ACTION CIVICS IN THE US: CURRENT LANDSCAPE & RATIONALE
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Decoding the Citizen
What does it mean to be an effective citizen and how do we educate for it?

Educating for Effective Citizenship
How do ideals for education for effective citizenship compare to the realities of how civic education is being taught and who has access to it?

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How does the current state of civic participation reflect the current state of civic education and why is it important for everyone to be effective citizens?

The Current State of Civic Participation

Barriers to Effective Civic Education
What stands in the way of effective civic education being ubiquitous across the country?
Decoding the Citizen

Educating for Effective Citizenship

The Current State of Civic Education

The Current State of Civic Participation

Barriers to Effective Civic Education
Civic education was once a staple in American schools – at the heart of their goals and purpose. Yet over the past decades, civic education has been on the decline and political engagement and participation have gone with it.

An understanding of the current state and value of civic education, and engagement, begins to build the case for why civic education, and specifically action civics education, needs to make a resurgence in American schools.
Civics is the study of the theoretical and practical aspects of citizenship, its rights and duties; the duties of citizens to each other as members of a political body and the government.

A Citizen is a person with citizenship – membership in a political community such as a country or city.

Civics is participation and engagement in systems and structures. To some it is explicitly about government. To others it’s about community. Overall, there’s a focus on local.
“The only title in our democracy superior to that of President [is] the title of citizen.”
– former Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis
TO BE A CITIZEN IS A...

RIGHT
In the United States, citizens are granted the right to:
• Express one’s self freely
• Worship as one wishes
• A prompt, fair trial by jury
• Vote in elections for public officials
• Apply for federal employment requiring U.S. citizenship
• Run for elected office
• Pursue “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”

RESPONSIBILITY
In the United States it is the responsibility of a citizen to:
• Support and defend the constitution
• Stay informed of the issues affecting one’s community
• Participate in the democratic process
• Respect and obey federal, state and local laws
• Respect the rights, beliefs, and opinions of others
• Participate in your local community
• Pay income and other taxes honestly, and on time
• Serve on a jury when called upon
• Defend the country if the need should arise

CULTURAL IDEAL
It is infused with moral meaning, encompassed by normative principles, values, and expectations that all derive from the social, historical, and cultural context of the times.

Source: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services; Institute for Advanced Studies and Culture, University of Virginia
AS CULTURAL IDEALS VARY, DIFFERENT CITIZEN IDENTITIES EMERGE

**KINDS OF CITIZEN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE CITIZEN</th>
<th>PARTICIPATORY CITIZEN</th>
<th>JUSTICE-ORIENTED CITIZEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DESCRIPTION</strong></td>
<td><strong>DESCRIPTION</strong></td>
<td><strong>DESCRIPTION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Acts responsibly in his/her</td>
<td>• Active member of</td>
<td>• Critically addresses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community</td>
<td>community organizations and/or improvement efforts</td>
<td>social, political, and economic structures to see beyond surface causes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Works and pays taxes</td>
<td>• Organizes community</td>
<td>• Seeks out and addresses areas of injustice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Obeys laws</td>
<td>efforts to care</td>
<td>• Knows about social movements and how to effect systemic change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recycles, gives blood</td>
<td>for those in need, promote economic development, or clean up environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Volunteers to give hand in</td>
<td>• Knows how government agencies work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time of crisis</td>
<td>• Knows strategies for accomplishing collective tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SAMPLE ACTION</strong></th>
<th><strong>SAMPLE ACTION</strong></th>
<th><strong>SAMPLE ACTION</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Contributes food to a drive</td>
<td>• Helps to organize a food drive</td>
<td>• Explores why people are hungry and acts to solve root causes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ASSUMPTIONS CORE</strong></th>
<th><strong>ASSUMPTIONS CORE</strong></th>
<th><strong>ASSUMPTIONS CORE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must have good character; they must be honest, responsible, and law-abiding members of the community</td>
<td>• To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must actively participate and take leadership positions within established systems and community structures</td>
<td>• To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must question and change established systems and structures when they reproduce patterns of injustice over time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne, Educating the “Good” Citizen: Political Choices and Pedagogical Goals (2004)
“Education in America must prepare all students for informed participation in civic and democratic life—so that all Americans are ready to tackle the challenges confronting communities and the nation in the 21st century and so that the United States can continue to serve as a model democracy for people and governments around the world.”

