



2017-18 IMPACT PROGRESS REPORT

October 18, 2018

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Photo 1: Students in the cover photo are listening to and asking questions of panelists while sitting in the House Chambers of the Rhode Island Statehouse at Civics Day in December, 2017.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Generation Citizen (GC), incorporated in 2010, is a national organization whose mission is to ensure that every student in the United States receives an effective Action Civics education which will provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in our democracy as active citizens. Our ultimate vision is that young people participate and work collectively to strengthen our country's democracy. As such, we support direct programming in schools to offer an exemplar of Action Civics, and we advocate for the discipline in policy and coalition-building work across the country. Our partnerships and advocacy efforts are primarily concentrated in six states (Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New York, California, Oklahoma, and Texas, in chronological order of our expansion). In the past year, we began implementing our programming and policy footprints beyond these geographies.

This report focuses on describing GC's impact and learnings from the 2017-18 school year, for the primary purpose of articulating the organization's lessons, priorities, and plans, and supporting the growth of the field at large. Our approach toward monitoring and evaluation is grounded in two of our core values: Action and Open-mindedness. Accordingly, we treat our evaluation efforts as an opportunity for continuous examination and reflection. This report does not serve as a forum to state if our intervention and methodology works, but rather to distill best practices and areas for improvement as we attempt to discern how we may better achieve our [Theory of Change](#).¹

Program Impact Highlights

In the 2017-18 school year, we engaged 14,025 students in Action Civics across 141 schools in 7 states, with the support of 548 volunteers in the classroom, predominantly college students. Our students, partners, and organization accomplished much within that year:

- We grew our school partnerships by 32% from the 2016-17 school year and classrooms reached by 46%, demonstrating that we deepened our presence on school campuses. This is an element of our strategy to develop “whole school” partnerships, in which all students receive Action Civics as a part of their regular academic sequence. Fifty-five percent of our schools were engaged in whole-school partnerships in the past academic year (the first year we consistently tracked this metric).
- We launched programming in “remote” districts in Camden, NJ and San Diego, CA, sites removed from our staffed offices. With these partnerships, we sought to learn what it would take to train and support teachers in regions where GC staff do not have proximity or local political knowledge or networks.
- In our existing and remote sites, students demonstrated gains across all indicators: civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions. Teachers reported that on average 76% of their students increased their civic knowledge, 71% their civic skills, and 61% their civic dispositions over the course of the program. These numbers remain stable from last year's program outcomes despite significant organizational and programmatic growth.
- Anecdotally, teachers revealed students' greatest gains in civic knowledge to be in their understanding of local political structures, processes, and players and students' strongest skill development in the categories of professional communication and collaboration. We are enthused by this feedback and attribute it, in part, to the inclusion of a Participatory Action Research (PAR) unit within curricular revisions in the summer of 2017.

¹ Details on our Theory of Change can be found here: <https://generationcitizen.org/our-impact/theory-of-change/> and in the Appendix (Figure 1) of this report.

- Growth on student survey indicators was most pronounced in the “Civic Action” section. Many young people engage in certain civic behaviors for the first time as a part of their participation in GC. From pre- to post-semester, there was an 175% increase in the number of students who had ever contacted a public official and a 135% increase in the number of students who had ever written an article or op-ed.
- Seventy-one percent of classes’ action projects addressed issues of Public Safety, Education and Student Voice, or Justice and Equality, and 135 of their projects advocated for or against local or state legislation, including on matters related to land use, affordable housing, environmental protection, and school funding.
- Seventy-three percent of students, 78% of teachers, and 80% of Democracy Coach volunteers would recommend the program to a peer. This number is notable because GC’s programming is incorporated into real classes, not optional activities for students.
- Opportunities for students’ post-semester engagement grew alongside the expansion of both our summertime Community Change Fellowship program in Boston, New York City, and Providence and our Student Leadership Board, comprised of young GC alumni from across the country.
- For the first time last year, we enumerated a comprehensive set of organizational policy and advocacy goals and indicators, and we made strides in achieving them. These included co-leading a coalition to pass the nation’s most comprehensive civics education bill in the Massachusetts House and Senate, establishing partnerships with several state education agencies to elevate the role of Action Civics through revising social studies standards and district reporting requirements, and mobilizing support for campaigns across the country to extend voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds in municipal elections.

In addition to sharing findings from our own evaluation efforts, this report summarizes research conducted over the past year by Elena Gustafson, a graduate student at the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley, who undertook a project to assess eleven semesters of GC classroom focus issue data. She analyzed the projects by theme, region, grade, and time to explore trends and relationships among these variables. The report offers descriptive evidence that youth in GC classes are acutely aware of how their communities are affected in matters of social justice, inequity, and violence. Students are aware of current events of local importance, as well as broader community trends and epidemiological factors that impact health and equity.

Moving Forward

We embark on a new school year energized to continue strengthening our programming and our field. Reflecting on lessons from the past year, our top priorities include:

- *Ensuring all students practice civic behaviors in the program:* To do so, we will be revising our curricula to create differentiated resources for middle and high school classes, building into both structures so that all students are deeply engaged in their class’ ongoing action project.
- *Expanding our capacity to improve our evaluation mechanisms:* We will be hiring a full-time Impact Manager to help inform the strategy, design, administration, and analysis of enhanced surveys for students, teachers, and volunteers, among other evaluation projects we intend to implement.
- *Providing teachers and administrators with tools to understand and celebrate their students’ civic learning:* Though educators intuitively recognize the value of civic learning, we want to offer our partners stronger evidence of the impact of Action Civics on their students and campuses, so that they may better serve their students and make the case to their own stakeholders that this work is important. We will be exploring how to better share our internal

program evaluation data with partners as well as designing new assessment resources for teachers to utilize in their classrooms.

- *Building best practices from program pilots into standard operating procedures:* In the year ahead, we will aggregate lessons learned from site-specific pilots - including those focused on relationships in GC classrooms, facilitator roles, student collaboration, and more - to inform program design across all models and sites.
- *Further integrating youth and participant voice into our decision-making:* Building on the success of the Student Leadership Board, we will be launching a Teacher Leadership Board comprised of veteran GC educators to help inform the design of our programming and advocacy. We will also be developing a plan to appoint youth members to our National Board of Directors by the end of our fiscal year.
- *Ensuring equity is front and center in all of our programmatic priorities, and in our evaluation strategy:* We predominantly work with students from low-income communities who have been historically and systematically marginalized from public life and who have been implicitly told throughout their lives that their voices do not matter. We need to ensure that our programmatic priorities express this reality, and that our intended outcomes are similarly equity-focused.

The start of programming last fall coincided with the introduction of a new strategic plan to the organization, which guides us to focus on achieving three overarching goals by the summer of 2020: strengthening our program portfolio, expanding our program footprint, and advocating for Action Civics at the state-level. We have made progress in accomplishing these aims, and we are eager to continue learning, innovating, and reflecting as we grow and evolve in the year ahead.

We are just getting started in this work. Strengthening our democracy and our education system demands patience and persistence. Yet, we share the philosophy of Student Leadership Board member and GC alumna Safiya Al Samarrai who, in reflecting on what she learned from Generation Citizen shared, “If I see an issue that needs fixing, I can work on it. Indeed[,] it is my responsibility to help fix it.”

II. OVERVIEW of PROGRAMS

GC IN THE CLASSROOM

CORE PROGRAM MODELS

GC partners directly with districts and schools to implement an experiential Action Civics education program. Middle and high school teachers integrate GC's Action Civics program into a course of their choosing, most often social studies or government classes, and typically facilitate our state standards-aligned curriculum twice-weekly over the course of one semester. Within the program, students identify and research an issue that directly affects their lives, determine root causes of the problem, set a collective goal, and determine specific tactics to address it. They then take concrete steps to accomplish their goal, executing their tactics through lobbying, coalition building, and other forms of action. At the end of each semester, GC student representatives present their projects to community members and leaders at Civics Day, a science fair-style showcase in which students receive feedback on and support for their work.

All of GC's in-class programming is built upon three core elements:

- Our foundational Action Civics curriculum,
- Intensive training for facilitators in Action Civics pedagogy, and
- Substantive support for classroom-specific local advocacy research and action planning.

Given that Action Civics pedagogy is demanding for teachers, requiring lesson customization according to each class' interests and entailing extensive local research, community outreach, and small group coordination, we have found that this level of training and support is vital for teachers to engage successfully in Action Civics with our existing set of curricular materials and resources. We have developed two program models with these integral elements in common. These program models allow us to ensure that Action Civics is accessible to a wide variety of school contexts and to create a range of proof points which demonstrate the power of an Action Civics education for students across the country.

Democracy Coach Model

In GC's historical model, we recruit, train, and supervise college volunteer DCs who support teachers in facilitating our Action Civics curriculum. DCs provide capacity for the teacher in the classroom and offer near-peer mentorship to students. The benefits of near-peer mentorship are many, including offering students a relationship with someone close to them in age who has recent experience juggling the demands of middle or high school life; offers direct access to learning about college applications and college life; and brings a new perspective on civic engagement, particularly their own youth civic engagement, to the classroom.

Teacher-Led Model

In this newer approach, we work directly with teachers to support their own implementation of an Action Civics curriculum. The goal of this model is to help schools and districts build in-house capacity to lead effective Action Civics programming themselves through multi-year, staged partnerships in which we train and coach teachers to institutionalize Action Civics on their campuses and in their communities. Removed of the constraint of proximity to college campuses and coordination with volunteers, this approach offers a more scalable model for the organization and an exemplar for schools and districts in distant geographies.

