Generation Citizen
FY15 Impact Progress Report

OVERVIEW

Impact evaluation is a critical component of Generation Citizen's work- we want to constantly improve our programming, and wan to test whether we are achieving our theory of change. Namely, how good of a job are we doing teaching young people the knowledge and skills they need to be active citizens?

This progress report is meant to review data and analysis gathered by Generation Citizen during the 2014-15 school year. We are interested in presenting our results here not as a blanket endorsement or rejection of our effectiveness, but rather as an honest reflection on our progress to date. Our goal is to showcase our strengths, review our challenges and areas for improvement, and discuss the route forward for the purpose of strengthening our own work and that of the field and other practitioners at large. We plan to publish these progress reports annually, and we promise to continue to be open and transparent about our results.

This report will elaborate on the following conclusions from our 2014-15 programming:

- Students are learning action civics knowledge in our program, especially the pillars of our innovative Advocacy Hourglass approach – understanding the concepts of root cause and decision makers within the context of making change.

- Teachers are highly supportive of the program and optimistic about its effect on their students' skill development.

- Our current evaluation mechanisms do not accurately assess the range of students' skill development, so we must engage in other evaluation projects to conduct this analysis.

- More attention must be paid to improving students' civic motivation. Suggestions for ensuring this area improves include ensuring better framing for students the purpose and structure of the program, strengthening our final reflection lesson, better training Democracy Coaches and supporting teachers in facilitating difficult discussions about failure and setbacks, and including more examples of young civic role models effectively and persistently accomplishing their goals within our curriculum.

- Given our limited staff capacity, our evaluation efficacy depends on clarifying and strengthening systems for data collection and analysis, utilizing the expertise of researchers within the field to support immediate and long-term analysis, and finding support for continued expansion of our evaluation work.

2014-15 PROGRAM EVALUATION METRICS, METHODS, AND PARTICIPANTS

Ultimately, GC wants to affect long-term political participation, ensuring that young people are active citizens now, and in the future. In the short-term, we have identified several specific civic indicators which researchers agree best predict a student's likelihood of future civic engagement:

- **CIVIC KNOWLEDGE**: knowledge of the governmental process and core concepts related to advocacy and democracy, such as ways citizens can influence the political process;
- **CIVIC SKILLS**: the abilities necessary to participate as active and responsible citizens, including the abilities to think critically, problem-solve, and work collaboratively;
- **CIVIC DISPOSITION**: desire to actively participate in the political process and take action on community issues.

In order to assess our students' development on each of these key metrics, we utilize several evaluation tools:
- Pre and post-test surveys of students and teachers
- A quasi-experimental analysis to understand summative program outcomes
- Democracy Coach surveys and classroom observations to receive formative feedback and tailor our staff support as programs are underway

Student Surveys

The student outcomes referenced below, and those utilized in the quasi-experimental analysis, are gathered from pre- and post-surveys administered in a random sampling of 50% of GC classes. Last year, we worked with approximately 7,600 students. From those sampled, we collected matching pre-/post-surveys from 732 students from 18 schools.

Of these respondents:
- 35% of respondents were from Greater Boston, 30% from New York City, 18% from the Bay area, and 17% from Rhode Island
- 46% were male, 45% were female (the remainder chose not to respond)
- 35% respondents reported they were Hispanic/Latino, 20% African American/Black, 16% Asian/Pacific Islander, 14% Caucasian, and 10% Other (5% chose not to respond).
- 13% were 12-13 years old, 39% were 14-15 years old, 11% were 16-17, and 35% were 18-20 (2% did not respond)

Teacher Surveys

All GC teachers are asked to complete mid- and end-of-semester online surveys reporting on their overall experiences with GC as well as the percentage of students they believe developed in each civic indicator. The results shared in this report were collected from fall and spring end-of-semester surveys.

Teachers from 111 classes responded to the survey:
- 38% were from Greater Boston,
- 33% New York,
- 17% Rhode Island, and
- 12% from the Bay Area

Quasi-Experimental Analysis

Also included in this progress report is a summary of results from Director of Evaluation Alison Cohen's quasi-experimental evaluation of GC's student surveys from the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years. This type of evaluation is the most rigorous analysis of our program to date. It is worth noting that such an approach is rare among organizations of our size and age. We are proud that we are already starting to build such an evaluation approach into our work.