- U.S. Department of Education

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Advancing Civic Learning and Engagement in Democracy: A Road Map and Call to
**TRADITIONAL CIVIC EDUCATION PRACTICES HAVE BEEN DEEMED BY MANY AS STALE BUT A NEW GENERATION OF PEDAGOGY HAS EMERGED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROVEN PRACTICE</th>
<th>OLD CIVICS</th>
<th>NEW CIVICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Instruction</td>
<td>Includes facts about procedures</td>
<td>Includes instruction that is relevant and interesting to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of Current Events and</td>
<td>Classroom discussions do not address or include controversy</td>
<td>Classroom discussions center on current, local, national, and international</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controversial Issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>issues and events, particularly those that young people view as important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service-Learning</td>
<td>Requires students to complete a number of service hours that are not related</td>
<td>Encourages the design and implementation of programs that provide students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to course work</td>
<td>with opportunities to apply what they learn through performing community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>service that is linked to the formal curriculum and classroom activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular Activities</td>
<td>Views as peripheral to civic learning and instruction</td>
<td>Supports extracurricular activities that provide opportunities for young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>people to get involved in their schools or communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Governance</td>
<td>Student councils make inconsequential decisions on social matters and do not</td>
<td>Student councils and other school governance opportunities are viewed as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>deal with true governance issues that address student concerns</td>
<td>laboratories for students to gain practical experience in civics and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulations of Democratic Processes</td>
<td>Non-existent as courses are based on textbook-heavy curriculums where</td>
<td>Used to teach students 21st century skills such as public speaking,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>students only read about civics</td>
<td>teamwork, close reading, analytical thinking, and the ability to argue both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sides of a topic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“The goals of traditional civic education - to increase civic knowledge, voter participation, and volunteerism–are all still fundamental. But the new generation of civic learning puts students at the center. It includes both learning and practice—not just rote memorization of names, dates, and processes.”

- Secretary Arne Duncan

THE NEW GENERATION OF CIVIC EDUCATION HAS BEEN WIDELY TERMED “ACTION CIVICS”

**Action Civics Theory of Change**

**Activities & Problems & Approach**
- Marginalization of youth voice
- The civic empowerment gap

- Program partners trained by action civics organization (ie. teacher, youth workers)

**Action Civics Framework:** Youth Voice, Youth Expertise, Collective Action, & Reflection

- Students engaged in action civics process (examine community)
  - Research issue, build consistency, strategize, take action, reflection

**Impact**
- Broad incorporation of youth voice / Transformed, strengthened democracy

**Outcomes**

**Civic and Cultural Transformation**
- Shifts in institutional, organizational, and school culture (youth given more opportunities to positively engage)
- Shifts in stereotypes about young people
- Improved pedagogy in classroom climates
- Changes in policy, budgets, and environment

**21st Century Positive Youth Leader**
- Increased skills in collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and professionalism
- Increased sense of agency

**Active and Informed Citizen**
- Increased knowledge of civics (schools, community, policy, political process)
- Increased commitment (in values and action) to electoral, community, and civic engagement
- Increased ability to enact change alone and with others (civic efficacy)
- Developed civic identity

**Youth Civic Participation**
- Youth consistently meeting with decision makers on key issues
- Youth engaged in on-going education and advocacy campaigns

**Youth Civic Creation**
- Youth create reports and digital media that circulate widely
- Media includes youth stories and point of view
- Youth facilitate community events
- Youth engage in philanthropy