GC BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

COMMUNITY CHANGE FELLOWSHIP

"Who would have thought that a boy from the Bronx would be in all of these tall buildings conversing with important decision makers!"

- Yerami, New York City Community Change Fellow

"If it doesn't challenge you, it won't change you."

- Bre'aja, Massachusetts Community Change Fellow

The Community Change Fellowship (CCF) program is a summer internship opportunity for high-performing middle and high school GC alumni to continue to develop their interests and skills in civic engagement and leadership. Fellows receive a stipend; hold an internship in political, advocacy, or governmental offices; and participate in weekly GC staff-led professional development workshops throughout the program.

In the summer of 2018, GC recruited and supported 52 Fellows across Greater Boston (7), New York City (25), and Providence, Rhode Island (20), growing from a national cohort of 42 Fellows in the summer of 2017. The complete list of Fellows' host organizations and offices can be found in Table 4 of the Appendix. Beyond the workplace, last summer's Fellows attended various professional development workshops and fieldtrips. In Massachusetts, they partnered with a local nonprofit, Youth on Board, on a project called Listening Works to hone their public speaking and active listening skills. In New York, Fellows incorporated an advocacy component to their Friday workshops where they created testimonials on public policy issues they cared most about and presented them at their CCF program graduation. In Rhode Island, Fellows engaged in a session about purpose-driven work with facilitators from Echoing Green, an organization which provides funding and training for future leaders. We will be integrating best practices from each site into our revisions of CCF materials for the summer of 2019.



Photo 2: 2017-18 GC Student Leadership Board members

STUDENT LEADERSHIP BOARD

GC's Student Leadership Board (SLB), established in 2016, is a cohort of middle and high school GC student alumni that supports our efforts to learn from our students' experiences, further promotes civic leadership development among our alumni, and elevates student voice in the broader democracy education field. The board informs our perspective on our students' experiences and drives improvements in our programming and policy work.

The 2017-18 SLB was comprised of 13 alumni from 14-20 years of age, representing all six of GC's regional program sites. Over the course of the school year, they offered feedback to GC staff at monthly meetings on organizational initiatives and engaged in local and national Action Civics advocacy. Their contributions included lobbying for draft civics education legislation in Massachusetts, speaking on panels about student voice at education conferences in Miami and San Francisco, and writing op-eds, being interviewed for newspaper articles, and speaking on the local evening news about the need for experiential civics education, among other activities. Three of these alumni will be returning as chairs of the SLB for the 2018-19 school year. Owing to the success and value of the SLB, GC is launching a Teacher Leadership Board (TLB) in the year ahead and will be officially adding student members to its National Board of Directors.

POLICY & ADVOCACY

In concert with programming, GC conducts policy and advocacy work across the country, in states where we have sites as well as states where we have remote programming and other states in which advocacy would help realize our vision of ensuring that all students have access to an Action Civics education. Our work to advance that mission consists of thought leadership, building local coalitions and networks, and influencing state-level policy. We also advocate for youth civic engagement—in particular, extending voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds—to build demand for Action Civics.

We have elevated the public narrative around Action Civics by securing media placements and publishing reports, organizing statewide and local convenings on civics education and youth civic engagement, and influencing state-level policy through both legislative and administrative initiatives. Additionally, the Vote16USA initiative supports youth-led work to influence city- and state-level policy around the country and has drawn significant public attention to its cause.

In 2017-2018, GC established its first-ever, organization-wide enumeration of policy and advocacy goals and indicators, at both the national and site-levels, to provide a standardized set of tools for advancing Action Civics policy. The goals and indicators, during the first year of implementation, provide a consistent framework for measuring and evaluating our policy and advocacy efforts against our strategic plan goals. Below is an outline of relevant accomplishments:

- Published our first annual Policy and Advocacy Agenda enumerating our positions and principles for policy that supports Action Civics at the state, district, and federal levels;
- Created Action Civics Landscape and hosted an Action Civics webinar with over 80 attendees, including funders and representatives from the nation's leading civics education organizations;
- Cultivated a site-based culture of policy and advocacy by engaging local boards, program staff, students, educators more deeply in local efforts to build networks and policy support around Action Civics;
- Co-led a statewide coalition that helped to pass the nation's most comprehensive civics education bill in the Massachusetts House and Senate;
- Established new partnerships with state education agencies in Utah and North Dakota to elevate the role of Action Civics through revising social studies standards, presenting at a statewide civics education conference, and leveraging district reporting requirements to foreground student-led, project-based civics;
- Led a successful coalition of youth advocates and worked with elected officials to introduce legislation to extend voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds in Washington D.C., which has now secured support from a majority of City Council members;

- Supported youth-led work that more than doubled public support 16- and 17-year-old voting in Greenbelt, MD, leading the city to officially extend voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds in municipal elections;
- Secured media coverage of the Vote16USA initiative and its youth leaders in more than 40 unique outlets, including the Washington Post, NBC Nightly News, NPR, NowThis, and others;
- Published *From A to GC: Our Civic Contemplations*, a compendium of reflections on civics from our Medium blog.

PRIORITIES FOR GROWTH & LEARNING, FROM 2016-17 TO 2017-18

This past year marked the first year of an ambitious new three-year [Strategic Plan](#) for the organization.² The plan calls for strengthening our Action Civics program portfolio by developing our Democracy Coach and teacher-led program models, increasing our program footprint to serve 30,000 students in rural and urban areas annually by the 2019-20 academic year, and advocating for Action Civics nationally by focusing on advancing state-level policy change. At the core of the plan is demonstrating that Action Civics can work everywhere and advocating for the discipline's inclusion throughout the country.

We prioritize evaluation in our efforts to guide the implementation of this organizational strategy. In last year's Impact Progress Report, we published a short list of goals for the year ahead. We intended to make strategic investments to enable this learning and growth as well as to act on lessons from previous years. Before sharing details of what we learned in 2017-18 school year, below are status updates on a selection of the commitments we made:

- Within our most recent strategic planning process, we updated our Theory of Change, and we are in the concluding stages of finalizing revisions to our logic model, to integrate our policy and advocacy activities and outcomes into the framework.
- We have not yet hired a full-time Impact Manager to strengthen and align our diverse array of evaluation activities but anticipate making a hire in October 2018.
- We continued to enhance our student surveys and our internal data tracking procedures, resulting in simplified data reporting and higher survey response rates this year.
- We engaged in diverse, yet strategically focused program pilots to improve the quality and consistency and potential for replicability and scale of existing program models. See Box 1 below for details about our 2017-18 program pilots.

Box 1. Program Pilot Details

Remote Partnerships: For the first time in GC history, we embarked on partnerships beyond the geographic proximity of our established offices, supporting two schools in Camden, New Jersey and three schools in San Diego, California. The goal for this initial pilot was to determine how well we could design and implement teacher training and support structures in regions where our staff lacked access to visit schools regularly as well as local political knowledge and networks.

With planned in-person training events and robust ongoing coaching for teachers, these partnerships strongly resembled those of our established sites: classes were able to pursue strong Action Civics projects, with guest speakers and policy-oriented advocacy goals. We ended the year reflecting strategically about the value of local school- or district-based champions taking responsibility for on-the-ground logistics, including training coordination and Civics Day organization.

² Link to Generation Citizen Strategic Plan 2017-2020: <https://generationcitizen.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Generation-Citizen-Strategic-Plan-2017-2020-1.pdf>

We must also further enunciate the process from outreach to confirmation of these partnerships, including determining the best points at which to engage district, school, and classroom leaders, respectively. We will continue these piloted partnerships in the year ahead, as well as expanding to new partnerships in Riverside, California; Salt Lake City, Utah; and Sumter County, Alabama, to further test this model and the efficacy of Action Civics in diverse geographies.

Relationships-for-Outcomes Initiative (ROI): GC is one of five nonprofits participating in this ROI with the Search Institute, an organization bridging research and practice to strengthen youth success in schools and communities. Over the course of this three-year project, the Search Institute will be working with GC to help us understand how developmental relationships are built within our existing programming; identify, create, and run pilots to strengthen relationship development for GC students; and evaluate the success of these interventions. Our first year of collaboration has prompted GC staff to think differently and talk more explicitly about the holistic range and value of relationships in our work – between students, among Democracy Coaches and teachers and students, among staff, and between staff and partners.

After their initial evaluation phase, Search Institute highlighted GC's success supporting relationship-building which "shares power" with students, and we identified projects related to staff training, volunteer training, curricular design, and evaluation to implement in the 2018-19 school year.

Encore Democracy Coaches: With generous support from the Einhorn Family Charitable Trust's (EFCT's) "Helping People Get Along Better" fund, GC partnered with Encore.org to explore the potential and power of utilizing volunteers age 50+ as DCs in the classroom. GC is interested in learning about recruiting, training, and supporting older adult volunteers as we look towards future geographic expansion, as we are eager to be able to offer tools and best practices to remote and rural program partners who wish to tap into local civic volunteer talent for their classrooms.

Seven Encore DCs participated in the first (spring 2018) semester of the pilot, and we learned from this experience to pay attention to application and training structures to acknowledge the unique perspectives and needs of Encore volunteers and college-age volunteers, that it takes time to build relationships with volunteers to entice them to commit, and to clarify roles for volunteers and teachers which capitalize on their strengths. We will be applying these lessons as we build on the pilot in six classrooms in Boston this fall and six classrooms in the Bay Area this spring.