Within the study, researchers compared students who recently completed participation in Generation Citizen (in the fall semester of each year) with those students who were about to begin participation (in the following spring semester). This model adjusts for variables across survey characteristics (academic year of administration and metropolitan area), school level characteristics (public or private school, free or reduced price lunch, and high school or middle school), classroom level characteristics (number of Democracy Coaches, subject of class), and individual level characteristics (gender, race/ethnicity, number of absences).

DEMONSTRATION OF IMPACT IN BRIEF
Survey Analysis

- Students demonstrated statistically significant growth in action civics knowledge, including their understanding of root causes and ability to identify decision-makers in given scenarios
- At the end of Generation Citizen, 90% of students believed they could make a difference in their community and 91% believed that challenging injustices is important
- Teachers assessed that over 70% of their students improved their collaboration skills
- 33% of teachers believe that students' participation in class is higher on GC days
- 75% of students and 98% of teachers were satisfied by their experience with the program
- Approximately 80% of teachers indicate that GC's support of school priorities is "Excellent" or "Good"
- Student surveys demonstrate that students are developing the most in civic knowledge, followed by civic motivation and then civic skills; teachers perceive students' greatest advances in the civic skills category

A full summary of our student and teacher surveys can be found in the appendix of this document. The table is separated by outcomes according to our three indicators – civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions. Student survey civic knowledge and skills questions are scored as right or wrong. Student survey civic motivation questions are scored on a Likert scale of 1 (definitely no) to 5 (definitely yes) or 1 (Not at all important) to 4 (very important). Our aim is to have students report a positive likelihood of being civically engaged in the future. Therefore, positive outcomes are based on the percent of students who responded a 3 or above on questions. The table offers the percentage of students who responded correctly or positively on pre- and post-surveys, the percent change of right or positive answers from pre- to post-survey, as well as the percentage of students who improved their scores from pre- to post-survey.

Also included in this report are the results from surveys completed by teachers at the end of the fall and spring semesters. In this survey, teachers were asked to answer questions about their general experience with GC and to predict the percentage of their students who they believed experienced an increase in each indicator. The results represent the average increases from the teachers' responses.

Qualitative Data
At the beginning of the 2014-15 school year, we identified two priorities for our support of action projects – we wanted classes to pursue more political-specific goals (targeting governmental and other systems of power to achieve systemic solutions) and to interact more with community stakeholders and decision-makers (beyond the classroom). We witnessed a significant shift in the quality of action projects as a result, and the stories below help to exemplify this development.

- **Greater Boston -** Students at the Dearborne STEM Academy were concerned about teen pregnancy, and narrowed down the specific issue of their concern that teen mothers very frequently dropped out of school. Exploring current state and city policies that affected this issue, they identified a Bill in the Massachusetts Senate, Bill S208, that would provide additional supports in MA high schools for students at risk of dropping out, with particular supports for teen mothers.

They talked to the bill's sponsor, State Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz, and discovered that the bill had gone through the Education Committee successfully and was supported by the Senate floor, but was now stuck in the Senate Ways and Means Committee. The students focused their energies on the Chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, State Senator Karen Spilka. Students contacted her office with letters and phone calls, and rallied influencers in their school (their principal and guidance counselor), to similarly contact State Senator Spilka.

- **New York City -** Seniors from the Academy of Urban Planning (AUP) in Bushwick voiced frustration with the trash lining their neighborhood's streets. Students saw this not only as a littering issue, but as a detriment to a healthy community identity. Through research, they learned about a "sanitation scorecard" which the city uses to assess and allocate resources to ensure neighborhood cleanliness.

They also learned that this Department of Sanitation tool hadn't been updated since its creation in 1973. Its methodologies were so outdated that, according to raw data from the last month's report, every neighborhood seemed to have between 80-90% acceptably clean streets, despite there being variation of 16-90% ratings twenty years ago and despite students knowing otherwise from personal experience. Students wrote letters to their community board, met with their Councilmember and Chairman of the Council's Committee on Sanitation, Antonio Reynoso, and discussed the issue with Deputy Borough President Diana Reyna at Civics Day. Councilmember Reynoso pledged to bring the issue to a policy analyst and then present it to the Sanitation Commissioner. Later that year, his staff sent AUP video footage of the Councilmember quoting their research at a budget hearing before the Commissioner and calling for another hearing to pursue the issue.