**Active and Informed Citizen**
- Improved grades, graduation rate, attendance, academic skills
- Increased school engagement and connectedness
- Increased college engagement and graduation

Sources: National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, A Crucible Moment: College Learning & Democracy’s Future (2012); National Action Civics Collaborative
THE DEMONSTRABLE BENEFITS OF ACTION CIVICS ARE VAST AND VARIED

21st Century Positive Youth Leader
- Increased skills in collaboration (perspective-taking/teamwork, constituency building), communication (public speaking, writing, media), critical thinking (research skills, strategizing), and professionalism (facilitation, networking)
- Increased sense of agency

Active and Informed Citizen
- Increased knowledge of civics (school, community, policy, political process)
- Increased commitment (in values and action) to electoral, community, and civic engagement
- Increased ability to enact change alone and with others (civic efficacy)
- Developed civic identity

Academically Successful Student
- Improved grades, graduation rate, attendance, academic skills
- Increased school engagement and connectedness
- Increased college enrollment and graduation

Youth Civic Creation
- Youth create reports and digital media that circulate widely
- Media includes youth stories/POV
- Youth facilitate community events
- Youth engage in philanthropy

Youth Civic Participation
- Youth consistently meeting with decision-makers on key issues
- Youth engaged in on-going education and advocacy campaigns
- Youth POV in public forums and media

Civic and Cultural Transformation
- Shifts in culture and stereotypes
- Improved pedagogy and classroom climates
- Changes in policy, budgets, and physical environment

Sources: CIRCLE, Building an Evidence-Based Practice of Action Civics: The current state of assessments and recommendations for the future (2013)
THE BENEFITS OF ACTION CIVICS
REACH BEYOND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

81% of high school dropouts said they would have been less likely to do so if there were more opportunities for experiential learning.

Students who receive both traditional and interactive civics score highest on assessments and demonstrate high levels of twenty-first century skills such as critical thinking, news comprehension, and work ethic.

Schools with civic learning programs are more likely to be “safe, inclusive, and respectful.”

ON A MACRO LEVEL, ACTION CIVICS IS A TOOL FOR REDUCING CIVIC INEQUALITY

Civic participation among marginalized and underrepresented populations creates a path to fair and representative policy-makers and policies. Action civics curricula can give students who might not otherwise have the opportunity or resources to participate, the means to do so.

Action civics in schools can offer the three components that scholars generally agree influence individuals’ civic and political engagement:

1. Resources/ability, including civic knowledge and skills
2. Motivation, which may include senses of civic identity or duty, a belief that one can make a difference, and passion about a cause
3. Opportunities/recruitment, especially being invited to participate in a civic or political activity or join a group

WITH A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW GOVERNMENT WORKS AND A FEELING OF EMPOWERMENT TO AFFECT IT, PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE

Civic knowledge (i.e. civic content and current events) and civic attitudes (i.e. self-efficacy and skill-specific self efficacy) are associated with young people’s intention to vote in the future.

Source: Alison K. Cohen and Benjamin W. Chaffee, The relationship between adolescents’ civic knowledge, civic attitude, and civic behavior and their self-reported future likelihood of voting (2013)
Decoding the Citizen

Educating for Effective Citizenship

The Current State of Civic Education

The Current State of Civic Participation

Barriers to Effective Civic Education
THERE IS PUBLIC CONSENSUS THAT CIVIC EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT

A 2010 survey revealed that 93% of the population feels that students should be required to take a civic education, social studies or government course in junior high and high school.

A national survey showed 74% of likely voters support civic knowledge assessment (USCIS) for high school students as a graduation requisite.