Urban/Rural Student Collaboration: Funding from the EFCT also enabled GC to launch pilot programming in rural Texas last spring, as part of a project to promote collaboration and empathy development among students from urban and rural communities. We have long heard from teachers about their interest in connecting their students to other GC classrooms, and we valued the opportunity to build and test structures for this among proximate but dissimilar districts. We matched eight classes and created a sequence of activities and structures to allow students to share progress, challenges, and lessons learned from their Action Civics projects. We discovered that teachers and students are eager for this type of engagement and for students to be learning directly from the example of other young people, but classes found the planned interactions difficult to jump quickly into and to fit into an already fast-paced program timeline. Looking ahead to an expanded pilot in Texas and Oklahoma this fall, we have revised the pilot curriculum to be better integrated into the project process and to allow more open-ended collaboration among students.

Revised Democracy Coach Role: DCs have historically taken a lead role in implementing GC in their assigned classrooms, including editing lesson plans, preparing materials, and facilitating lessons, while teachers have often played a supportive supplementary role. DCs, teachers, and our own observations have suggested that this can be an overwhelming role for college students and that we

could be better capitalizing on the skills and experience of teachers in this partnership. Last year, we piloted a modified DC role for our Austin- and Boston-based partners, strengthening the near-peer mentorship and relationship-building responsibilities of DCs and engaging teachers as lesson planners and leaders, rather than having DCs lead the entire class.

We saw teachers take newfound responsibility for integrating the program into curricula and DCs express relief at a lessened workload. We also observed a lack of clarity, however, in DCs' and teachers' respective roles and a reluctance among veteran GC teachers to transition responsibilities. We revised DC and teacher training materials over the summer to better enunciate expectations and look forward to building on the pilot in Austin and Boston this fall.

III. MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

KEY INDICATORS

The best predictors of a student's likelihood of future civic engagement, broadly accepted across the civic education field and utilized by GC throughout its history, are gains in the following indicators:

- **Civic knowledge:** a student's grasp of governmental processes and core concepts related to advocacy and democracy, such as key players and ways citizens can influence the political process;
- **Civic skills:** a student's capability to use acquired skills effectively to participate in the political process, including abilities to think critically, communicate persuasively, problem-solve, and work collaboratively; and
- **Civic dispositions:** a student's desire to actively participate in the political process and act on community issues.

DATA COLLECTION AND EVALUATION METHODS

To assess our students' development on each of these metrics, we utilize a range of data collection mechanisms whose uses, benefits, and limitations are outlined in the table below.

Table 1: Summary of Data Collection and Evaluation Methods

Method	Type of Analysis	Overall Purpose	Advantages	Challenges
Ongoing Tools				
Classroom Observations	Qualitative & Quantitative	To gather information on class progress in real time and to provide immediate feedback to DCs and teachers on elements of democratic classroom culture and advocacy project design and implementation	Offers immediate feedback on student, teacher, and DC needs and the option of direct and targeted support	Laborious and time-intensive recordkeeping of range of data collected, and lack of timely analysis of quantitative data to date
Students: Pre-and Post-Semester Surveys	Quantitative	To gather information about students' experiences from them directly	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
Teachers: Mid-Semester Check-Ins & End-of-Semester Surveys	Qualitative & Quantitative	To gather teachers' opinions and reflections on the program and to provide immediate feedback for program improvement and immediate needs for support	Complement potential gaps in students' own self-awareness of learning; aggregate valuable feedback on program efficacy from veteran educators	Quick semester timeline requires diligence of staff and cooperation of partners to schedule check-ins and collect survey responses
DCs: Mid- & End-of-Semester Surveys	Qualitative & Quantitative	To gather DCs' opinions and reflections on the program and to provide immediate feedback for program improvement and identify immediate needs for support	Invite feedback on multiple aspects of programming; share real-time classroom progress and opportunities for program improvement	Response rates variable; quick semester timeline requires diligence of staff and cooperation of partners
Discrete Projects*				
GC Class Project Analysis	Quantitative	To analyze six years of GC student projects in order to ascertain trends according to topic, region, grade and time	Offers a summary of project details over time not afforded through our regular annual systems of evaluation	Dependent upon staff-reported project details; data from initial programming years difficult to decode
Student Alumni Survey	Qualitative & Quantitative	To gather a baseline record of what GC student alumni report as takeaways from the program and suggestions to contact them in the future in order to inform longitudinal survey design	Low-cost, low-labor survey; offered GC a rare opportunity to be in touch with students and maintain relationships post-programming	Poor student contact information collection expectedly yielded low responses rates; sample not scientifically drawn or valid for us to draw more than general impressions from results

*To be elaborated upon in the "Evidence and Discussion of Impact" section.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

GC staff conduct regular observations of all our participating classrooms. In the 2017-18 school year, staff observed 71% of classes at least two times (slightly below our 80% goal).

STUDENT SURVEYS

We employed a clustered probability sample for our student survey design, in which classrooms were clustered into small groups by region and then randomly selected to be surveyed. Surveys were distributed and administered by GC staff or classroom teachers in hard copy or electronically. We surveyed 69 schools, (49% of partners schools) and 148 classrooms (26% of all classrooms). We collected pre- and post-semester survey responses from 3,662 students, nearly 26% of all students served (compared to 1,687 students last year, 18% of all students). As expected, the number of matched pre-and post-semester surveys (surveys completed by the same student) was fewer, numbering approximately 1,000 surveys or 27% of all surveys collected. We analyzed the results of each question within the set of matching surveys, and we share matching responses in this report, unless otherwise indicated.

TEACHER AND DEMOCRACY COACH SURVEYS

GC teachers were asked to participate in in-person or virtual mid-semester check-ins with GC staff and end-of-semester online surveys. Collection efforts were led by local program staff. We collected 134 end-of-the-semester fall and spring surveys, a 54% response rate (similar to last year's 57% response rate).

DCs were surveyed online at the middle and end-of-the-semester about their experiences at training, in their classrooms, and in chapter meetings, and about their classes' plans and progress. We collected 285 end-of-semester surveys from DCs, a 52% response rate (down 61% last year).

IV. EVIDENCE AND DISCUSSION OF IMPACT

2017-18 PROGRAM OUTPUTS

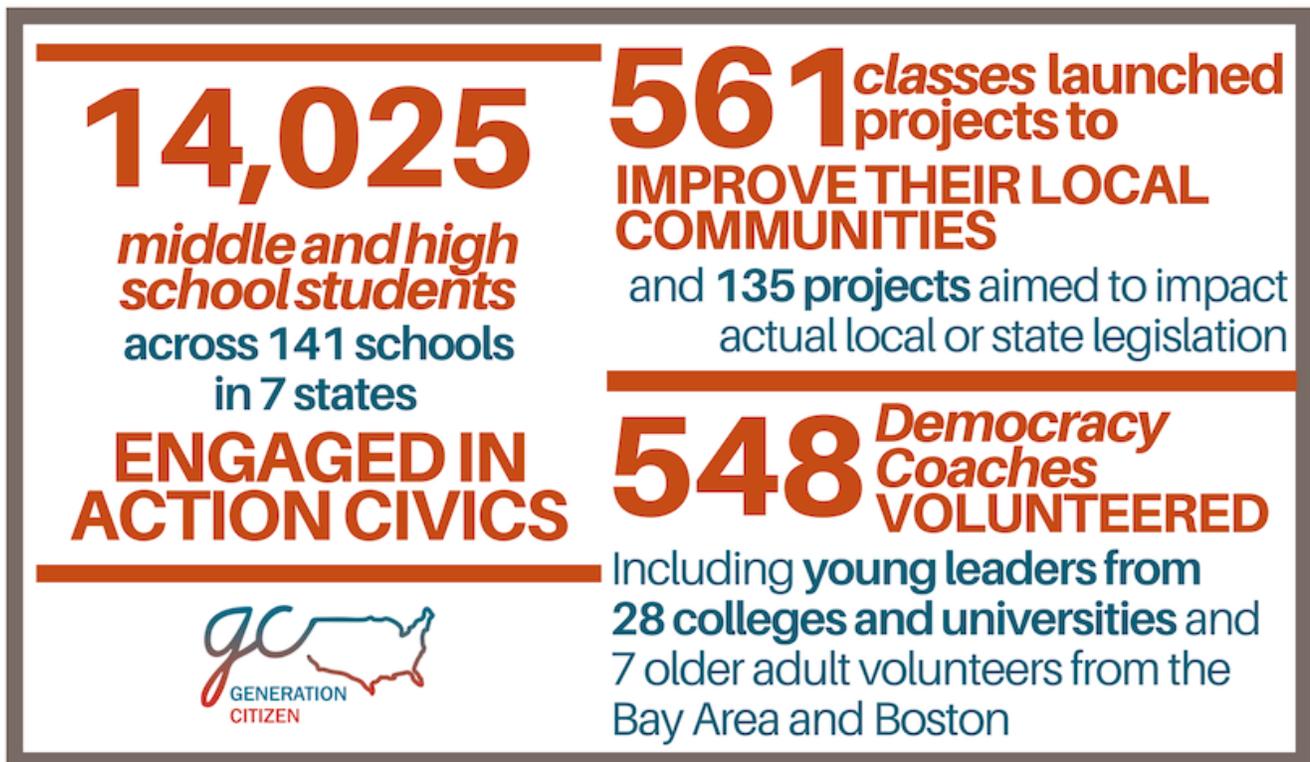


Table 2: Program Size Across Sites

	CA*	MA	NY	OK	RI	TX	NR**	Total
Students	1,625	3,925	4,350	825	2,175	825	300	14,025
Classrooms	65	157	174	33	87	33	12	561
Schools	16	32	47	9	20	12	5	141

*CA refers to programming in the Bay Area, where GC has a staffed office.

