FY16 Impact Progress Report

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Executive Summary

In 1822, James Madison wrote "A popular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or, perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: And a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."[1] At Generation Citizen (GC), we share James Madison's vision of an informed and knowledgeable citizenry. We aim to arm young people with the necessary tools to become and remain learned, active, and engaged individuals, now, and in the future.

This report reviews data gathered and interpreted by GC during the 2015-2016 academic year (Fall 2015 - Summer 2016). During this period, we served over 6,500 students across 80 middle- and high-schools in four regions of the country – California (Bay Area), Massachusetts, New York City, and Rhode Island.

This analysis shares results from areas that demonstrate promising results, as well as reviewing our challenges and areas for improvement. We reflect on our progress to date primarily for the purpose of improving our program (including but not limited to: curricular and training design, staff requirements, and model refinement) as well as to inform others of the actions we have taken and learnings we have observed at this phase of GC's trajectory.

Below is a summary of our findings, including the impact of our program to date and the efficacy of our current evaluation efforts.

Program Impact Highlights

Surveys of students and teachers demonstrated positive, incremental student growth on nearly every measured indicator of civic *knowledge*, *skills* and *dispositions*. Specifically:

- Teachers reported approximately three-quarters (72%) of their students increased their civic knowledge and student surveys revealed that by the end of the semester, more than half (52%) of students demonstrated proficiency in civic knowledge. Students' growth in this category was most pronounced in their improved understanding of the structure and functions of the branches of government on the local level, a strong corroboration of GC's emphasis on local political engagement.
- According to teacher's perception, civic skill development was observed among 70% of the students. Students' surveys measured growth on four indicators – working in collaboration to solve a problem, leading people of care about a problem, ability to make a public speech, creating a plan to address an issue. They demonstrated greatest gains (21% change) in their confidence to make a speech in public.
- Teachers estimated that 68% of students grew more civically motivated during the program, and students' surveys revealed major increases in the percentage of students inclined to contact an elected official (54% growth), to write an article, op-ed, or letter to the editor (52% growth), or to run for office (31% growth) in the future.
- For the first time, we measured changes in students' experience engaging in civic activities on our student surveys, and we observed a 152% increase from the beginning to end of the program in the

[1]James Madison, letter to W.T. Barry, 4 Aug. 1822. http://presspubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch18s35.html

percentage of students who had ever contacted or met with a public official, and a 74% increase in the percentage of students who had written an article, op-ed, or letter to the editor.
- Teachers' estimations of student growth remained relatively constant to their estimations in the 2014-2015 school year, as did their satisfaction with the program (ranked "Very Good" or "Excellent" by 75% of teachers), while their valuation of GC's "Very Good" or "Excellent" support of their schools' priorities increased from 77% to 89% this academic year from the previous.
- DCs' satisfaction with the program remained fairly stable as well, growing from 85% of DCs reporting a "Very Good" or "Excellent" experience to 88% this year.

Evaluation Process Challenges

- Student survey data was highly representative of our student population at large, but the process of administering and tracking surveys before analysis must be improved for the purpose of program efficiency and to gather sufficient data to support continuous learning.
- Student surveys are an imperfect measure of students' skill and dispositions development (as these sections are dependent upon students' self-awareness and their expressed confidence is often negatively impacted by their growth in knowledge of difficult or complex processes), especially, and we must balance our findings on these indicators with other evaluation mechanisms.

We have learned much from the process and outcomes of our FY16 program analysis and are eager to build on these lessons to guide our ongoing monitoring and evaluation efforts. Immediately, we are creating an improved survey administration protocol and tracking process, to be rolled out in Spring 2017 to better help our team manage data collection. We will also develop new training materials to better support Democracy Coaches (DCs) and teachers in connecting their students to community members and guest speakers, a clear value add of the program, as demonstrated through students' surveys. It is equally evident that we must continue to explore other mechanisms for assessing students' civic skill development, and we will be working with external consultants on new research projects to that end. Additionally, we are looking forward to next year comparing the results presented in this report with the results from our FY17 programming, when we introduced significant updates to our action civics curriculum.

Purpose of the Report

In the near-term we have identified specific program outcomes that researchers agree best predict students' 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:* 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 utilized pre- and post-semester surveys of students, mid- and end-of-semester surveys of DCs and teachers, and classroom observations. This report will discuss our findings from these methods of information gathering and analysis. Both analyses, and this report, allow us to enunciate and build on positive signs in for our students, direct attention to areas for improvement in our programming, support the development of a culture of evaluation and data-driven decision-making within the organization, and enlist the support of strategic partners to help support us in the above pursuits.

Background

GC was founded on an idealistic, but deeply grounded, belief in the power of the democratic spirit, in which individuals come together to make a collective difference in their communities. Its founders recognized the extent to which this democratic spirit had been lost in our current political environment, especially among young people. In 2008, eight Brown University students began teaching action civics in four Providence school classrooms, helping secondary school students realize the power of their voices to make a difference in their communities.

Since its inception in 2010, GC has grown to serve four regions (the Bay Area in California, New York City, Rhode Island and Massachusetts), in addition to current expansion into central Texas and Oklahoma City. In the 2015-2016 school year, GC empowered over 6,500 young people to use their voices to make change in their communities.

Action Civics Programming Models

In accordance with our mission of ensuring that every young person in this county receives an effective civics education, GC offers a suite of in-classroom programming. In our "core" action civics program, GC pairs trained Democracy Coaches (DCs) with secondary school teachers to lead an in-school action civics course. The course is taught twice weekly over one semester, typically in a social studies class, for a total of 18-22 classes. This is not an elective class or after-school program - it is a core part of the school day. A key component to GC is that we work with every student, not only those already interested in the democratic process. In our "teacher-led" program, GC staff support teachers in facilitating our action civics curriculum without the assistance of college volunteers. In FY16, teacher-led classrooms comprised of about a quarter (22%) of our programs. Both models follow the same curriculum and structure.

The class begins with an introduction to action civics and examples of youth-led change, and unfolds with students debating what they would improve if they were in charge of their school, their city, or their state. Through consensus-building, as a class, the students then choose an issue which affects them, and that they think they can take effective action on (e.g., teen unemployment, public transit). The students analyze the underlying root causes of the selected issue and collaborate with DCs and teachers to develop and execute an action plan, which involves building their argument, persuading a decision maker, and influencing other members of the community. DCs and teachers ensure that every student recognizes both their ability to make a difference in their communities and their responsibility to be an effective and engaged citizen.