- **Rhode Island -** Seniors at E-Cubed Academy were concerned with student voice and leadership in decisions made throughout the Providence Public School district. They wanted to create opportunities for students to serve as decision makers through the School Board or through a Principal's Council. After consulting with student leadership organizations in Providence and working in partnership with Principal Regina Winkfield, they decided to tailor their approach to their school as a pilot for the rest of the district. With the endorsement from their Principal, the students designed a comprehensive student leadership integration plan for E-Cubed. This not only comprised an inclusive leadership nomination and selection process but also expanded the Principal's Council idea to include student positions on the School Improvement Team.

- **San Francisco Bay Area -** Concerned about water conservation in the midst of the state's drought, students at Abraham Lincoln High School in San Francisco were shocked to discover that their campus was the second-highest water consumer among all schools in the district. Students surveyed peers and read articles to develop a proposal for new water-saving systems they wanted paid for by the school district and Public Utilities Commission, including new automatic sink fixtures (to prevent students from accidentally leaving the water on in bathrooms), a water refill station in the cafeteria, and an outdoor water catchment system to use in the school garden.

One student group made phone calls to and held meetings with the school district's Director of Sustainability and the PUC to have them assess their school's existing water infrastructure, and were successful in getting their bathroom sinks replaced by the PUC. A second group took their District Supervisor on a tour of their school, and asked her to support district funding for improved water systems at Lincoln and other schools in their neighborhood. At the end of the semester, students testified at a Board of Education meeting to share their project's successes and advocate for these systems to be implemented in all district schools.

DATA DISCUSSION
Civic Knowledge Impact
Student and teacher surveys reveal that GC students are developing and improving their civic knowledge, particularly in their ability to define root causes of problems (a 21 percent increase from student pre- to post-surveys) and in their knowledge of ways to effect change (observed by teachers in 75% of students).

It remains difficult for us to assess students' learning about particular civic structures and players as our classes across the country choose their own focus issues and project scales – not all interact with the same civic processes, and particular details change from municipality to municipality. This reality makes it challenging for us to both build this localized content into our curriculum in a standardized way and for us to assess the accuracy of students' answers on surveys (the answer to a question asking the name of their Councilmember might be different for students coming from different neighborhoods).

To address this challenge, we have begun to train Democracy Coaches and teachers on local civic structures in order for them to incorporate this knowledge into classrooms as is relevant. It is important for us then to solicit the feedback of teachers in helping us assess students' development of civic knowledge. In 2014-15, teachers reported that nearly 70% of their students increased their knowledge of local government structures and decision-makers as a result of participation in GC.

Civic Skills Impact
Across disciplines, it is notoriously difficult to assess students' skills development. This requires students not merely possessing information but applying it, which is not conducive to large-scale comparative analyses like a pre-/post-survey.

We attempt to do so by asking students to apply their understanding of root causes, decision makers, and strategic action planning to given scenarios in order to identify the most effective course of action for a particular focus issue, as they are doing for their own focus issue in the classroom. Student surveys suggest that this is students' weakest area of growth, with 34% of students increasing in civic skills during the semester. Teachers, however, perceive civic skills to be students' strongest area of growth, judging that 72% of students increase their skills throughout the GC term. This discrepancy suggests that learning is taking place in areas we are not able to evaluate in our standard survey structure.

Deeper analysis of this indicator may require other methods of assessment. In 2014, Rebecca Casciano of Glassfrog Solutions released a report of her analysis of GC students' civic skill development, gathered from in-depth written assessments of students participating in GC versus

control groups of non-participating students from the same four schools. Students shared a similar baseline of skills at the beginning of the semester, and GC students' scores increased more than their peers though not to a statistically significant degree. More such small-scale evaluation is necessary to further assess students' skill development.

Civic Dispositions Impact

We believe that young people need to be taught that politics can be an effective way of driving change on community issues, and that young people, regardless of their background, are capable of effecting that change. Many of our students are internalizing this lesson. At our fall 2014 Civics Day, GC Boston student De'Anthony Robinson recounted his process: "I never understood that my problems and the problems of friends really mattered to the rest of society. I just assumed that nobody cared. Working with Generation Citizen has helped me recognize that I not only could, but should be an active and engaged citizen."