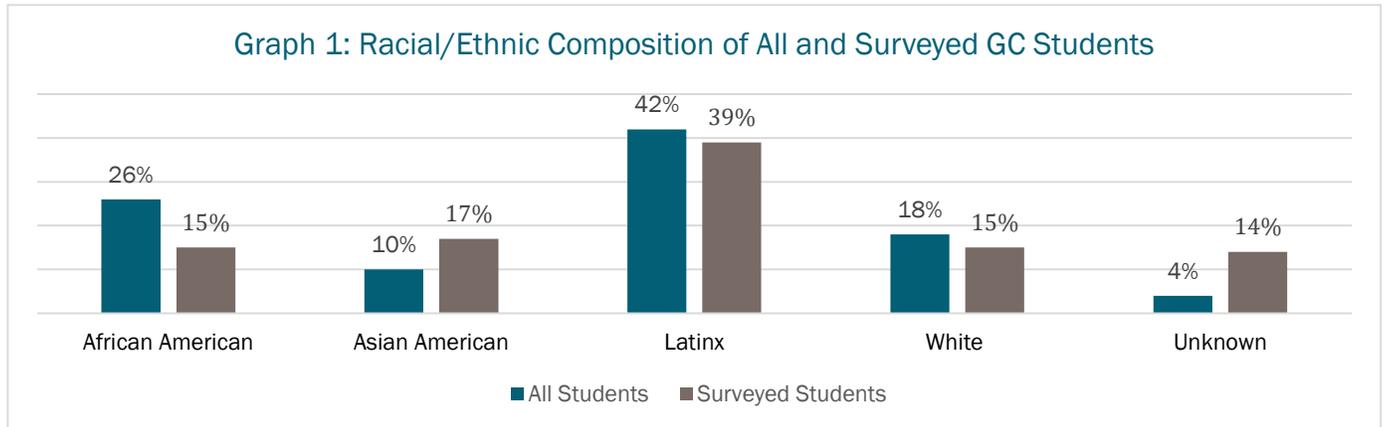
**NR is used to refer to our new "National Remote" partnerships where our national team supports districts from afar. This included schools in Camden, NJ and San Diego, CA.

Table 3: Number of Classrooms per Program Model Across Sites

	CA	MA	NY	OK	RI	TX	NR	Total
Democracy Coach	53	49	149	27	45	29	0	352
Teacher-Led	12	108	25	6	42	4	12	209

STUDENTS

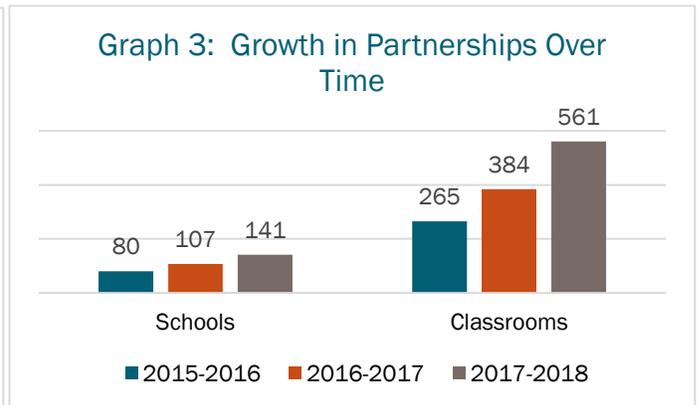
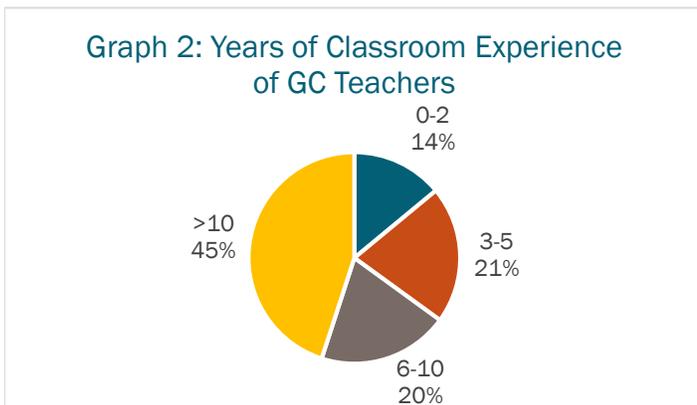
Nationally, 50% of GC classes were high school and 50% were middle school classes. Surveyed students' racial/ethnic composition was similar to that of our overall student body, primarily Latinx. Variation between the full and surveyed groups may be due to the random nature of the survey selection process, which we hope to modify in the future to ensure better representation across demographic lines within our survey responses. Of students surveyed, 50% self-identified as females, 42% as males, and 8% chose not to respond.



DEMOCRACY COACHES

Our cohort of 548 DCs was comprised of volunteers from 28 colleges and universities across our six sites as well as seven Encore DC volunteers (see page 10 for a description of Encore pilot). Sixty-eight percent of DCs were female. Fifty-six percent identified as people of color. Volunteers' participation ranged evenly overall across freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years of college. Of the respondents, we were encouraged to see that 27% of our DCs had worked with us previously and 73% were first-time GC volunteers (compared to 85% of DCs being first-time volunteers last year). DC retention was a priority of the program team in the past year and, along with racial and socioeconomic diversification, will be again in the year ahead. For a complete list of colleges and universities please see Table 5 in the Appendix.

TEACHERS, SCHOOLS, AND CLASSES



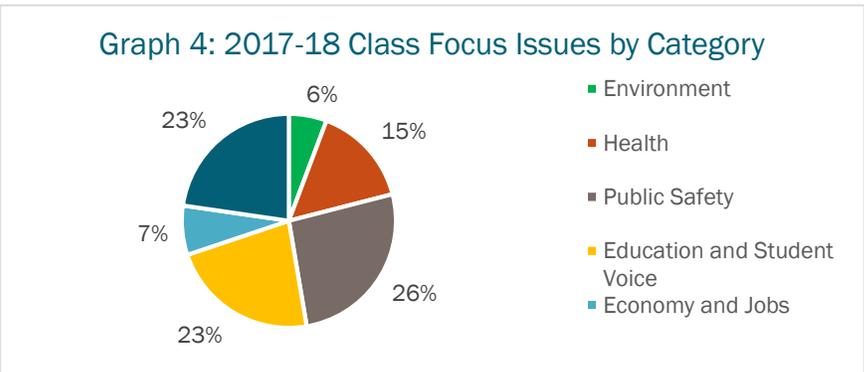
We worked with 256 teachers across 141 schools in 2017-18, the majority of whom were veteran educators.

Eighty-five percent of our school partners were defined as under-resourced, meaning that at least 50% of their students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Fifty-five percent of our partnerships

were “whole-school” or “saturated” partnerships in which we worked across an entire grade level, whereby every student in attendance is expected to participate in GC while on that campus.

In 2017-2018, we retained 72% of our 2016-17 school partners and grew our school partnerships by 32%. This growth and retention are similar to last year’s reporting, including the primary reasons for non-retention of partners (teacher or administrative turn-over or program quality). In addition to improving programming, we look forward to exploring ways to strengthen our partnerships to prevent gaps in programming during times of staff transitions.

Offered the opportunity to reflect on and select their own personally relevant issues to research and address as a class, our students focused on a range of topics. Gun violence, gentrification and homelessness, immigration drug use, policing, and sexual assault were among the most frequent issues chosen last year.



2017-18 STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

UNDERSTANDING BY THE INDICATORS

In the section below, we will take a closer look at the quantitative evidence which helps us understand students’ experiences and growth. Generally, we observed gains from student and teacher surveys across all three domains of students’ civic knowledge, skill, and disposition development.³ Where questions were modified from previous years’ evaluation tools, thereby affecting historic comparisons, we will indicate as such.

Gains in Civic Knowledge

“Getting students to understand how a bill is introduced, where it is voted on, and how lengthy the process is for it to become law seemed valuable. The experience of knowing all the people involved with the bill made government much more accessible to students. They couldn’t believe they could speak with the same senators who had power to determine a law. It gave them a sense of understanding that government is made up of people doing work for issues, and the awareness that they too could do the same.”

- Ms. Herron, GC teacher in San Francisco, California

“Students learned a valuable lesson regarding the American democracy: it possesses many bureaucratic layers. They also learned the importance of perseverance and diligence specific to enacting change within their local community.”

- Mr. Ellis, GC teacher in Providence, Rhode Island

According to teacher survey responses, 76% of students gained civic knowledge over the course of the program. Teachers cited students’ knowledge of local and non-local governmental agencies and the key agents within those democratic institutions who hold positions of power as the most valuable areas of students’ civic knowledge development.

³ In reporting on data from student surveys, we have calculated point change from the beginning to the end of the semester in the percentage of students answering correctly or positively per surveyed question.

