Research Summary
VALUES, DISPOSITIONS AND ATTITUDES

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Definitions

Whether intentionally or not, schools and other educational settings and programs develop character traits, dispositions, virtues, and values. These qualities lay the foundation for the health of democracy and civil society.

Civic and political values are a subset of the values that young people should learn, and there are no sharp lines separating the civic/political domain from others.[2] For example, the list of "core competencies" advocated by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making—are valuable in civic life *and* in personal and career life.[3] Likewise, there are no sharp boundaries around civic education, which can take place in a civics class, in other classes, in the co-curriculum, or beyond schools.

The literature on character education, social-emotional learning, and Positive Youth Development is expansive, covering a wide range of interventions, settings, and outcomes. This paper focuses on the effects of classroom-based civics education on values directly relevant to democracy and commonly emphasized in political science, such as support for democracy and human rights and political efficacy (the belief that one's political actions make a difference). This paper does *not* address issues that may also be relevant to civic education, such as the

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[1] With edits from Dr. Peter Levine, Tufts University; Dr. Joseph Kahne, University of California Riverside

[2] Crittenden, Jack and Levine, Peter, "Civic Education", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/civic-education/>.]

[3] CASEL, "What is SEL?": https://casel.org/what-is-sel/

psychosocial benefits of contributing to one's community,[4] the effects of various pedagogies on character development,[5] or how adolescents develop a sense of *purpose* that may motivate voluntarism and career choices in adulthood.[6]

- **Civic and Political Dispositions and Values**

The dispositions and values that political theorists and political scientists tend to consider central to a democratic society today include "tolerance, equality, due process, respect for the rule of law, and support for the fundamental political institutions of our society"[7] as well "concern for others rights and welfare, fairness, reasonable levels of trust, and a sense of public duty."[8] Political scientists also emphasize the importance of efficacy: the sense that one's actions, either alone or in combination with others, can make a difference. Research has consistently shown that a sense of self-efficacy is strongly correlated with civic action.[9] A related concept, more common in developmental psychology, is "agency," which includes the ability to form and act on a strategy for changing the world.[10]

Today, many people are concerned that the schools are not sufficiently exposing students to appropriate civic values.[11] Studies have shown that young people express increasing

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[4] e.g.., Lerner, Richard M., Jacqueline V. Lerner, Jason B. Almerigi, Christina Theokas, Erin Phelps, Steinunn Gestsdottir, Sophie Naudeau et al. "Positive youth development, participation in community youth development programs, and community contributions of fifth-grade adolescents: Findings from the first wave of the 4-H study of positive youth development." The Journal of Early Adolescence 25, no. 1 (2005): 17-71.

[5] See Nucci, Larry, Tobias Krettenauer, and Darcia Narváez, eds. Handbook of moral and character education. Routledge, 2014

[6] Damon, William, Jenni Menon, and Kendall Cotton Bronk. "The development of purpose during adolescence." *Applied developmental science* 7, no. 3 (2003): 119-128.

[7] Michael A. Rebell, *Flunking Democracy, Schools, Courts, and Civic Participation*, University of Chicago Press, 2018, p. 86. Scholarship in moral education and character education has been fruitful in delineating crucial civic values. Wolfgang Althof and Marvin W. Berkowitz, "Moral Education and Character Education: Their Relationship and Roles in Citizenship Education," 35 *Journal of Moral Education*, 2006, p. 495, p. 503. Althof and Berkowitz emphasize "social justice, honesty, personal and social responsibility, equality, etc." In 1989, R. Freeman Butts proposed twelve categories of civic values including "truth" and "patriotism" in *The Civic mission in Education Reform Perspectives for the Public and the Profession*, Hoover Institution Press, 1989.

[8] Jonathan Gould, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Peter Levine, Ted McConnell, and David B. Smith, eds., "Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools," Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania and the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools , 2011, p. 17.

[9] Elizabeth Beaumont, "Political Agency and Empowerment: Pathways for Developing a Sense of Efficacy in Young Adults," In L. R. Sherrod, J. Torney-Purta, and C. A. Flanagan (Eds.), *Handbook of Research onCcivic Engagement in Youth*, John Wiley & Sons, 2010, pp. 525-558.

[10] Larson, Reed W., and Rachel M. Angus. "Adolescents' development of skills for agency in youth programs: Learning to think strategically." Child Development 82, no. 1 (2011): 277-294.