Every classroom over the course of the semester is observed by a GC staff member, who offers immediate guidance and advice to DCs and teachers on classroom relationships, lesson preparation, effective instruction, student engagement, and action planning. DCs and teachers are also surveyed at the midpoint of the semester so that staff may direct additional support and attention as needed.

As a culminating activity, students participate in "Civics Day," presenting their action plans and preliminary outcomes to public officials, fellow GC classes, and other community members. Judges for this "civics fair" have included governors, commissioners of education, and members of Congress. At the end of the term, all students, DCs, and teachers complete program post-surveys, which are then analyzed by GC staff to support programmatic improvements leading into the next program cycle.

In addition to evaluating metrics mentioned above (students' civics knowledge, skills, and disposition), we assess impact by the strength of our students' action projects, like those below, illustrating how they use existing democratic structures to drive meaningful change.

Qualitative Assessment of Applied Classroom Learning: Action Projects from Around the Country

As reported in last year's FY15 Impact Progress Report, in the 2014-2015 academic year we identified two priorities, *intent* and *purpose*, for our students' learning in constructing civically effective projects: (1) to pursue more politically specific goals by targeting governmental and other systems of power to achieve systemic solutions ***(intent)*** and (2) to interact more with community stakeholders and decision-makers beyond the classrooms ***(purpose)***. We witnessed a significant shift in the quality of projects as a result, and the stories below demonstrate this inspiring development in FY16.

Bay Area

Eighth grade students at *Herbert Hoover Middle School* felt frustrated that youth lacked exposure to practical life skills before entering high school – like applying for jobs, street safety, financial literacy, and cooking. To change that, students lobbied for a "Real-Life Education" course to be offered at their own school. The class researched topics, and with the help of tech professionals at GC's Civic Tech Challenge event, built a website where they distributed a peer survey and collected student testimony on their topic. Students presented a formal proposal to their school's administration. This academic year, a teacher at the school is piloting the class.

Greater Boston

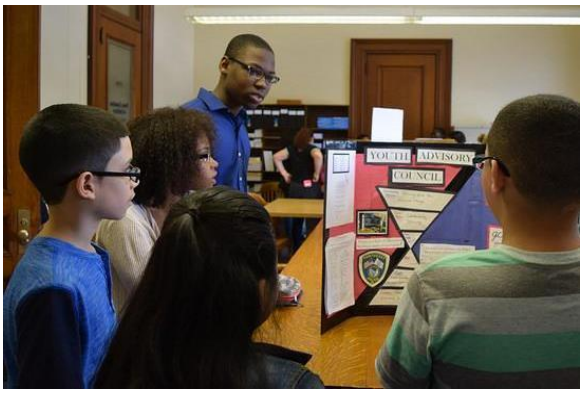
Lowell High School (LHS) students wanted to do something about the statewide opioid crisis, negatively impacting the city of Lowell, the state, and the region. After conducting research on the topic and participating in guest speaker conversations - including representatives from the health department of the city, a recovering addict who was a graduate of LHS, and the drug court coordinator - the class decided to model their work after the ANGEL program in Gloucester, MA. Headed up by Gloucester Police Chief Leonard Campanello, the program allows addicts to turn themselves into the police, and instead of getting arrested they are helped in finding recovery services.

The key moments in the students' campaign came when a city councilor came in to speak about his work on the issue, and during a subsequent face-to-face meeting with Lowell Police Chief William Taylor. Although the students did not ultimately accomplish their goal of changing the police department's strategy to align with the ANGEL program, they communicated their message and underscored the urgency of the crisis to young people and the community at large. Lowell recently received a grant to combat the opioid crisis and hopefully will have ways to push forward innovative approaches like this one.

New York City

In light of many reported national gun-related incidents, high school students at *The Young Women's Leadership School of Astoria* focused on the Safe Homes Act. The Safe Homes Act prohibits those who have a record of domestic violence from owning firearms. With guidance from their DCs, students invited Assemblywoman Nily Rozic, sponsor of the bill, as their principal target and identified Assemblyman Will Colton (Majority Whip), New Yorkers against Gun Violence (an advocacy organization), and Carl Heastie

(Speaker of the NY State Assembly who sets the Assembly's legislative agenda) as targets. As the bill was being reviewed in the Codes Committee, students advocated for their topic to be brought to the floor calendar in the spring. Students are hopeful it will be brought up for a vote in spring, 2017.



Rhode Island

Middle school students at *Samuel Slater Junior High School* were concerned about the divide between youth and police officers in their community. While researching the issue, students learned that cities such as Fresno, Anaheim, and Ottawa have created Youth Advisory Councils to facilitate more dialogue between students and officers regarding issues relevant to youth. The class decided to advocate for the Pawtucket Police Department to create a similar advisory council.

To assess the viability of such a program, the students administered a survey to 384 students and found that 62% of their peers expressed interest in participating in an advisory council. The class presented their idea to their principal and met with their School Resource Officer and a captain from the Pawtucket Police Department's Community Policing Unit. A member of the School Committee also enthusiastically supported their idea. At the conclusion of the semester, the Mayor's Office reported to the students that they are thinking about implementing something similar and thanked them for working on the issue.

Non-Classroom Initiatives

GC's most notable non-classroom programs include the Community Change Fellowship program, and various initiatives to build demand for action civics, including the Vote16 initiative intended to lower the voting age in local elections to the age of 16.

Community Change Fellowship

The Community Change Fellowship (CCF) is an internship opportunity for high-performing GC middle and high school alumni to continue their community engagement after the semester in a professional political environment. Fellows hold a stipend-paid summer internship in political, advocacy, and governmental offices and receive GC staff-led professional development throughout the summer. CCF helps students cultivate their leadership in and advance their commitment to public advocacy and strengthen their dedication to sustained civic engagement.

In the summer of 2016, GC supported 23 teenage program alumni in fellowships in advocacy and political offices across Boston and New York City. Fellows completed a rigorous selection process, attended program orientation, worked 20-30 hours a week in their six-week placements, and attended regular professional development workshops led by GC staff. Through the support of John Hancock, GC's three Boston Fellows were able to participate in its MLK Summer Scholars program and receive additional support from the MLK cohort. GC NYC partnered with an established nonprofit, Futures and Options, to lead career development workshops for its 20 Fellows. Generous support from the Pinkerton Foundation has allowed ten NYC Fellows to receive compensation to continue to work in public sphere internships this fall.