Teachers in our 2014-15 program reported that nearly 70% of their students grew in their belief in their ability to affect political change or in their sense of responsibility to do so.

Part of that learning process also entails students confronting the reality of the difficulty of effecting change. Students' surveys demonstrate overall growth in civic motivation (for 44% of students), but not to the same extent as that suggested by teachers. Researchers suggest that student surveys are often skewed by the (desirable) development of students' self-awareness alongside other learning. Within our results, it is likely that students' initial disposition scores offer an inflated baseline of their sense of efficacy, interest, and motivation, and that students' post-semester responses contain a heightened awareness of the complexity of the issues they are confronting.

We want students to grapple with that complexity, especially while they are in school and surrounded by teachers, Democracy Coaches, and other civic mentors with whom they can process and reflect. In order to understand the ramifications of this growing awareness, we must continue to develop our longitudinal evaluation systems so that we can assess how this growth may or may not translate into future actions.

Academic and Socio-emotional Impact

Our main focus is to improve students' civic development, and our curricula and surveys are designed to support and assess that growth. We are interested in also understand any academic and socio-emotional spill-over effects which might be derived from our program.

School partners offer anecdotal feedback that our program strongly supports their priorities (77% of teachers agree) and their implementation of Common Core standards, through GC's incorporation group collaboration, critical thinking, and application of skills to real-world issues. Teachers report that students participate more in GC than in non-GC days. New York GC and Community Change Fellow alumnus Maurice DoCarmo reflected that Generation Citizen offered him his first and only experience working on a group project at his Brooklyn high school.

We are currently participating in a evaluation project in New York as part of the Student Success Network to better understand our program's impact on students' socio-emotional development, encompassing traits such as a grit, sense of self-efficacy, and problem-solving.

Quasi-Experimental Analysis

This rigorous research confirms that GC is having a statistically significant effect on students' action civics knowledge, setting a strong baseline from which to further drive students' development of skills and motivation.

The evaluation also offers the following observations to learn from:

- GC's effect appears to be more pronounced among high school than middle school students. This suggests that younger students could benefit from a more differentiated curriculum, which accounts for variance in students' knowledge and skill level at entry to the program.
- The number of Democracy Coaches in a classroom (one versus two) does not seem to strongly influence students' outcomes. It might be the case, however, that program staff are intentionally placing stronger DCs alone or in classrooms with fewer students.

We will continue to engage in rigorous quasi-experimental analysis to better assess our efficacy as we strengthen our curricula, training structures, and surveys in the years ahead.

Community Change Fellowship M&E

We are seeing promising results from the first years of our Community Change Fellowship (CCF) program. Last summer, we offered our CCF program in our Greater Boston and New York sites, supporting 21 high school alumni Fellows in paid internships in offices of 13 elected officials and advocacy organizations. Whereas our general in-school program acknowledges that all young people have a right to learn to be engaged and effective citizens, our CCF program is designed to support the continued development of young civic leaders.

From our Summer 2014 programming:

- At the end of the summer, Fellows reflected that the program most importantly taught them how to speak in public with confidence, how to assert themselves, and how to ask questions, as well as offered them a community of like-minded and similarly motivated peers and mentors which they had not had before
- 100% of Fellows would recommend the CCF program to a peer
- 100% of Fellows' supervisors report satisfaction with their Fellow(s) and experience with the program, which offered overall "better communication" and more organization than other intern programs they had worked with

There were marked differences last summer in the structure of our Boston and New York City programs, including cohort size and the number and content of staff-led professional development sessions. We will be standardizing these systems and materials before next summer's programming so that we can better analyze challenges and successes across sites.

LOOKING AHEAD

Responding to formative feedback collected throughout the 2014-15 school year, we have already made several informed changes this year to our evaluation approach. Last summer, we revised our student surveys to better align with our updated curriculum, shortened surveys to minimize the effect of survey fatigue on participants and reinforce the accuracy of student responses, and de-identified surveys to eliminate the need for parental consent forms, thereby allowing us to increase

our sample size in order to collect more data across classes and sites. We look forward to sharing outcomes from these efforts at the end of the 2015-16 school year.