Sources: Civics Education Initiative; Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Attitudes About Civic Education (2013)
WHILE SEEN AS IMPORTANT, CIVIC EDUCATION IS NOT NECESSARILY A PRIORITY

People Saying Each Of The Following Is Very Important As A Goal Of The Nation’s Schools

- Preparing students to be responsible citizens: 100%
- Preparing people to exercise their right to vote: 75%
- Educating people about government and how it works: 50%
- Educating people about core democratic principles as set forth in Declaration of Independence & US Constitution: 25%
- Teaching people to read, write and do math: 0%
- Providing students with marketable skill for future employment: 100%

Sources: Civics Education Initiative; Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Attitudes About Civic Education (2013)

Sources: Civics Education Initiative; AEI Program on American Citizenship, Contested Curriculum: How Teachers and Citizens View Civics Education (2011); Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Attitudes About Civic Education (2013)

The public and schools alike prioritize instilling good work habits, but there is a disconnect when it comes to teaching facts and promoting civic behavior: the public prioritizes the former and schools the latter.

While Republicans prioritize understanding the US government, Democrats prioritize internalizing core values. Consistently, Republicans demonstrate stronger support for USCIS assessment (78% vs. 68%) and conservatives are less likely to believe that educating students about improving social conditions should be an important goal of the nation’s schools. Liberals strongly support educating students about cultural diversity.
IN CLASSROOMS, MANY STUDENTS DO HAVE SOME FORM OF CIVIC EDUCATION, BUT FOR MOST IT’S THE “TRADITIONAL” – NOT THE “NEW”

90% of high school students take at least one civics class, and most states have a requirement

but...

59% of fourth-grade students, 53% of eighth-grade students, and 56% of 12th grade students report that they never participate in simulations or mock trials

Nearly 70% of students never write letters to newspapers or otherwise express their opinions in a public way

Only 30% of 4th or 8th grade teachers report that their students engage in some form of student government

Less than 20% of 4th or 8th grade teachers organize visits from members of the community, or report that their students participate in community projects

Sources: CIRCLE, AEI For Public Policy Research, Dry to Dynamic Civic Education Curricula (2011)
QUALITY CIVIC EDUCATION IS NOT EQUALLY AVAILABLE FOR STUDENTS FROM ALL BACKGROUNDS

Higher income students are more likely to have an action civics education. African-American, Hispanic, and rural students score lower on tests of civic knowledge and have less optimistic views of their civic potential than their more privileged counterparts.

PROMISING PRACTICES IN CIVIC EDUCATION ARE NOT EQUALLY DISTRIBUTED AMONG STUDENTS

- **Discuss Current Events** (weekly or more)
  - Lunch Program Ineligible: 65%
  - Lunch Program Eligible (low-income): 59%

- **Participate in Debates** (monthly or more)
  - Lunch Program Ineligible: 49%
  - Lunch Program Eligible (low-income): 44%

- **Participate in Simulations** (of domestic processes and procedures) - ever
  - Lunch Program Ineligible: 46%
  - Lunch Program Eligible (low-income): 41%

Sources: CIRCLE; Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools (2011)
WHILE NUMEROUS STATE-LEVEL POLICIES HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED AROUND CIVIC EDUCATION, MANY DO NOT GUARANTEE – OR EVEN PROMOTE ACTION CIVICS