Below are some of the *highlight*s from the NYC program specifically (the size of the cohort allowing us to more easily draw statistical evidence):

- 100% of the fellows would recommend the program to a peer.
- Fellows' confidence in their abilities increased on every skill measured, most notably in their confidence in reaching out to an elected official, participating in a class or group discussion, leading a meeting, and getting along with people in a small group.
- By the end of the program, 100% of Fellows could name the Mayor and their City Councilmember, increased from 82% and 63%, respectively, at the beginning of the summer.
- There was a 256% increase in Fellows' who responded "Definitely Yes" to the statement: "If I am concerned about a community issue, I know where to go to find more information" (from 21% of Fellows at the beginning of the summer to 75% at the end, with all Fellows reporting "Definitely" or "Probably Yes" on the post-summer survey).
- 88% of Fellows agreed that they believed they can make a difference, knew how to make their voices heard, and believed that elected officials care about what they think at the end of the summer.
- We witnessed a 27% increase in the number of Fellows would had friends they could talk to about important current events and community issues (growing from 75% to 93% of Fellows) and a 70% increase in the number interested in pursuing a career in advocacy or politics at the summer's end.

Anecdotally, many Fellows shared testimonials along the lines of 13 year-old Jessica's thoughts: "This experience has given me so much confidence to speak up and advocate for what I believe in."

The most notable areas of opportunity to improve the fellowship program include:

- Addressing the observations that from the beginning to end of the program, Fellows' confidence improved the least on measures of speaking in public and asking a teacher or supervisor for help, and there was a decrease in the percentage of Fellows who expressed interest in attending local community meetings.

- Improving the evaluation of Fellows' experience – for example, Fellows did not demonstrate growth on any multiple choice questions related to professionalism or workplace etiquette, but observations and check-ins with supervisors suggest that this was a significant area of improvement for Fellows over the course of the summer.
- Developing application and publicity materials and processes in a timeline that supports expanded outreach to GC students from the fall semester – efforts to address this challenge are already underway.
- Securing resources to enlarge the Boston CCF cohort, thereby supporting the allocation of more staff time to planning and management of the program. Through a generous grant from the W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation, this has recently happened, and we look forward to expanding the program's capacity and impact in Summer 2017.

Demand-Building

In order to achieve our goal of providing action civics education to all students in America, we have to scale in ways above and beyond bringing its program to new communities. To that end, we have begun to engage in advocacy and policy work, building the demand for action civics, so that educators, philanthropists, and policymakers alike recognize the importance of educating young people to be active citizens. In FY16, we saw dramatic growth in our demand-building capabilities. Over the course of the year, we engaged in many activities, including the organization of several national conferences for leaders from across the democracy education field, and we will continue organizing relevant assemblies and engaging in thought leadership to move the field forward.

Vote16

The Vote16 USA campaign aims to support youth-led efforts to lower the voting age to 16 in cities around the country, help start new local campaigns, and elevate the idea on a national level. This work contributes to GC's goal to prepare young people to be active and engaged citizens, and can help drive demand for action civics education. Since officially launching the campaign in December 2015, we have become a central authority on this cause and a hub for those working on the issue, publishing white papers, forming a leadership board, and launching campaigns.

In November 2016, we played a central role in the campaign for the nation's first ballot measure to lower the voting in local elections – Prop F in San Francisco earned more than 172,000 votes to finish with 48% of the vote after polling at 36% just seven months prior, proving that Vote16 is a viable policy idea that voters are ready to seriously consider. We will aim to build on our momentum by continuing to support and help start city-level campaigns nationwide and working strategically to spread our message in ways that lead to maximum impact.

Evaluation Goals, Methodology, and Findings

Examining the breadth and depth of our program allows us to strive to provide excellent programing. We want to know if our interventions are working and if so why - an ultimate test on how we are achieving our Theory of Change along a chain.[2]

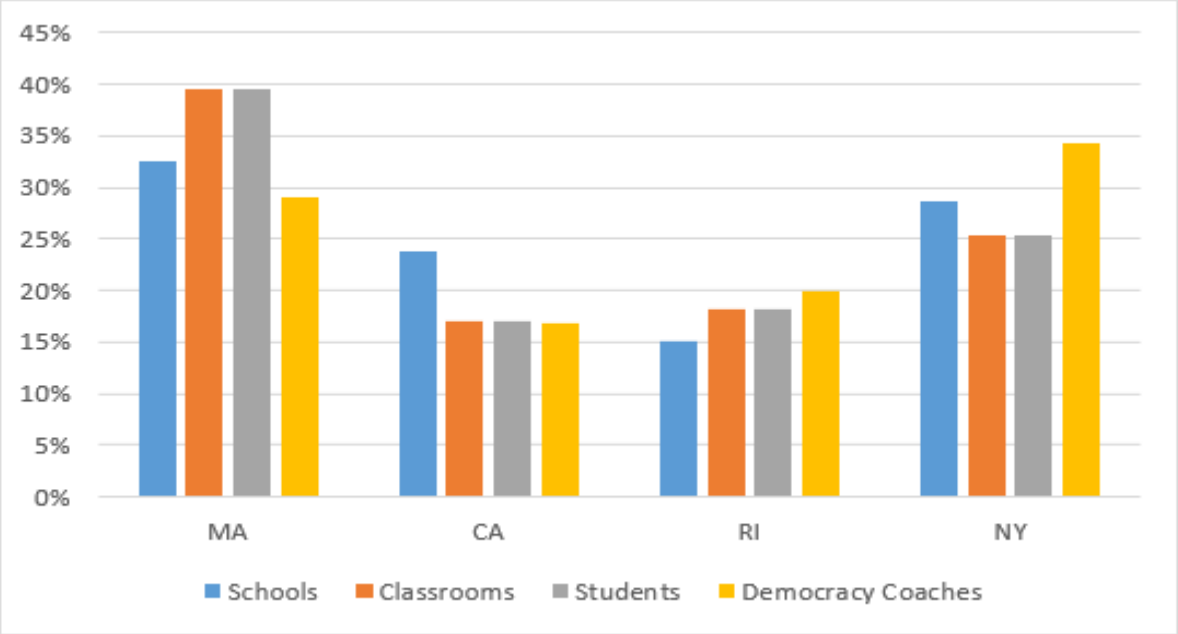
- We review the efficacy of our ***inputs*** and ***activities*** - the quality of our curriculum, the training of our DCs, recruitment and support of partners: middle- and high- schools and universities. As we reported last year, we conducted a comprehensive curriculum revision in Spring 2016 with input from veteran GC teachers, administrators and DCs. (Student progress presented in this report

[2] Please refer to Appendix A for our logic model and Appendix B for the articulated Theory of Change.

comes before the facilitation of this improved curriculum, which was rolled out in Fall 2016.) Equally important, GC staff visit each classroom twice a semester and provide immediate feedback to teachers and DCs. Strengthening our relationships with school and university partners is an important part of our vision of success – deepening our ties results in better alignment of our priorities and more successful implementation of our program and simultaneously bolsters our positive impact on school and district culture, an exciting area of future program evaluation.