[11] Richard Weissbourd, *The Parents We Mean to Be: How Well Intentioned Adults Undermine Children's moral and Emotional Development*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009, p. 116; William Damon, *Failing Liberty 101: How We Are Leaving Young Americans Unprepared for Citizenship in a Free Society*, Hoover Institute Publication, 2011.

skepticism and cynicism toward the democratic political process.[12] However, among young Americans,   skepticism about politics was *positively* correlated with intention to vote in the 2018 election;   sometimes a critical view of institutions motivates action.[13] A perennially contentious question in civics education is how much to balance support for the existing institutions of the republic versus supporting students in developing the capacity to criticize and change those institutions.[14]

Research Findings

Several aspects of civic learning can foster and enhance the values, dispositions and attitudes necessary for a functional democracy.

Teacher Attitudes	Research shows that teacher attitudes, when they promote tolerance and respect, have an impact on students' sense of trust in humanity and support for the American political system.[15]
Interactive Civic Learning	Kahne and Middaugh's study in Chicago Public Schools found that interactive civic learning significantly strengthened students' commitment to engage with their communities and participate in politics.[16]
Cultivating Self-Efficacy	Romanowski's 2003 study, based on interviews with 144 high school students, found that although students recognized the importance of character education, they criticize the disconnected, superficial nature of their school's program. Romanowski recommends making character education more relevant to students' lives.[17]
Classroom Discussions	Classroom discussion in civics classes has been found to boost students' concerns about the unjust treatment of others.[18]

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[12] Foa, Roberto Stefan, and Yascha Mounk. "The democratic disconnect." *Journal of democracy 27.3 (2016): 5-17.* On the growing distrust towards institutions among America youth, see Peter Levine and Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, "The Republic is (Still) at Risk—and Civics is Part of the Solution," Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life, Tufts University, 2017, available at: https://www.civxnow.org/documents/v1/SummitWhitePaper.pdf.

[13] CIRCLE, "CIRCLE Poll: Ahead of 2018 Midterms, A New Generation Finds its Political Voice," Oct 11, 2018, https://civicyouth.org/circle-poll-ahead-of-2018-midterms-a-new-generation-finds-its-political-voice/

[14] Diane Ravitch, "Celebrating America," in Joel Westheimer ed., *Pledging Allegiance: The Politics of Patriotism in America's Schools*, Teachers College Press, 2007, p. 92.

[15] Constance Flanagan and Leslie Gallay, "CIRCLE Working Paper 61: Adolescent Development of Trust," 2008; "Guardian of Democracy," 2011, p. 17.

[16] Joseph Kahne and Ellen Middaugh, "Democracy for Some: The Civic Opportunity Gap in High School," in James Youniss and Peter Levine (eds.), *Engaging Young People in Civic Life,* Vanderbilt University Press, 2009, pp. 50–52.

[17] Michael H. Romanowski. "Through The Eyes of Students: High School Students' Perspectives on Character Education," *American Secondary Education*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Fall 2003), pp. 3-20.

[18] Constance Flanagan, Tara Stoppa, et al., "Schools and Social Trust," in Lonnie R. Sherrod, Judith Torney-Purta, and Constance Flanagan (eds.), *Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement in Youth,* Wiley, 2010, pp. 318–9.

- **Proven Practices in the Classroom**

  o **Service-Learning and Other Forms of Community Engagement Tied to the Curriculum**: Service experiences, even when required, have been found to build lasting dispositions to serve and be civically engaged.[19]

  o **Simulation of Democratic Processes**: Research indicates that simulations of democratic processes such as voting, trials, and legislative deliberation can increase civic dispositions toward democratic values.[20] Recent research has also examined game narratives, and has shown similar effects.[21]

  o **Controversial Topics**: Scholars have reiterated the need for teachers to discuss controversial subjects in the classroom, as these discussions instill in students a sense of the complexity of societal issues, an understanding of positions different from familiar ones, and foster respectful and conscientious attitudes towards deliberation.[22]

  o **Deliberative discussion:** Deliberative discussions are necessary to develop tolerance values and prepare students for civic participation in a diverse democratic society.[23] Leading scholars emphasize that these discussions should always be as inclusive of diverse points of views and experiences as possible.[24]

Assessment

Assessing the extent to which schools have imparted positive values and dispositions in students is difficult. Particular challenges confront governmental agencies, from local schools to

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[19] Hart, D., Donnelly, T. M., Youniss, J., & Atkins, R. (2007). High school community service as a predictor of adult voting and volunteering. American Educational Research Journal, 44(1), 197-219 and Youniss, James, and Miranda Yates. "Youth service and moral-civic identity: A case for everyday morality." Educational Psychology Review 11.4 (1999): 361-376.