Additionally, we observed in our student surveys:

- Gains across all knowledge measures, including students' identification of a strategic plan of action, students' understanding of the functions and structures of the branches of government on a local level, and students' knowledge of the voting process;
- A 27% increase from pre- to post-semester in the number of students who could identify a plan which would target governmental (over other forms of community) action to address a hypothetical natural disaster in their community.

While knowledge assessment is procedurally the simplest of our sets of indicators to evaluate reliably on a student survey – students either get the factual questions right or wrong – this continues to be an area of challenge for the organization, as knowledge development is not the primary focus of the program. We have revised the curriculum, our teacher and volunteer training, and our internal metric tracking in the past several years to do more to encourage students to grapple with the mechanisms of their local governments as they delve into issues of their choice. Our teachers' survey feedback suggests that this exploration of local political structures, processes, and players, is precisely the most important content with which the students engage. Yet, because students engage with these processes hyper-locally and to varying degrees, determined by their respective plans of action, the student surveys which we employ across all our districts from coast-to-coast do not accurately or vividly capture these gains.

It is important to pay attention to teachers' strong positive reflections on their students' engagement with the intricacies of local government. Our years of partnering with educators have revealed that often teachers lack either confidence in their knowledge of non-federal governmental institutions or basic knowledge in this domain themselves. (Perhaps they were themselves denied a strong civics education which emphasized local aspects of government, precisely the challenge they are broaching now for their students.) Teachers' high estimation of students' learning here might be a reflection of teachers' increasing aptitude, as well. Observing this, we have begun developing stronger teacher training materials to ensure that educators start the program familiar with the components they will be covering with their students, and we intend to devote more resources to this need in months to come.

While we are excited to learn from students and teachers that young people in our program are gaining local civic knowledge, we also know that a strong grounding in historic civic content (the Constitution and primary documents, the foundational principals of democracy, etc.) is a vital component of the well-rounded civics education which all students deserve. We are eager to explore partnerships with other experts in the education space to offer strong resources to teachers looking to solidify this foundation upon which students can build in their GC programming.

Development of Civic Skills

"My students' group collaboration and formal communication skills grew immensely from our work with GC. To give them authentic problems to solve and then ask them to contact leaders in the community raised the stakes and it pushed many of my students to learn how to communicate effectively with others."

- Ms. Dodd, GC teacher in San Diego, California

"[Students learned about] collaboration with individuals who do not necessarily agree with them ... [and] how to identify barriers to collaboration and then how to navigate that space as they attempt to move past those problems/disagreements."

- Ms. Griswold, GC teacher in Austin, Texas

Teachers observed development of civic skills among 71% of their students. On end-of-semester surveys, teachers referenced professional communication, critical thinking, and collaboration and teamwork as areas where students demonstrated the most growth.

Student surveys offered additional insight on students' skill development, on familiar metrics (ability to speak in public, ability to construct an action plan) as well as new a selection of new survey questions. Before the fall of 2017, we made several strategic updates to our surveys in efforts to both minimize confusion related to their instructions (we narrowed the scale of responses for self-assessment questions from a six-point to a four-point Likert scale) and to collect more information about our students' growth (we added six new questions assessing how well students thought they could research issues, converse with people of differing opinions, and work with people with whom they disagree, among others).

Our analysis revealed:

- Student gains on all indicators, in numbers similar to growth demonstrated in past years, most notably in their confidence speaking in public (a 13% increase in the percentage of students who could do this “Very Not Well” or “Not Well” to “Well” or “Very Well”) and in their ability to construct a strategic action plan (a 9% increase);
- A positive shift in students' self-reported ability to collaborate (from a 5% decline in students' confidence on this measure last year to a 2% increase this year) - we posited in last year's report that dips in students' confidence in their interpersonal skills might have been due to the vitriol of the presidential election during the time of their engagement with GC;
- Students' scores increasing on all new indicators, most notably knowing who to contact to solve a problem in the community (a 49% increase), followed by beliefs in their ability to research issues (11.5%) and to work with others with whom they disagree (10%).

In years past, we have elaborated on the universal challenge of assessing skill development via self-assessment surveys, which capture only students' confidence demonstrating skills, not their proficiency in doing so. Similarly, students' confidence in their abilities may drop as they learn the skill required to demonstrate them at the same time as their actual competence in the skill is increasing. Although we observed gains in all of the questions, these challenges remain as we need to continue contextualizing our student survey processes within other methods of evaluation, like teacher surveys, portfolio rubrics, and qualitative assessments.

Cultivation of Civic Dispositions

“Yesterday two teachers commented to me after [a group of students presented] about how much less conflict they have had with those students over the last few months as they've begun to realize that they could and did achieve a systematic change in our school. A number of students also made comments and took actions that showed that they are more hopeful about being able to make change on a local level as well after experiencing this win.”

- Ms. McKay Bryson, GC teacher and Teacher Leadership Board member in Roxbury, Massachusetts

“My students really felt like their opinions did not matter. But this program raised an awareness and provoked a new thought inside of them. Yes, I do matter, and I can help to make a change.”

- Ms. Davis, GC teacher in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Civic dispositions are the underlying beliefs and mindsets which incline people to participate in the political process, including a sense of responsibility to community and belief that they can make a

difference. Teachers identified that 61% of their students cultivated civic dispositions as an effect of the GC program.

We made several changes to this section of students' 2017-18 surveys, like those described in the skills section above. We simplified answer choices when possible (moving from a six-point to four-point Likert scale), eliminated redundant questions to minimize survey fatigue, and created a few new questions around intergenerational learning and learning across lines of difference.

Students' survey results demonstrated that:

- 70% of GC students believed they have power to make a difference in their communities by the end of the semester;
- Students' interest in engaging in civic activities increased the most in their likelihood of running for public office (a 49% increase, compared to a 43% drop last year) and in participating in the most active and strategic political activities offered as choices, such as contacting or meeting with a public official (a 47% increase, compared to 29% growth last year), writing an article, op-ed, or letter to the editor in the future (a 36% increase, compared to 42% growth last year), or attending a community meeting (a 12% increase, compared to 13% growth last year);
- Students' gains were most negligible on general activities such as volunteering in their community (a 4% increase) and wanting to vote (a 1% increase), though these were activities also had high baselines of students interested at the beginning of the semester (57% and 73%, respectively);
- There was no change pre- to post-semester in students' interest in discussing politics (despite an 8% increase last year), though 53% of students entered the program likely to engage in that behavior already, a relatively high baseline;
- Of the new questions added, we observed students' greatest gains in wanting seeking conversations with people with differing points of view (a 12% increase); ninety-four percent of students entered the program already believing that learning from other generations is valuable, a number which remained relatively steady over the course of the program.

It is validating to see the greatest gains in students' likelihood of engaging in civic activities to be in the realm of active political engagement, like running for office or contacting elected officials. We suspect that enhancements to the curriculum's research process in the summer of 2017, in which groups of students are now expected to make calls and send emails to elected officials and community advocates, has bolstered students' confidence and buoyed their enthusiasm for this type of engagement. Given the dramatic jump in the percentage of students interested in running for office from last year to this year, we also cannot overestimate the influence of the broader political environment on students' perceptions and lives. Rather than the vicious polarizing discourse of presidential candidates that our students observed and internalized in the 2016-17 school year, last year's students were witness to groundswells of citizen participation in the form of rallies, protests, walk-outs, and more. The 49% increase we saw on this metric this year surpasses even the 31% growth we observed in the 2015-16 school year. Though our students are so young that the long-term effects of this socialization have yet to be seen, we will be interested to continue to observe these indicators in years to come.

Experience with Civic Action

"One of our students called [Councilmember] Bill Perkins and talked to his secretary about potentially getting him to come speak to the class. The secretary said that he would be interested and to email her to confirm a date. This one student was so proud of himself that he ran out of the room, jumped in the air and said, 'I'M GOING TO CHANGE THE WORLD.'"

- Katie, Democracy Coach from New York City, New York

“This was the first time many of the students either made a professional phone call or drafted a professional email.”

- Mr. Gotsell, GC teacher in Easton, Massachusetts

In addition to working to develop students’ civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions, we also strive to offer students opportunities to practice civic participation within GC programming. Students and adults alike learn by doing, and building the muscles of civic engagement is no different. To hold ourselves accountable to this aim, as of the 2016-17 school year we now gather information on students’ surveys about their experiences with civic action coming into and then leaving the program.

From 2017-18 surveys we learned that over the course of their GC semester:

- There was an 175% increase in the number of students who had ever contacted a public official- from 18% of students pre-semester to 49% post-semester who had participated in the activity, and there was a 135% increase in the number of students who had ever written an article or op-ed- from 11% to 26% of students.
- There was a 75% increase in the number of students who had worked collaboratively to solve a community issue, a 34% increase in the number who had signed a petition, and a 20% increase in the number who had attended a community meeting. We saw an 8% increase in the number of students who had attended a meeting of a student group or club.

We did refine this section before the 2017-18 school year to maximize clarity in the section’s directions and questions. Although we think it is substantially clearer this year, as with any survey, questions may have been misinterpreted or answered incorrectly by students. For instance, some students responded “yes” to engaging in an activity prior to GC (in pre-survey) but responded “no” to having ever engaged in that same activity after GC (in post-survey).