- We measure our ***outputs*** - the DCs and teachers we train, and the students we teach. Tracking helps us consider the resources and staff capacity allocated to program support in each site. In FY16, we served 265 classrooms across 80 schools.[3] The chart below shows a detailed breakdown of our work across the four regions and visualizes how our outputs are currently distributed throughout the organization. Important to note, the two states with the greatest number of schools, Massachusetts and New York, had different proportionate representation of DC-led (core) classrooms. In Massachusetts, the proportion of DC- and teacher–led classrooms was evenly distributed, while in New York, DCs led most of the classes.

Chart A: Details of the Proportion of Schools, Classrooms, Students and DCs across Four Regions



From the students surveyed, male and female students were represented fairly equally, and about a third of them (29%) were Hispanic/Latino followed by a quarter (25%) African American. Two-thirds (66%) of the DCs were female and more than half (56%) were Caucasian, with more than a third (36%) of the DCs were freshman when they participated in the program, expected to graduate from college in 2019.

- We analyze our ***outcomes*** – students' civic knowledge, skills and disposition – by implementing pre- and post- student surveys and mid- and end-of-semester surveys for DCs and teachers. We believe these are crucial tools in assessing our intended outcomes. However, we, much like other nonprofit organizations, face the question of whether all of our outputs are producing the anticipated outcomes. For instance, as the years have passed and we have learned more about our students'

[3] There was an even distribution of middle and high schools.

experiences and development, we have modified a range of programmatic variables – from curriculum revisions and updated DC trainings to improved survey questionnaires. And each year, we amass better information on how and why our program is affecting change across our predefined metrics and where we stand to improve.

- Our ***impact*** is intended to spark civic engagement in our youth so that as young adults they are politically engaged. Drawing a clear linkage from our outcomes to impact has been challenging for us, in part, because of the dearth of empirical research and evidence which link youth civic programming to meaningful political participation in adulthood. As we have noted in previous GC publications[4], we know schools can affect civic engagement through educational programming (Quintelier, 2010; Torney-Purta, 2002), and quality civic education can improve civic achievement and engagement, self-agency, and academic achievement (Levine, 2007). As such, we are exploring various opportunities for research and better understanding of this landscape.

Program Evaluation Design and Metrics

Student Surveys

Since inception, our program has been dynamic and rapidly growing. As a result of our ongoing learning and incremental program improvements, we have faced challenges integrating our curriculum with our evaluation systems. In Summer 2015, much work was done to address this and to strengthen our measurement and evaluation capacity, primarily by designing a new student survey better aligned with our curricular goals and civic outcomes and by updating its administration process.

Table A: Highlights Changes to the Student Surveys, FY15 to FY16

FY15 Surveys	FY16 Surveys
Length: 5 pages	Length: 4 pages
Included multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank questions (requiring longer completion and processing time)	Includes only multiple choice questions, with qualitative questions to be compiled for small-scale follow-up studies
Required collection of parental consent, student assent, student information, and media consent forms	Requires student assent forms, which are built into the survey, and double-sided student information and media consent forms
Distributed by GC staff, administered by teachers, and collected by GC staff	Administered directly by GC staff in a smaller number of classrooms
	More tightly aligned with GC curriculum and Theory of Change

Teacher and DC Surveys

The focus of our 2015-2016 evaluation improvements was on updating the student survey, adding revisions to teachers' and DCs' surveys to our FY17 priority list. In their FY16 form, these surveys were long depositories of questions, focused on the following areas:

[4] "Action Civics Education and Civic Outcomes for Urban Youth: A Quasi-Experimental Evaluation of the Impact of Generation Citizen: Executive Summary", Alison Cohen, November 2015.

DC Surveys	Teacher Surveys
• Classroom Experience (incl. relationship with teacher, etc.) • Action Project Description • Chapter Experience • GC and Staff Experience • Civics Day • General Experience (incl. time commitment, personal areas of development, etc.)	• Classroom Experience (incl. training, support, etc.) • Class Action Plans • Experience with DCs • Program Impact on Students • Civics Day • Overall Experience (incl. staff and curricular feedback, etc.)

Data Collection

In the table below, we summarize ways in which we collect data and highlight the advantages and challenges of each method.

Table B: Summary of Data Collection Methods

Method	Type of Analysis	Overall Purpose	Advantage	Challenges
Classroom Observation	Qualitative and Quantitative	To gather information on class progress in real time and to provide immediate feedback to DCs and teachers.	Offer immediate feedback on student, teacher, and DC needs and the option of direct and relevant support.	Opportunity for stronger alignment of observation rubric, training materials, and curricular pedagogies; laborious and time-intensive recordkeeping of range of data collected, and to date lack of analysis of quantitative data and student outcomes.
Student Pre- and-Post-Semester Surveys	Quantitative	To gather self-assessment reports from student's experiences.	Random sampling of classes presents an unbiased view of student development.	Labor intensive; requires cooperation of students and understanding of survey questions; imperfect tool to gauge skill and disposition development as students learn more and discover their inflated senses of understanding at the beginning of the semester.
Teacher Mid- and End-of-Semester Surveys	Qualitative and Quantitative	To gather information on teachers' opinions and reflections on the program and to provide immediate feedback for program improvement.	Complement potential gaps in students' own self-awareness of learning; aggregate valuable feedback on program efficacy from veteran educators and valued partners.	Response rates vary across programs; quick semester timeline requires diligence of staff and cooperation of partners.

DC Mid- and End-of-Semester Surveys	Qualitative and Quantitative	To gather information on DCs' opinions and reflections on the program and to provide immediate feedback for program improvement.	Invite feedback on multiple aspects of programming (training, curriculum, support); share real-time classroom progress and opportunities for program improvement.	Response rates vary across programs; quick semester timeline requires diligence of staff and cooperation of partners.

We will share our findings from student, teacher, and DC surveys in this report.