- Since 2013, **over 20 state-level legislative actions or rules around civics education have been adopted or signed into law**
- As of June 2016, **nearly 40 states require some testing in social studies OR civic education**
- Among those 40 states, **8 have passed the Civic Education Initiative (CEI) which uses the USCIS assessment to test memorization of government related facts. Another 7 states have bills on CEI in committee**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adopted 2016-03-12</th>
<th>WV</th>
<th>Requests a study on effectiveness of Civics Education in WV Schools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signed into Law 2016-03-02</td>
<td>WI</td>
<td>Civics Test Requirement for Graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signed into Law 2015-08-21</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>Requiring Civics Course for High School Graduation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signed into Law 2015-07-22</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>Oregon Civics Day for Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signed into Law 2015-07-13</td>
<td>WI</td>
<td>Civics Test Requirement for Graduation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signed into Law 2015-07-01</td>
<td>LA</td>
<td>Civics Course Content and Civics Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signed into Law 2015-06-04</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Labor and Free Market Capitalism Curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signed into Law 2015-06-03</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Requiring High School Students to Take U.S. Citizenship Test</td>
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<td>Requiring High School Students to Take U.S. Citizenship Test</td>
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<td>U.S. Government Course</td>
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<td>Civics Test Requirement for Graduation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signed into Law 2015-03-17</td>
<td>AR</td>
<td>Establishes Take Your Legislator to School Month</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signed into Law 2015-02-03</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>Proficiency in Civics for High School Graduation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signed into Law 2015-01-15</td>
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<td>Civics Exam Required for High School Graduation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issued 2014-09-22</td>
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<td>Governor’s Commission on Service and Volunteerism</td>
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<td>CA</td>
<td>Civics Instruction, Including in Adult Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signed into Law 2014-07-25</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>Task Force on Civic Education</td>
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<td>Legislative Youth Advisory Council</td>
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<td>TN</td>
<td>Civics Curriculum</td>
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<td>Adopted 2014-04-01</td>
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<td>Strengthening Civic Education</td>
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<td>Signed into Law 2014-03-18</td>
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<td>Commission on Civics Education</td>
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<td>Signed into Law 2013-10-02</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Voter Education in American Government and Civics Curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signed into Law 2013-09-06</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Civics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signed into Law 2013-08-09</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>Task Force on Civic Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Education Commission of the States (ECS) State Policy Database, retrieved 6/7/16.
Key Civic Education Policy Elements
Effective state policies for civic education need to address the following key elements:

Policy 1: The co-equal civic purpose of education at the state, district and institutional level.
Policy 2: Standards and curricula for education at each grade level, preschool through postsecondary.
Policy 3: Standards include inquiry-based instruction that results in informed action and demonstration of learning.
Policy 4: Integration of civic learning across all academic disciplines.
Policy 5: Pre-service licensure/accreditation supports teachers as civic educators.
Policy 6: Professional development supports teachers as civic educators.
Policy 7: Assessments of student progress toward civic learning outcomes is used to measure student performance and inform instructional efforts.
Policy 8: Accountability indicators of teacher, district and school/institution performance.
Policy 9: Measures of community impact.

The Every Student Succeeds Act that President Obama signed into law in 2015 includes several federal funding sources and resources for new social studies, history, and civics.

It outlines criteria to:

- Improve the quality of civics and government education by educating students about the history and principles of the Constitution of the United States, including the Bill of Rights
- Foster civic competence and responsibility
- Improve the quality of civic education and economic education through cooperative civic education and economic education exchange programs with emerging democracies

Source: Education Commission of the States, U.S. Department of Education
A DIVERSE ARRAY OF NON-LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE EFFECTIVE CIVIC EDUCATION HAVE BEEN TAKEN IN DIFFERENT STATES

Task Forces
Massachusetts, Illinois, Alaska and Oregon, among others, have appointed task forces to study and make recommendations for potential improvements in civic education.

Accountability
Florida and Tennessee have attached consequences for students and schools for poor performance outcomes on standardized civics assessments.

Statewide Implementation
Illinois and Florida have developed networks of academic institutions committed to civics education.

Administrative directives
Some state officials have used their authority to push civic education agendas and initiatives. In California and Montana, initiatives were developed to offer resources and trainings for civic education state-wide.

Secretaries of State
Because of their role in elections, Secretaries of State in Idaho, Mississippi, Ohio, Oregon, and Washington, have provided civics resources and educational tools for teachers to educate about the political system and encourage voting behaviors.