This section of student surveys reveals the most profound gains of any competency measured on the surveys and underscores that engaging students in new civic behaviors is a clear value-add of GC programming. In areas where students’ baseline experiences are minimal, we saw outstanding growth, such as contacting public officials or working collaboratively to solve community problems. Corollary to this, we did not see as much growth in areas where students are likely to engage in these experiences without our intervention, such as attending student or community group meetings.

We view engagement in civic activities during the program not merely as learning opportunities but rather as a matter of equity. The most powerful way to engage [a student] in civic or political activities is to invite him or her to participate.⁴ Yet, a National Assessment of Educational Progress study concluded that these invitations are not extended equally to all students. While researchers observed that in general, “more students [are] asked to memorize material from social studies textbooks than to engage in a range of “best practices,” for example, role-playing exercises and mock trials, visits from those who are active in the community, or opportunities to help solve community problems, the study also found “that students of color and those from low-education families [are] the least likely to experience these desired opportunities.”⁵ Creating space within the classroom for students to experiment with civic engagement is a vital precursor to building their confidence employing these skills and strategies on their own in the future.

⁴ Kinder, D.R. (1998). Opinion and action in the realm of politics. In D.T. Gilbert, S.T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (4th ed., pp. 778-867). Boston: McGraw-Hill.

⁵ Kahne, J. & Middaugh, E. (2008). Democracy for some: the civic opportunity gap in high school (Working Paper No. 59). Retrieved from Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement website: <http://civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/WP59Kahne.pdf>

Program Feedback

“Many of my students who are typically disengaged stepped up because they felt purpose with this project and understood that what we were doing in the classroom could actually have a community impact.”

- Ms. McAlduff, GC teacher in Berkeley, California

“...This is something that should be in every [government classroom]. This is a great opportunity for students to be become connected with their communities.”

- Ms. Perez-Ruiz, GC teacher in the Bronx, New York

Our teachers, DCs, and students offer valuable information to continue improving our curriculum, training, and support in addition to our operations as an organization. Their 2017-18 surveys revealed that:

- Seventy-three percent of students would recommend GC to their friends (compared to 69% of students last year).
- We also saw significant increases on several of students’ other program feedback indicators: 77% of respondents said GC broached interesting topics (compared to 32% last year), and 81% said that they had a say in projects they worked on more than in other classes (up from 41% last year), though we attribute some of this increase to a simplification of the survey instructions.
- Ninety-one percent of DCs had a “Good” or “Excellent” experience overall (compared to 84% last year), and 80% would confidently recommend participating to a peer, consistent with our findings in past academic years. DCs also demonstrated, as they have consistently, deep commitment to the program, committing on average five hours a week to GC (from preparation to travel to classroom time to meetings).
- Eighty-six percent of teachers rated their experience as “Good” or “Excellent” (91% last year) and 78% would confidently recommend partnership to others (78% last year).
- Teachers who responded to our end-of-the semester surveys noted the following as their top motivations for partnering with the program: its emphasis on students’ civic development, opportunity for students’ engagement with community, and emphasis on project-based learning.

Anecdotally, teachers and DCs elevated their ongoing struggle keeping all students engaged in the project, highlighting small group work as a challenging time to maintain all students’ focus. In the 2018-19 school year, we plan to create differentiated middle and high school versions of the curriculum which we intend will better meet students’ needs, and we will be partnering with a research firm, Glass Frog Solutions, to explore student engagement in our classrooms in more detail (observing who is engaged or not, at what moments, and why, among other questions). Teachers and DCs also have cited the difficulty of getting through all course material in the time allotted. We will be prioritizing this feedback within our curricular revision project, as well.

REAL-WORLD APPLICATIONS OF LEARNING

The stories in this section integrate the discrete components of civic learning reviewed above and describe the experiential and cyclical process of young people developing and applying their civic knowledge, skills, and values to drive change in their communities. While just a sample, these stories demonstrate the power of students advocating for systemic change in their communities.

California

Seniors in the Green Academy at Abraham Lincoln High School recognized the disastrous impact of water pollution in the Bay Area. They first tackled the issue by learning about the situation in other schools and neighborhoods and about citywide initiatives addressing the matter. They compiled a report on the various types of litter near waterways in their community and then advocated and succeeded in having their school participate in San Francisco Water's Adopt-A-Drain program for storm drains near their campus. Ultimately, the class supported the introduction of legislation that would ban plastic straws in San Francisco, working closely and hosting meetings with District Supervisor Katy Tang, who then sponsored the ordinance in June 2018. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed the ordinance in the summer.

Massachusetts

High school students at Mary Lyon Pilot School watched as rising rent prices extended into many Boston neighborhoods, including their own, Brighton, and decided to advocate for affordable housing. They worked with their Massachusetts State Representative, Kevin Honan, to support his bill which would preserve and create housing for low-income residents across the Commonwealth. They wrote and called state representatives to lobby in support of the bill, developed a website about the impact of gentrification, and researched the long-term effects of gentrification on their community. Once the bill passed the House in January 2018, several students testified at the Senate Committee on Bonding, Capital Expenditures and State Assets on the importance of the revised bill and their own experiences with the changing landscape of Brighton. Students continued their advocacy in the spring by directly voicing their concerns about community impact to the Boston Landing Development leadership team. In May, Governor Charlie Baker signed the bill into law.

New York

In the fall semester of 2017, Seniors at Urban Assembly Institute of Math and Science for Young Women, an all-girls school in Brooklyn, recognized a dearth of monuments commemorating African-American female leaders in public places in their community. The students' goal was to have the New York City Parks Department install a statute or plaque featuring a female abolitionist in a local park. Their focus on this issue was timely, as Mayor de Blasio had recently convened a local monuments task force to study and make recommendations about ways to diversity figures represented in city monuments. The class conducted research about existing local monuments, secured petition signatures from community members, and met with the New York City Parks Department to advocate for their suggestion of including the abolitionist Elizabeth Gloucester in their improvements. Though Elizabeth Gloucester did not appear as a recommendation in the task force's final report, one student from the class later wrote a powerful article in *City Limits* online magazine underscoring the importance of their continued advocacy for diverse representations of historical figures, particularly in communities of color.

Oklahoma

Seniors at U.S. Grant High School identified limited access to higher education as an issue especially negatively impacting the undocumented members of their community. By reaching out to and learning from a local advocacy group, students discovered that Oklahoma's Promise – a state-managed scholarship fund for students whose families make less than \$55,000 per year – was originally extended to all Oklahoma residents and had only recently been amended to exclude undocumented residents. After contacting the offices of several state representatives about the change, Representative Cindy Munson of Oklahoma City responded enthusiastically to their arguments, saying that she would be willing to introduce a bill during the 2019 legislative session to re-establish Oklahoma's Promise as a promise for all Oklahoma students, regardless of documentation status. As all students from this class have since graduated, their teacher, Mr.

Rhodes, is eager to connect future students with Representative Munson should they choose to pursue the issue of access to education themselves.

Rhode Island

Students at Central High School were concerned about the number of homeless people they saw near their school and yearned to find a systemic way to help address the issue in their community. After meeting with Professor Eric Hirsch from Providence College, the class decided to advocate for S0317, an appropriations bill which had not been passed in previous legislative sessions but which would designate \$5 million to expand affordable housing in Rhode Island. The students presented their research and proposal to one of the original bill's co-sponsors, Senator Frank Ciccone, who agreed to reintroduce the bill during the 2018 Rhode Island Legislative Session. With the students' support, this appropriation was introduced as S2061 by Senator Ciccone on January 18, 2018. While the bill was eventually stuck in committee, the students' efforts brought renewed attention to the issue and renewed conversation among decision makers about potential means to address it.

Texas

Seventh grade students at Webb Middle School lobbied the City of Austin to allocate funding through the Community Envisioning Project to repurposing an abandoned Home Depot lot into a public space, thereby fulfilling a promise to reinvigorate the community of St. John's. The class created a social media campaign, circulated an on-campus petition, and met with the principal to open a dialogue about getting the school to co-sponsor their initiative. They also attended a neighborhood information day, which they catalyzed into a campaign to generate community support for their project and ask. The City has not yet responded to the student's or community's campaign.

Beyond....

In San Diego, students concerned with school attendance and tardiness at Hoover High School drew inspiration from New York City's policy of providing public school students with free metro (subway) passes to commute to and from school. They attended a Board of Education meeting and advocated that all students attending Title I schools in San Diego Unified receive free transit passes. A school board member was impressed with the students' presentation at the school board meeting and visited their classroom, along with a representative from the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System, to learn more about their campaign. No funding has yet been allocated to the expenditure.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT OVER TIME

GC CLASS PROJECT ANALYSIS

In the past year, Elena Gustafson, a graduate student at the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley, undertook a project to assess eleven semesters of GC classroom focus issue data. She analyzed the projects by theme, region, grade, and time to explore trends and relationships among these variables and to contribute to the growing body of literature on Action Civics. To our knowledge, this was the first systematic investigation of the patterns of issues youth are focusing on within the Action Civics realm. The data yielded 1,651 projects with meaningful information to analyze, stretching from the spring of 2012 to the fall of 2017. Data from the spring of 2018 is currently under analysis.