Student Surveys

GC conducted a clustered probability sample, where classrooms were clustered into small groups by region and then randomly selected to be surveyed. Once selection was made, pre- and post-program surveys were distributed and administered by GC staff or classroom teachers. Due to inconsistent technology access across classrooms, the majority of surveys are administered in hard copy, sent by local program staff to the New York offices, and then their data populated manually by hand and later analyzed by GC staff, with the exception of five classrooms in the spring semester where surveys were administered electronically.

We surveyed more than 55% of the year's partner schools and 28% of all classrooms. (see Appendix C for detailed breakdown). We collected pre- and post- survey responses from more than 1,757 students, about a quarter of all GC students (26%) in the 2015-2016 school year. However, the number of matched pre- and post-surveys (surveys completed by the same student) was fewer, numbering approximately 300 respondents for each question (considering that some respondents left some questions blank). Our analysis calculated the results of each question within the set of matching surveys and within the full set of responses. We did not find substantive differences between the groups; therefore, in search for precision and better reliability, we will discuss our findings from matched responses in this report.

Teacher and DC Surveys

All participating teachers and DCs are surveyed at the mid- and end-of-semester. In the 2015-2016 school year, these surveys were all administered online, with collection efforts led by local program staff. We collected 119 surveys from teachers and 186 surveys from DCs. Eighty-six percent of the teachers who responded had DC-led classrooms. The response rate was weak among DCs (53% responded), in part we believe, because of DC survey fatigue, an area which we have hope to have improved upon in FY17.

Data Analysis and Findings

We taught approximately 6,625 students over the course of the year and observed gains across all three metrics of students' civics knowledge, skills and disposition development. (In order to identify areas of more or less student development, we calculated percentage change from the beginning and to the end of the semester per surveyed question.)

Students Gained Civic Knowledge

Teachers reported approximately three-quarters (72%) of their students increased their civic knowledge and student surveys revealed that by the end of the semester, more than half of the students demonstrated proficiency (52%) in the category. Below are specific highlights of our findings from student surveys:

- The percentage of students who correctly identified the branch of local government responsible for managing departments increased by 44%, the most notable area of growth among all of the indicators in this section.

- There was a 22% increase in the number of students who correctly identified the most strategic decision maker for an action plan.
- There was a 35% increase in the number of students who identified the branch of local government associated with the Mayor's office.
- We observed growth in all civic knowledge indicators except for the ability to identify a systemic-level root cause when constructing a strategic plan, which demonstrated a 6% decrease.

Though civic knowledge represents the easiest indicator to assess on student surveys (as it is less dependent on students' self-awareness than other sections), it is also the most challenging for us as a program. We have historically vacillated on how much to emphasize the teaching and subsequent evaluation of civic knowledge, especially because our program is local politics-concentric.

In the survey revisions made in the summer of 2015, we amended the civic knowledge section to focus in part on students' understanding of the functions and structures of local government. In FY16, we had not yet updated our curriculum to ensure that students were actively engaged in an exploration of local branches of government themselves. We are encouraged by these preliminary outcomes and excited to compare these results with next year's, with these lessons now built into the curriculum facilitated for students.

Students Developed Civic Skills

According to teacher's perception, civic skill development was observed among 70% of the students. Students' surveys assessed their confidence demonstrating four essential civic skills– working in collaboration to solve a problem, leading people to care about a problem, making a public speech, and creating a plan to address an issue – and revealed growth on all indicators.

Below are more specific highlights of our findings from student self-assessments:

- There was a 21% increase in the number of students believing they could speak in public (most demonstrated growth in the category).
- The percentage of students who believed they could work together with others grew by 4% (least demonstrated area of growth).
- There was a 15% increase in the number of students who believed they could get others to care about a problem.

As we have noted in previous reports, it is difficult to measure students' skills development, as students often begin the program with an inflated sense of confidence, a score which drops as they develop both skill and an acknowledgement of the difficulty of their tasks at hand, and because on surveys students are not demonstrating skills but rather speaking to their own assessment of said skills. The discrepancy between results from students' surveys and teachers' perceptions of this indicator suggests that growth is occurring in areas in which our survey is not correctly capturing the outcome. Corroborating teacher inputs helps us calibrate our findings.

We did note students' lack of recognition of changes in their collaboration skills. Though pre-survey scores on this indicator offered the highest baseline of all skill indicators (76% positive self-assessment as opposed to 34-60% on other skills), the GC program puts significant emphasis on group work, and teachers and students consistently report this as one of the defining features of the experience. The lack of improvement in student surveys on collaboration underscores the need for us to explore other methods to assess students' skill development.

Students Cultivated Civic Dispositions (Motivation)

We had two subsections in the student survey to measure civic dispositions. In the first section, students were asked to agree or disagree with a set of civic-minded statements such as "citizens can effect local change by voting". In this section 81% of the students responded in agreement at the end of the semester. In the second section, students were asked the likelihood of participating in various civically-minded actions in the future, such as the likelihood that students will / not "run for public office." We saw a 13% average increase in the likelihood of participation across the various activities. Teachers observed growth in the civic dispositions of 68% of their students.

More specifically:

- By the end of the program, 75% of GC students believed they had the power to make a difference in the community (a 23% increase from the pre-surveys).
- At the end of the program, 92% of students believed that citizens can effect local change by voting.
- There was a 54% increase in the number of students who reported that it was likely that they would contact or meet with a public official in the future.
- There was a 52% increase in the number of students who reported that it was likely that they would write an article, op-ed, or letter to the editor in the future.
- There was a 31% increase in the number of students who reported it likely they run for public office (totaling 21% of students on the post-survey).[5]
- There was an only 5% increase in students' likelihood to follow news and 3% in students' likelihood of volunteering (although 11% increase in volunteering for a campaign).

When we revised this section of the survey, we edited this section to include students' affinity toward behaviors of general civic engagement (volunteering, following the news) as well as more political engagement (contacting public officials, running for office). It is interesting to note that students' positivity grew most markedly on measures of political engagement. For example, although students didn't show major gains (3% increase) for future general volunteering activities, we noted at 11% increase in their interest for volunteering in a political campaign. This is consistent with the emphasis of GC's curriculum.

There was no change in students' attitude towards college attendance from the beginning to end of the program. At both instances, 95% of our students believed they would likely go to college. In the meantime, only 78% of students entered the program believing it likely that they would vote in the future (and 80% at the end of the semester).[6] This differential speaks to us of the extent of the college- and career-readiness focus pervading the educational climate for the past many years. Students are growing up well-groomed in the belief that college is important and something to aspire to. Fewer, however, are cultivated to place the same importance on voting or civic participation.