Source: Education Commission of the States, Different paths to a common goal: Preparing students for civic life (2014)
THE US FACES LOW LEVELS OF CIVIC INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION, PARTICULARLY AMONG DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS

Populations least likely to participate in civic or political activities:
- Young
- Non-white
- Less educated
- Low-income

Among those who participate, the most popular forms of civic engagement are:
- Signing a petition (32% have taken part in the past 12 months)
- Contacting a national, state, or local government official about an issue (30%)
- Working with fellow citizens to solve a problem in a community (28%)
- Attending a political meeting on local, town or school affairs (24%)

Levels of civic and political engagement

The proportion of adults in each group who have taken part in civic or political activities in the past 12 months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Did any activities</th>
<th>1-2 activities</th>
<th>3-4 activities</th>
<th>5+ activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<td>45-54</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic (English-speaking)</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school grad</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College grad</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual Household Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $20,000</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000 - $39,000</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000 - $74,000</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 - $99,000</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 or more</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PEW, 2008
In the 2014 General Election, there was a 37% voter turnout rate across the country. In the 2012 General (presidential) Election, the turnout was 59%.

White voters turn out in the greatest percentage as compared to non-white citizens. White citizens are also most likely to be registered to vote.

Higher income individuals are more likely to vote than low-income individuals.

Sources: Demos, U.S. Census Bureau
VOTER TURNOUT OF YOUNG PEOPLE HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN LOW, AND IS CURRENTLY ON THE DECLINE
THERE TENDS TO BE A FEELING THAT INDIVIDUALS AREN’T CAPABLE OF MEANINGFUL CHANGE, PARTICULARLY THROUGH POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

“There is] a deep sense of unease about the loss of public life and a feeling of powerlessness to do anything about it. As a result, many people have retreated into silence and away from public life, turning instead to things they can control and feel will help make a difference, such as volunteering, giving to charities, and helping their friends. Americans’ penchant for volunteering, in fact, may be less a springboard for deeper engagement in civic life and more a temporary panacea to the alienation and sense of being unable to “make a difference” that many Americans feel.”

Sources: Case Foundation, Citizens at the Center: A new approach to civic engagement (2006)
GENERATION Z (BORN 1995-PRESENT) IS PARTICULARLY DISILLUSIONED BY THE CURRENT POLITICAL STATE OF THE US BUT THERE IS SOME PROMISE FOR FUTURE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

47% of Gen Z say that voting is important

While this number is lower than any other generation, when considering that most of Gen Z can’t yet vote and don’t have responsibilities such as tax paying or driving, this rate may actually indicate promising attitudes for the future.

26% of Gen Z trust in elected officials

This compares to 27% of Gen Y (born 1980-1994), 15% of Gen X (born 1965-1979) and 14% of Boomers (born 1946-1964) who report they have trust in elected officials.

23% of Gen Z feel that the U.S. is “headed in the right direction”

Gen Y is the generation most optimistic about America’s future with 28% thinking that the U.S. is headed in the right direction.

EVEN WHERE THERE IS DESIRE FOR EFFECTIVE CIVIC EDUCATION, BARRIERS STAND IN THE WAY OF ACTION CIVICS MAKING ITS WAY TO THE CLASSROOM

Teachers Aren’t Equipped Or Empowered to Facilitate Action Civics

• Some cite that they don’t feel prepared to have discussions around political systems or controversial topics that require deep knowledge and the ability to facilitate diverse opinions
• Select school districts, principals, and parents discourage teachers from addressing controversial topics especially when it might be interpreted as political bias
• With pressure to show progress in math and English, teachers don’t prioritize social studies (civic education, included)

Appropriate Policies and Funding Aren’t In Place To Require or Encourage Action Civics

• Most districts don’t mandate civics education, and when they do, it’s not action oriented
• There is no uniform assessment model that meaningfully measures civic knowledge, skills, or motivation
• Funding is being cut from social studies programs around the country, and funding specifically intended to support civic education is limited

Sources: The Atlantic, Civic Education in the Age of Trump (2016), AEI Program on American Citizenship
WHAT'S NEXT FOR ACTION CIVICS EDUCATION

We need to build demand for action civics nationwide – and generate the resources to make it possible.