The projects were coded into the following eight categories (listed with example project details):

- **Safety and Violence** (23% of projects): bullying, gang violence, gun violence, sexual assault, domestic violence, racial profiling
- **Schooling** (22%): school climate, school lunches, budget cuts, curricula, dropout rates, facilities, extracurricular activities, student resources

- **Basic Needs** (12%): homelessness, poverty, food access
- **Justice** (12%): policing, immigration, criminal justice, gun policy
- **Health** (11%): substance abuse, mental health, teen pregnancy
- **Environment** (8%): pollution, conservation, water management, parks
- **College, Career Enrichment** (7%): employment, college funding, career prep
- **Transportation** (6%): school transit, public transit, infrastructure, car safety

Ms. Gustafson’s report offers descriptive evidence that youth in GC classes are acutely aware of how their communities are affected in matters of social justice, inequity, and violence. Students are aware of current events of local importance, as well as broader community trends and epidemiological factors that impact health and equity. Further, these students learn to find creative solutions to act on these diverse community issues, as noted previously in the “Real-World Applications of Learning” section of this report.

Some highlighted trends from this research include:

- Middle school classes focused more on Safety and Violence projects, with a large focus on ‘bullying,’ while high school classes had a larger focus on College/Career topics (11th grade) and Justice topics (12th grade). Middle school Health projects showed spikes in 8th grade related to “substance abuse,” 9th grade to “well-being,” specifically “student stress,” 10th grade to “teen pregnancy.” Both of these patterns align with the theory of positive youth development and growing capacity to address anticipated stressors at different stages of adolescent development. However, over time within the Health category, “well-being” and “teen pregnancy” projects decreased, while “substance abuse” projects increased; this parallels the epidemiological trends seen over the past five years in adolescence.
- Middle school classes often addressed broader projects (i.e., ‘homelessness,’ ‘food access’ and ‘police brutality’) while high school classes more frequently addressed projects with more specificity or systems-orientation (i.e., ‘homeless services,’ ‘food system,’ and ‘criminal justice laws’). This aligns with stage-salient growth processes described in positive youth development and sociopolitical development theory, as well as the “developmental mismatch” often found in high schools with less space for student autonomy and decision-making within the school setting. Interestingly our findings in [Spring 2017 Focus Group](#) found that “taking civic action” meant different things for students of different age groups—younger students in middle schools focused on actions at the hyper-local school level and older students in high school focused on broader community issues—which we surmised to be a reflection of the scale of their own classroom projects.⁶
- Regional variations showed classes focused on issues of local importance, such as ‘gangs’ in Rhode Island, ‘housing’ in the Bay Area, and ‘opioids’ in Massachusetts. This underscores student awareness of the role of inequity and injustice in their communities as well as consciousness of larger epidemiological and social trends.
- Variations over time show youth are responding to national campaigns and issues impacted by federal action; this is exemplified by spikes in ‘police brutality’ in fall 2015 (following the non-indictment in the shooting of Michael Brown and rise of Black Lives Matter) and increases in ‘immigration’ and ‘discrimination’ since the spring of 2017, paralleling increases in federal anti-immigrant legislation and a rise of hate crimes across the county. Overall, Justice and Basic Needs topics trended upward over time more than other topics.

⁶ Link to report on Spring 2017 focus group sessions: <https://generationcitizen.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/GC-Focus-Group-Report-Spring-2017.pdf>

- Regional variations by time also show that youth are aware of timely community issues; Bay Area classes focused on “water waste” projects at the height of the state drought in 2015-16, Massachusetts classes responded to transit (2012) or school budget cuts (2016) related to local budget crises, and New York City classes addressed “stop and frisk” (2012-13).
- Youth are also engaged in local issues before the topics gained larger media recognition or civic engagement focus. For instance, Massachusetts classes started focusing on “opioids” in the fall of 2016, after an increase in regional overdose deaths but before the growth in media and public attention to the topic in the spring of 2017. Over the two semesters (Spring 2017-Fall 2017) of GC programming in Oklahoma, a high proportion of classes (8 of 29, 28%) were focused on school funding issues related to budget cuts and teacher pay, highlighting their engagement with this topic before teacher strikes and media coverage in the spring of 2018.

Projects were also assessed for their alignment with traumatic experiences and issues of equity (for example, most Safety projects directly dealt with trauma, and most Basic Needs projects dealt with equity). Many projects inherently or directly dealt with traumatic experiences, paralleling research showing youth have a high exposure to community and interpersonal violence. Action Civics projects can provide a space for “positive adaptation” and building of protective factors- youth show resilience by addressing traumatic issues through action projects, providing a potentially effective and relevant way to address these risk factors. Many projects also dealt with equity and specifically targeted root causes of systemic issues, highlighting youth’s ‘critical consciousness’ and ability to be justice-oriented citizens. This study helps reveal how youth around the county are “doing civics,” and thus allows GC to contribute to civic engagement research, theory development, and outcome measurements.

These findings, among others, are currently under review for publication. If you would like further information, please contact GC staff for more details on Ms. Gustafson’s report.

STUDENT ALUMNI SURVEY

Despite deep interest in assessing the long-term effects of GC’s programming on students, lack of capacity and resources have prevented GC from engaging in large-scale longitudinal evaluation to date. To begin preparing for that future opportunity, we administered a short survey to student alumni last spring to gather information about whether our expectations for what students would remember from the program matched their actual civic behaviors, and students’ own recommendations for how GC could stay in touch with them.

We emailed a ten-question survey to 1,867 student alumni and received 88 responses- an expectedly low response rate of 5%. From this limited scope we drew the following observations:

- Sixty-nine percent of students were younger than 18, suggesting that either students who more recently completed the program were more likely to respond and/or that GC’s contact information tracking procedures have improved over time.
- Fifty-two percent of respondents age 18+ had not furthered their education beyond high school.
- Eighty-one percent of respondents age 18+ noted they were eligible to vote, though only 48% had registered to vote and 19% had voted in the most recent November elections.
- In the past year, 43% of respondents had contacted an elected or governmental official, primarily by email (39% of respondents who had engaged in this behavior), phone (37%), or in person (12%). We do not know how much of this engagement occurred during GC classes.
- The average respondent was affiliated with more than one (1.25) community organization. Engagement with a volunteer group such as scouting or other community service was most

common (31% of respondents), followed by religious groups (30%), sports teams (27%), and political groups (15%).

- Eighty-five percent of respondents felt that they had the power to make a difference in their community. When asked to elaborate, many articulated that everyone has a voice and referenced their own abilities to speak persuasively, mobilize others, and persevere. Those who didn't feel empowered (15% of respondents) noted their age, ethnicity, and "low social status" as impediments to civic agency.
- When asked to respond anecdotally about what they remembered from GC, respondents most frequently cited the Advocacy Hourglass, interacting with adults (either as speakers or at Civics Day), skill-building activities like collaborating with others and reaching out to community members, and the sheer enjoyment of the class itself. This finding was also consistent with our Spring 2017 Focus Group results.
- When asked the best ways to get in touch with them in the future, respondents vastly favored email (93% identified it as an effective method, though this is likely skewed as it was the method of contact for this survey) and text (42%) over Snapchat (18%), Instagram or snail mail (10% each), phone calls (9%), What's App (6%), or Facebook (3%).

This survey was a low-touch method to begin ascertaining how GC alumni's behavior and intention differ, if at all, from youth who have not participated in our programming and how best we should operationalize a longitudinal research endeavor. Analyzing students' responses has reinforced the following questions:

- How do students' responses immediately post-program correlate with their actual civic behavior later? Do most students leave the program with positive intentions which diminish over time, or are students from more recent programming affected more strongly than were students who engaged in previous iterations of programming?
- What are the best methods to contact and receive information from our alumni? How can we better (more easily, consistently, and reliably) be in direct contact with our students after the program, whether by collecting their information ourselves, with the consent of our school and district partners, or having them connect with us?

V. CONCLUSIONS

REFLECTIONS ON 2017-18

Civics education is undergoing a renaissance at the moment. On the heels of the tumultuous 2016 presidential election, countless pundits, journalists, and citizens alike are calling for a reexamination of how we teach our young people to engage with one another and with their, our, political system. Believing that Action Civics is part of the solution for strengthening our collective democracy moving forward, our charge at GC has been to relentlessly work to improve our program quality while also experimenting to test how Action Civics can be employed by any school or district whose leaders recognize its transformative potential.

In the past year, we expanded programming, both within our current geographies and - for the first time - in new un-staffed locales, while maintaining or improving previous years' rates of student learning and stakeholder satisfaction. We did this, in part, by refining the touch points GC staff have with teachers near and far to ensure that educators receive both the broad-based training and the individualized support needed to effectively facilitate Action Civics for the first time.

We have continued learning, from student surveys, alumni surveys, and DC and teacher feedback, about the value of students practicing civic behaviors (including contacting elected officials, organizing or attending meetings with community leaders, and making presentations about their proposals) within the program. Students are largely not engaging in these activities on their own, and GC is often their first opportunity to develop a specific vocabulary and skill set for this purpose. We have built more opportunities into our curriculum, through a participatory action research unit, to codify these experiences into expectations of participation in GC. We have more work to do in this regard to ensure that *all* students within GC classrooms engage in these activities, not just the most motivated project leaders.

Experimentation continues to fuel our team and drive program refinements and innovations. We must manage these processes so that lessons are integrated across program models and sites. We have seen far-reaching benefits, for example, from strengthening the local governmental advocacy training we provide to teachers. This project arose with our development of teacher-led programming, as we could no longer rely on training and supporting DCs to take responsibility for the advocacy expertise aspects of Action Civics implementation, and has now been built into our DC program model. Our Encore, Search Institute and modified DC role pilots have similarly been mutually illuminating and reinforcing. Each has taught us that we must continue the process of testing, enunciating, and communicating with clarity DCs' and teachers' respective roles, and we must design training and curricular materials with this delineation in mind.