Similar to civic skills, civic dispositions are difficult barometers to measure, as students become more self-aware, they better understand the obstacles they may face in affecting change. For that reason, we are thinking about modifying this section of the survey to better gauge change on this indicator.

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[5] In 2015, Jennifer Lawless and Richard Fox found that only 19% of the young Americans they surveyed reported that one of their future goals was to become a political leader.

[6] According to a report by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), 50% of eligible young people aged 18-29 voted in the 2016 general election.

Students Engaged in Civic Action

In FY16, we added a new section to the student surveys, Civic Action. Its relationship with the logic model is yet unarticulated, but we think it is important to begin collecting information about our students' previous experiences engaging in various civic behaviors as well as opportunities they might engage in during the course of the program.

What we observed:[7]

- Before GC, 83% of students have never attended a community meeting.
- 78% of students have never contacted or met a public official.
- 75% of students have never written a letter, article or op-ed to the editor of a newspaper, magazine, or blog.
- 53% of students had never worked with someone or some group to solve a problem in their community.
- By the end of the program, more than half (56%) of the students had contact or met a public official (a 152% increase).
- More than a third of students (39%) had attended a community meeting and nearly half (44%) had written an article, op-ed, or letter to the editor.

We are excited about the insight gleaned from this section and eager to capitalize on the opportunity to expose students to and support them in new civic experiences. At the same time, from students' responses we suspect that the language of this section was confusing (requiring students to identify activities they had never done, done but not within the past 12 months, and done recently). For example, at the end of the semester, only 78% of students reported that they had ever worked on a group project. Since participating in GC is participating in a group project, by its very nature, we were surprised by this result and are eager to offer further clarity to survey-takers in the future. We will edit these questions on future surveys to minimize possible confusion.

Program Feedback

This year's surveys were also modified to collect more information from students about their GC experiences, and we received both positive feedback from our students and information on opportunities to continue to improve the student experience. More than two-thirds (69%) of students would recommend GC to their friends. And when students were asked to compare their GC class with other classes and rate their experience on the scale of "more", "about the same" or "less," on average about 40% of the students rated their experience as more interesting, collaborative, and relevant to their lives than other classes.

Teachers remain highly supportive of GC programming and are enthusiastic about its effect on their students' development. Seventy-five percent of teachers noted their experience was "Very Good" or "Excellent." More than a third of teachers (36%) reported their students' participation was higher on GC days than regular class days. Further, 89% of them thought GC's support of school priorities was either "Excellent" or "Very Good," a mild increase from the 85% who reported similarly on 2014-2015 surveys.

As we expected, GC also had a positive impact on the DCs in our program. Eighty-eight percent of them noted that GC positively affected their development across multiple indicators. Specifically on two measures, 95% noted the experience allowed them to work collaboratively with diverse individuals and improved their communication skills, and 88% reported a "Very Good" or "Excellent" experience overall.

[7] Observations from all respondents.

Limitations of the Evaluation

As with any other impact evaluation research we note areas in which our finding are limited. Specifically:

- Due to limitations of capacity the nature of our study was substantive, though yet without testing of statistical significance. This is a common occurrence within nonprofit evaluation efforts, the primary purpose of which, ours included, is programmatic learning and improvement rather than academic research. In the future, we may introduce means testing in our evaluation.
- We would have liked to stratify our results by site and program model, but our relatively small matching data set limited our ability to do so. This is a future evaluation goal.
- Student survey data was highly representative of our student population at large, but the process of administering and tracking surveys before analysis must be improved for the purpose of program efficiency and to support continuous learning. The challenges with administering paper surveys range from not knowing if the students understand the question to illegible handwriting to human error in processing the data as currently multiple steps are required.
- Certain questions on the student survey will be updated based on what we have learned from this evaluation.

Recommendations

FY16 Takeaways

We took away many lessons to focus on in the year to come. Below are specific highlights.

Outcome and Impact

According to teachers' perceptions and students' surveys, GC students are demonstrating improvement across all indicators. We saw the most growth in students' understanding of local government and confidence in and eagerness to engage with elected officials and to make their voices heard through hosting meetings, writing articles, or running for office. These increases are commendable and exactly aligned with our objectives as a program, and we are eager to continue on this positive trajectory.

It is also clear from surveys of students' experience that part of GC's added value is young peoples' exposure to new civic actions, including interacting with politicians and community leaders and learning about and perhaps attending community meetings. This is an important framing for our classrooms facilitators to know – breaking down students' fear towards or unfamiliarity with the activities of civic engagement is just as important for teachers and DCs to consider as is their supervision of small group work or the research process.

As we reflect on the positive points of the data, it is also interesting to note a significant area for growth – though students are making gains across the spectrum of survey questions, there are few indicators reveal near universal correctness, positivity, or confidence at the end of the semester (as gauged by >85% correctness, positivity, or confidence on post-surveys). Students' knowledge of the voting age breaks this barrier, as does the percentage who have ever followed current events, those who believe that working with a group rather than alone is more effective, that local government has an impact on their lives, and that voting can effect local change, and those that intend to go to college.

But the vast majority of indicators leave us ample room for growth. Moving forward, our team will be prioritizing the indicators most aligned to the outcomes articulated in our Theory of Change, and we should plan specific steps to ensure that positive outcomes are being enjoyed more deeply and consistently by all of our student participants.

Process and Methods

Removing the need to collect parental consent forms did not ease all difficulties associated with the data collection process, and we must strengthen our systematization of survey administration, data tracking, and data analysis.

DCs and teachers offer valuable though different information at the middle and end of the semester, and there is significant opportunity to increase response rates for all of our partners' surveys so that we can better draw conclusions from this information. We suspect the short duration of the program supported participants' sense of survey fatigue this year, as we delivered end-of-semester surveys soon after concluding our collection of mid-semester responses.

Reviewing our students' surveys, we are thinking deeply about appropriate indicators of growth and whether our results offer true measurements of our intended outcomes. On nearly all indicators, our students demonstrate incremental but not monumental growth. This is understandable, given the tight timeline of the program, but contrasts with many students' anecdotal reports of the program's impact on their lives. We must engage in continued study to deduce the impact that we are having on students by the efficacy of our inputs and activities and to confirm that we are asking the right questions in student surveys; we are in the midst of discussing using student focus groups to jumpstart this exploration.