We envision an America in which every K-12 student receives an effective action civics education and subsequently:

• A population of young people who understand the political system and process and are excited by, and committed to, life-long civic participation and engagement
• A vibrant citizen-centered democracy in which all citizens participate on an ongoing basis at the local, state, and federal levels
• A country in which all people – including youth – are represented by the systems and elected officials that serve them
From our birth in 2010, we have thought not just about the individual students we teach, but about the system-wide barriers to, and opportunities for, effective civic education for all K-12 students. With young people at the front and center of our work, we see the potential they hold materialize as they engage in action civics material through increased civic knowledge, values, and behavior as well as overall academic success and 21st century skills. Through rigorous evaluation, and program adaptation, we have developed a concrete understanding of what does, and what doesn’t work, when it comes action civics curricula and how to optimize intended outcomes.

We are committed to bringing action civics to all students across the country but cannot reach them all through our program alone. By convening leaders in the field, young people, educators, foundations, and policy makers we hope to increase the prioritization of K-12 action civics and develop and obtain the financial, professional, and policy resources we need to make this vision into a reality.
HOW WE'RE ACHIEVING OUR GOALS

**Resources**
- Landscape Mapping
  - Create landscape of active participants in fields/audiences to engage

**Standard Practice**
- Model curricula for implementation
- Model policy practices for district implementation

**Monitoring and Evaluation**
- Validated, universal assessment
- Ongoing impact evaluation

**Money and Investment**
- Funding on state and district levels
- Foundation support

**Activities**

**Policy Analysis, Research, and Development**
- Understand policy climate in local sites (NYC, MA, RI, Bay Area, Central Texas) and influence as possible
- Influence policy in local sites
- Track civic education-related policy on ongoing basis, Monitor successes and failures of relevant policies

**Coalition, Network & Relationship Building**
- Form national coalition with action civics organizations, education reform groups, government reform/participation groups
- Host convenings for youth, district/state leaders, coalition members
- Form local coalitions
- Build relationships with decision makers in local sites, national politicians, foundations

**Thought Leadership and Best Practice Demonstration**
- Publish Op-ed series
- Create media campaigns
- Write white papers/publications
- Develop model district, model classroom curriculum, model state
- Track student and community outcomes

**Primary Targets**
- District leaders
- Public administrators: State
- Departments of Education/Secretaries of State
- Philanthropists
- Graduate Schools of Education

**Secondary Targets**
- Government employees
- Education reformers
- Local elected officials
- Nationally elected officials
- Specific constituencies
- Young people
- School leaders
- Teachers

**OUR GOALS**

**Ultimate Vision**
- A population of young people who understand the political system and process and are excited by, and committed to, life-long civic participation and engagement
- A vibrant citizen-centered democracy in which all citizens participate on an ongoing basis at the local, state, and federal levels
- A country in which all people— including youth—are represented by the systems and elected officials that serve them

**Ultimate Outcome**
- Every K-12 student in the US receives an effective action civics education

**Interim Outcomes**
- All states’ districts require action civics education for their K-12 students
- Demand is built, need for action civics is demonstrated and support of decision makers is gained
- Systems and resources are in place for ongoing implementation of effective action civics programs

**BENCHMARKS**

**Advocacy Capacity**

- Collaboration and Alignment
  - Significant output from coalition and convenings

- New Advocates
  - Increase in email inquiries and interest from teachers and districts

- New Donors
  - Funding from additional foundations/donors
  - Foundation champion

- Organizational Visibility
  - Published articles in diverse, and widely read news sources
  - Increased citation of GC/ action civics in reports

- Policy Change

- Awareness
  - Acknowledgement of action civics as solutions to "malfunctioning democracy," "political apathy," and "nonrepresentative government."
  - Google searches for action civics/ civic education

- Issues Reframing
  - General notion of civic education shifts from role to action oriented and seen as "need to have"

- Political Will
  - Districts and states propose/implement action civics mandates (and offer resources accordingly)
  - District and state leaders who support and champion action civics in their schools

- Professional Development
  - Sponsored professional development for teachers
  - Action civics training courses in GSEs