We are finding success in developing and retaining strong partnerships with schools. Principals are seeing Action Civics come to life in their classrooms and, as demonstrated through their ongoing partnership, valuing the impact it is having on their students and campus communities. However, they are grasping for the language with which to describe this impact, language which would help them better make the case for prioritizing and funding Action Civics to their own boards, parents, and influencers. It is incumbent upon us in the year ahead to turn attention toward this need. We must offer partners more succinct, direct, and timely evidence of their students' learning than the qualitative data we gather from observing students' advocacy.

This speaks to the reciprocal relationship we have observed in the past year between our programmatic and policy efforts, and the need for strong program evaluation to undergird both streams of work. High-quality Action Civics programming demands effective teachers who have the support of their administrators to engage in this work. Administrators must have the budgets to support teachers' participation in training and the program and the approval of their supervisors to direct resources towards programs that do not factor into their schools' accountability ratings. Sustainable in-school programming is dependent on advocacy and effective advocacy is dependent upon data articulating the impact of strong programming. We must continue to strengthen our evaluation practices to support our team's and partners' efforts in both domains.

We also have recognized the need to better and more comprehensively define the role of equity in our work. While we do articulate that we intend to focus our intervention on low income students, a population tracked internally through a target that 90% of our school partners have at least 50% or more of their students receiving free or reduced lunch, we have not adequately explained the why of this goal. Some may recognize within this goal our desire to address the civic engagement gap, while some may implore us to better explain our ultimate purpose in uplifting young people who have traditionally been excluded from formal power structures. We both understand a need to better define our target population and to ensure that this focus on equity is part of our intended outcomes and evaluation. We acknowledge that this ultimately may entail shifting our mission and theory of change to distill the difference between a program that intends to secure civics education for all, and one that educates young people from historically marginalized populations to be politically engaged for the purpose of shifting existing power dynamics.

MOVING FORWARD

More opportunities for student and organizational learning await in the 2018-19 school year. Within the next 12 months, we will:

- Partner with researchers on a study to examine the micro-factors impacting students' engagement with or disengagement from the program;
- Create and pilot differentiated middle and school versions of our foundational curriculum, including developmentally appropriate opportunities for practice engaging in civic behaviors and a shared emphasis on enhancing the cultural relevance of the curriculum for students of color;
- Expand our partnerships in rural districts and observe how our curriculum, training, and support translate for partners in remote locations;
- Develop training and assessment materials to support classroom and school leaders' efforts to integrate Action Civics into their institutions for the long-term;
- Organize the activities and lessons from our pilots to inform program design and execution across GC;
- Strengthen structures for receiving feedback from our program partners by developing a Teacher Leadership Board (launched in the summer of 2018) and determining a plan for introducing student members on our National Board of Directors;
- Align and refine our evaluation strategies and tools by first hiring a full-time Impact Manager and then engaging in research and partnerships to improve our assessment of students' civic knowledge, skills, and disposition development; and
- Ensure that equity is at the forefront of our priorities and our programmatic reforms.

Year after year, our students demonstrate the power of personal conviction, collaboration, strategic planning, boldness, and persistence. They delve into what they do not know with curiosity and healthy doses of idealism and skepticism. They try, reflect, adapt, and try again. They change policies. They improve programs. They at once build community around their projects and strengthen their communities through their projects. They do what we aspire to accomplish as an organization every day. As we ground ourselves in the responsibility of working for their benefit in the year ahead, may we also ground ourselves in learning from their example.

VI. APPENDIX

Figure 1. Generation Citizen Theory of Change

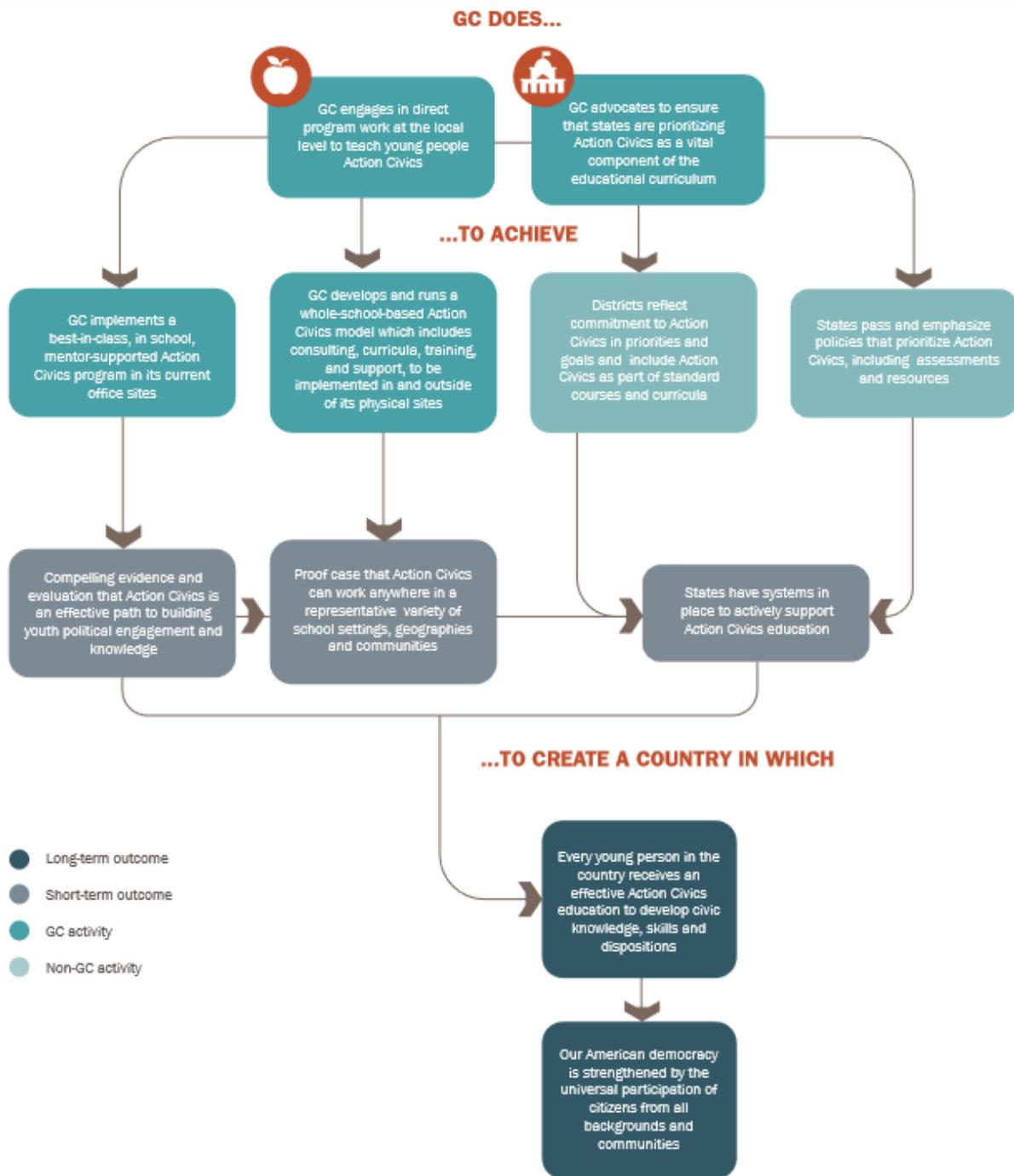


Table 4: List of Summer 2018 Community Change Fellowship (CCF) Host Organizations

Region	Organization
Massachusetts	Fair Shot for All*
	Lowell Center for Hope and Healing*
	Lowell Community Health Center: TeenBLOCK*
	Office of Boston City Councilor At Large Annissa Essaibi George
	Office of Boston City Councilor At Large Ayanna Pressley
	Office of Boston City Councilor Lydia Edwards
	Office of Congresswoman Katherine Clark*
New York	Assemblymember Michael Blake*
	Assemblymember Diana Richardson*
	Assemblymember Tremaine Wright
	Citizens Union
	Councilmember Laurie Cumbo
	Councilmember Mark Levine*
	Councilmember Ritchie Torres*
	Make the Road*
	Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
	New York City Campaign Finance Board*
	New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board*
	New York Public Research Interest Group (NYPIRG)
	Police Athletic League
	The Hope Program
Rhode Island	City of Providence*
	Children's Youth Cabinet
	Providence Public School District
	Recycle-A-Bike
	Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council*
	Year-Up*

*Indicates returning Host Organizations, who had partnered with CCF in previous years.

Table 5: List of 2017-18 Colleges & Universities of Democracy Coach Volunteers

Region	College/University	
California	Mills College	University of California- Berkeley
	Saint Mary's College of CA	University of San Francisco
	San Francisco State University	
Massachusetts	Boston College	Northeastern University
	Boston University	Tufts University
	Emerson College	
New York	Baruch College	New School
	Columbia University/Barnard College	New York University
	Fordham University- Rose Hill	Pace University
	Hunter College	Queens College
	John Jay College of Criminal Justice	Wagner College
Medgar Evers College		
Oklahoma	Oklahoma City University	University of Oklahoma
	University of Central Oklahoma	
Rhode Island	Brown University	Providence College
Texas	St. Edward's University	University of Texas