Looking Ahead

As we have embarked on our FY17 program and M&E efforts, we have already made improvements to address obstacles outlined above, including:

- Revising our curriculum to enhance its alignment with our program outcomes, which we hypothesize will offer interesting results for us to consider on students' surveys from the current 2016-2017 school year.
- Rewriting our DC mid-semester surveys to be shorter and more focused on process feedback, to minimize survey fatigue and thereby increase end-of-semester survey responsiveness and to support a quick turnaround of data analysis for staff and chapters build into their reflection and plans for immediate DC and classroom support.
- Reorganizing our mid-semester check-in process with teachers in an aligned effort to increase return rates on our end-of-semester surveys, and in doing though building the mid-semester check-in into an opportunity for strengthening relationships with teachers and engaging directly to offer, as with DCs, immediate support to our partners.
- Developing a new survey administration and tracking protocol (to be rolled out in Spring 2017) to better monitor the immense amounts of data that we are taking in and intending to analyze from our partners.

Still, there remains much to do, in FY17 and beyond. This year, we plan to:

- Focus attention on enhancing our end-of-semester DC and teacher surveys, to broaden our perspective on students' growth and gain a better understanding of the program's impact on DCs and of teachers' inclinations to participate in a non-required partnership such as GC. Revised surveys will be piloted in the fall of 2016.
- Hold regular data discussion meetings with local sites to help them organize and review information from their DCs, students, and teachers. Initial conversations have begun and will be regularly scheduled throughout the spring semester.

- Better link and understand the relationship between our stated outcomes and long-term impact, and we are currently engaged with external consultants at Glassfrog Solutions and staff from other nonprofit organizations to explore research designs to address this area.
- Identify additional ways to assess our program's impact on students' skill and dispositions development and to work with collaborators on this enhanced evaluation, ideally with an eye towards differences in our teacher-led and DC-led classrooms.
- Improve our student surveys to support students' comprehension of questions.
- Bolster training and resources to support DCs and teachers in connecting students with guest speakers and in engaging in new civic behaviors such as writing articles and attending meetings.
- Share new resources with our DCs that were developed by our Student Leadership Board to support DCs in building stronger relationships with and creating positive environments for students.

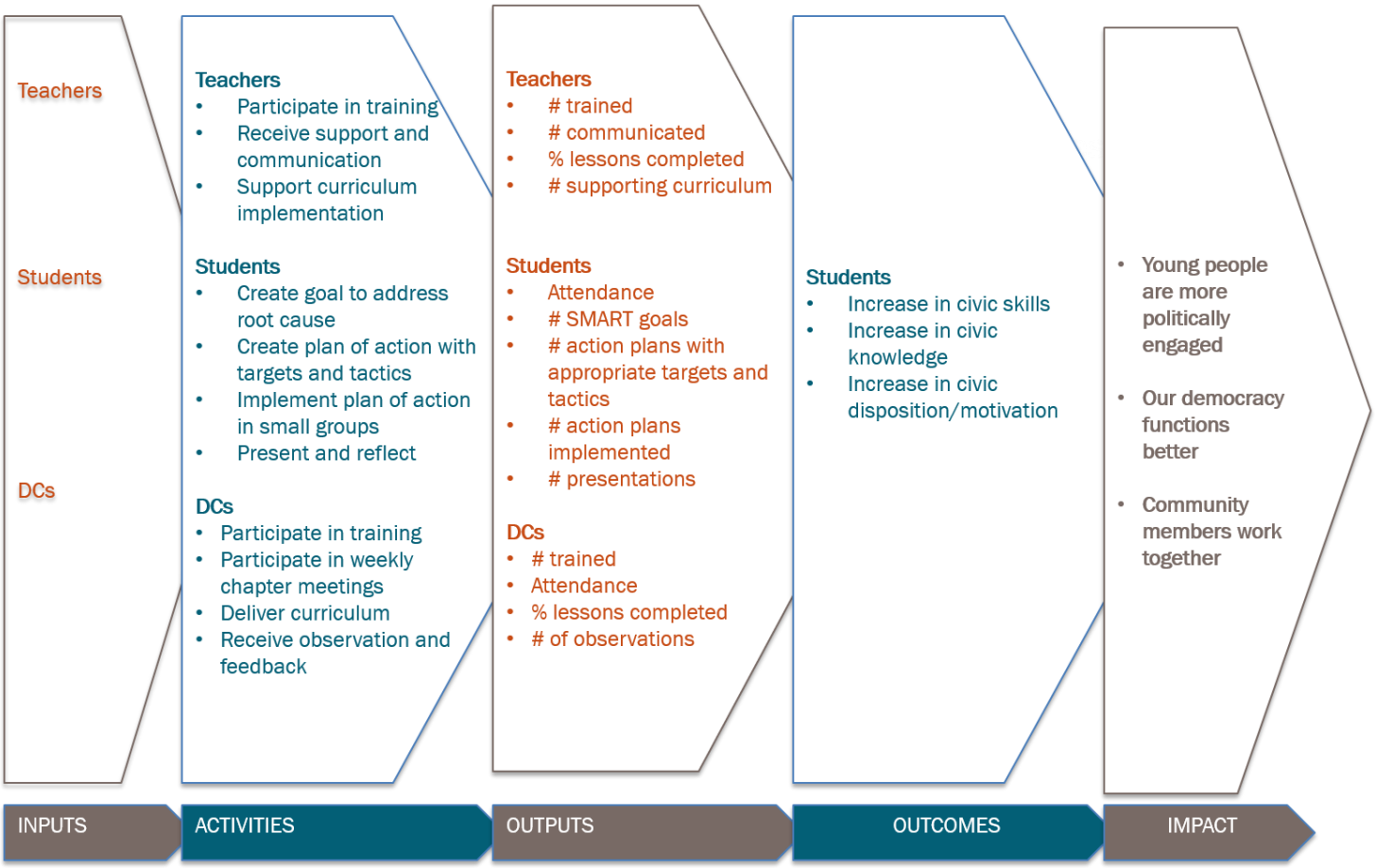
As these plans get underway, our plans for the future will include:

- Auditing differences in local sites' classroom observation implementation and recordkeeping processes, as we consider the utility of this feedback in analyzing differences in classes' outcomes in the future.
- Diving into a study of diversity, quality, and impact of our DCs and how their backgrounds and training influence their students' outcomes.
- Exploring GC's impact on school culture, which we see as a currently unarticulated but intrinsically valued aspect of our vision of success in school partnerships.