We will be conducting a comprehensive curricular review this spring, with input from veteran GC teachers, administrators, and Democracy Coaches. Within this review, we must make a clear decision on the incorporation of civic knowledge in the curriculum, as well as keep an eye towards opportunities for differentiation between middle and high school materials, which we hope to have in future versions of the curriculum and in supplementary materials in the meantime.

In addition to improving our programming, we aim to improve our aligned assessment. This means continuing to our analysis of students' civic skill development, capturing more information about students' civic behaviors, improving our systems for longitudinal evaluation, and extending our quasi-experimental analysis to offer feedback on this year's programming.

We have a strong program and evaluation mechanisms in place, and we are committed to continuing to learn, reflect and strengthen our practice and our assessment. In the words of a GC teacher, "this is education that changes lives." We are confident that with continued evaluation and improvement, it will change our democracy as well.

CIVIC SKILLS

According to Student Surveys: 34% of Students Increased in Civic Skills

Indicator	% Correct, Pre	% Correct, Post	% Change	% Students Who Improved
Ability to identify the root cause of an issue in a scenario*	60%	60%	(0)	19%
Ability to identify decision maker of an issue in a scenario*	41%	53%	12	23%
Ability to identify the best action plan of an issue in a scenario*	67%	65%	-2	17%

According to Teacher Surveys: 72% of Students Increased in Civic Skills

Indicator	% Increased
Ability to identify a problem's root cause as a result of GC	73%
Ability to find an appropriate solution that could address the root cause as a result of GC.	73%
Collaboration skills, as a result of GC	71%

CIVIC KNOWLEDGE

According to Student Surveys: 46% of Students Increased in Civic Knowledge

Indicator	Natl Avg	% Correct, Pre	% Correct, Post	% Change	% Students Who Improved
Ability to define a root cause*		50%	71%	[21]	31%
Ability to define a decision maker*		73%	77%	4	19%
Ability to identify all of the given rights of citizens and noncitizens*	45%	57%	61%	[5]	16%
Ability to identify the most democratic way to make a decision	43%	71%	69%	-2	18%
Ability to name the branches of the government*	24%	64%	68%	[4]	15%
Ability to identify who have the power to make local laws*	65%	73%	74%	1	12%
Ability to understand that there are several ways to influence the political process*	56%	23%	26%	3	16%
Ability to identify how being politically engaged is important for democracy*		53%	55%	[2]	17%

According to Teacher Surveys: 69% of Students Increased in Civic Knowledge

Indicator	% Increased
Knowledge of local government structures of a result of GC	67%
Knowledge local decision-makers as of a result of GC	69%
Knowledge ways they can affect change of a result of GC	75%
Knowledge democratic principles of a result of GC	67%

According to Student Surveys: **44% of Students Increased in Civic Motivation**

Indicator	Natl Avg	% Positive, Pre	% Positive, Post	% Change	% Students Who Improved
Likelihood of voting in every election		86%	86%	0	8%
Likelihood contacting someone in government who represents their community		64%	66%	2	15%
Likelihood of being a leader in their community		70%	73%	3	12%
Likelihood of running for office		26%	28%	(2)	12%
Belief that they can make a difference in their community		88%	90%	2	8%
Belief that if they speak up, their voice will be heard		81%	84%	3	12%
Belief that by working with others they can make things better		92%	91%	-1	6%
Belief that challenging injustices in their community is important	39%	90%	91%	1	8%
Recognize importance of being politically involved	79%	66%	71%	5	16%
Recognize importance of helping a political candidate run for office	46%	51%	57%	6	19%
Recognize importance of attending a political rally	45%	44%	50%	6	18%

According to Teacher Surveys: **68% of Students Increased in Civic Motivation**

Indicator	% Increased
Belief in their ability to affect political change as a result of GC	69%
Sense of responsibility to challenge injustices in their community as a result of GC	70%
Sense of responsibility to be politically engaged as a result of GC	67%

Impact on Academic Outcomes, according to teachers

Student attendance is HIGHER on GC days	14%
Student participation is HIGHER on GC days	33%
GC's support of school priorities is excellent or good	77%

% Satisfied with Overall GC Experience

Students	75% Definitely Yes or Yes
DCs	85% Excellent or Very Good
Teacher	75% Excellent or Very Good

() denotes a # which is greater than or equal to 5 percentage points lower than FY14 scores
[] denotes a # which is greater than or equal to 5 percentage points higher than FY14 scores