. The McCormick Freedom Museum is part of the McCormick Foundation. To learn more about the Freedom Museum's new outreach program visit FreedomMuseum.US.

A focus on children, communities and country unites the McCormick Foundation and its many parts and keeps us true to our mission of advancing the ideals of a free and democratic society. To learn more, please visit McCormickFoundation.org.

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For more information on how to become a Democracy School, visit www.FreedomMuseum.US/DemocracySchools.