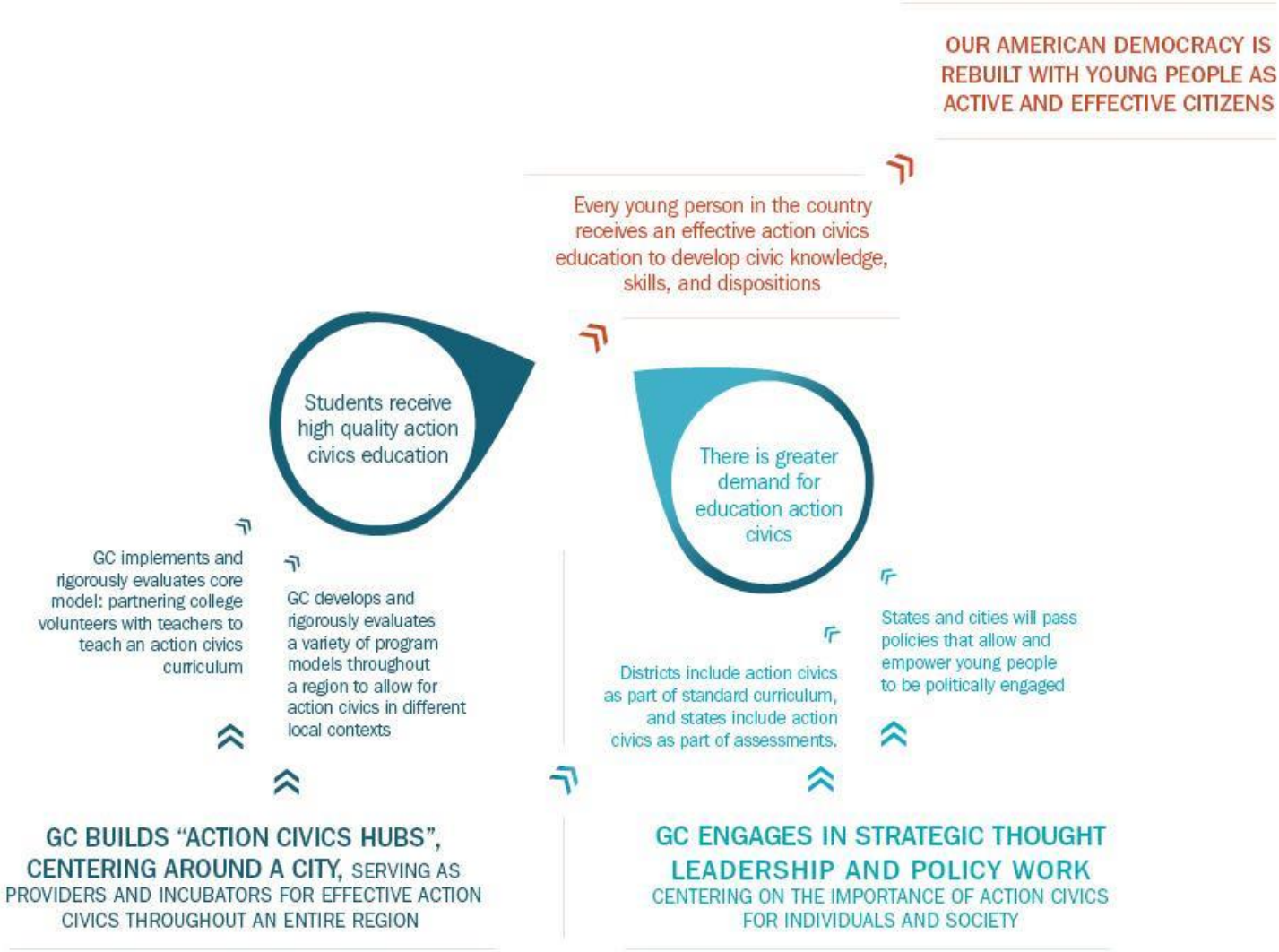
In every lesson of our curriculum, class concludes with an Exit Ticket, a small reflection activity whereby students consider their accomplishments and learning during the class period and offer DCs and teachers a glimpse into how the lesson went so they may build on this progress and make adjustments as needed moving forward. We intend that this Progress Report serve as a structured opportunity for reflection on and planning for future programming. This analysis reveals that our students are learning and growing and that we as an organization are learning and strengthening alongside them. We look forward to continued evaluation and improvement, for the sake of our students and for our democracy at large.

Appendix

Appendix A: Logic Model



Appendix B: Theory of Change



Appendix C: Regional Details of Surveyed Schools and Classrooms

Chart A: 55% of GC Schools were Surveyed

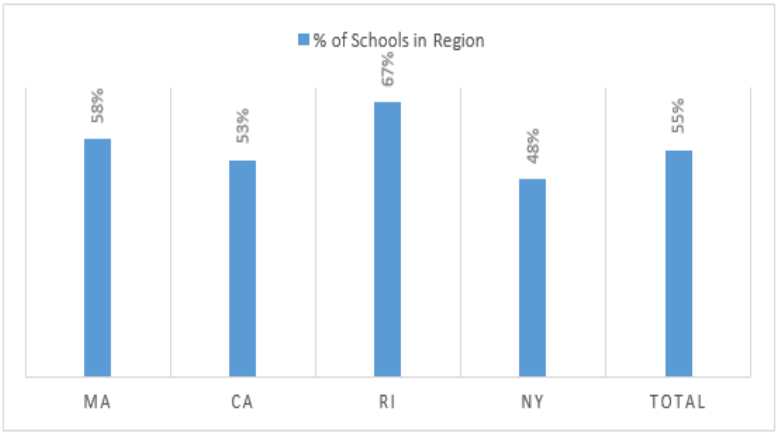
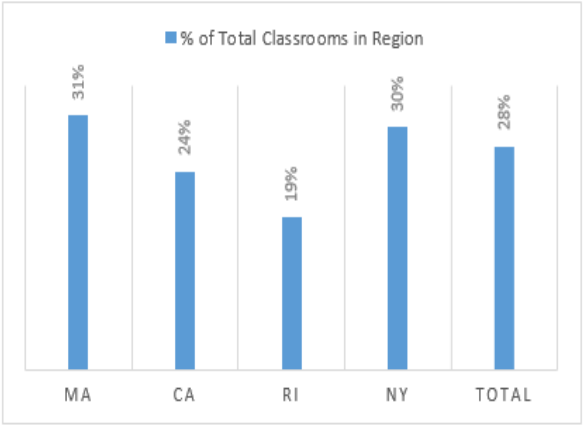



Chart B: 28% of GC Classrooms were Surveyed