[20] "Guardian of Democracy," 2011, p. 34. iCivics, on organization founded by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, provides many resources for simulation activities.

[21] Sasha Barab, Tyler Dodge, et al., "Our Designs and the Social Agendas They Carry," *Journal of the Learning Sciences,* vol. 16, no. 2, 2007.

[22] Diana E. Hess, *Controversy in the Classroom: The Democratic Power of Discussion,* 2009, p. 62; Ronald Dworkin, *Is Democracy Possible Here: Principles for a New Political Debate*, Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 148–49, Jonathan Zimmerman and Emily Robertson, *The Case for Contention: Teaching Controversial Issues in American Schools*, University of Chicago Press, 2017.

[23] Stephen Macedo, *Diversity and Distrust: Civic Education in a Multi-cultural Democracy*, Harvard University Press, 2000; Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education*, Princeton University Press, 1987.

[24] Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 369–70; William Galston, *Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues, and Diversity in the Liberal State*, Cambridge University Press, 1991; Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift, "Family Values and School Policy: Shaping Values and Conferring Advantage," in Danielle Allen & Rob Reich eds.,*Education, Justice, and Democracy,* University of Chicago Press, 2013.

the federal government. The NAEP Civics Assessment includes some items that are coded as measures of "civic dispositions," but on the whole, federal policy prevents the measurement of values on the NAEP or the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, which measures civic engagement as a set of acts.

Richard Rothstein and his colleagues have noted that in the early development of NAEP, the assessment design included written tests, interview protocols for high school students and young adults and surveys which would assess their attitudes, values and dispositions in such areas as openness to competing points of view and involvement in community activities. [25] These methodologies also attempted to capture progress toward the development of these values and dispositions over time.[26] However, Congressional opposition to these types of initiatives prevented NAEP from fully developing and implementing these approaches. Rothstein *et al*. also advocate the use of intensive quality reviews that can examine the extent to which schools are, among other things, providing instruction on values and dispositions.[27]

Conveying positive civic values in diverse settings requires substantial teacher preparation and training, and much could be done to expand and assess methods for improving teacher education and professional development in these areas.[28] As the Guardian of Democracy report has stated:

> "There are specific classroom practices identified with positive civic outcomes, and professional development has been shown to increase the chances teachers will use those practices effectively in their classrooms.[29] Given this connection, it should not be surprising that a teacher's professional development in civics is predictive of students'

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[25] Richard Rothstein, Rebecca Jacobsen and Tamara Wilder, *Grading Education: Getting Accountability Right*, Teachers College Press, 2008, pp.99-118, 154-156

[26] Richard Rothstein, Rebecca Jacobsen and Tamara Wilder, *Grading Education: Getting Accountability Right*, Teachers College Press, 2008, pp.99-118.

[27] *Id* at pp. 154-156.

[28] One example of a program that shows promise is a study on the effects of the *Facing History and Ourselves* program.Teachers who went through training with the program felt more capable than did control group teachers of creating classroom environments and implementing teaching practices to promote students' historical understanding, civic learning, ethical awareness, and character development. The program demonstrably fostered civic dispositions such as "civic efficacy, valuing the protection of the civil liberties of people with different political views, [and] awareness of the dangers of prejudice and discrimination." Dennis Barr, "Continuing a Tradition of Research on the Foundations of Democratic Education: The National Professional Development and Evaluation Project," *Facing History and Ourselves*, 2010, available at: https://www.facinghistory.org/for-educators/school-and-district/outcomes/evaluation-results.

[29] Ian MacMullen, *Civics Beyond Critics: Character Education in a Liberal Democracy*, Oxford University Press, 2015.

civic knowledge and attitudes.[30] Reflecting on their own education and teacher preparation programs, 51 percent of public school civics teachers report that programs 'fell short' in 'preparing social studies teachers to teach in real-world classrooms.'"[31]

The number and frequency of civics professional development programs has declined in recent years.[32]

[30] Judith Torney-Purta, Carolyn Henry Barber, and Wendy Klandl Richardson, "How Teachers' Preparation Relates to Students' Civic Knowledge and Engagement in the United States: Analysis from the IEA Civic Education Study," CIRCLE, 2005, pp. 1–9, available at: https://civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS_IEA_Teacher_prep.pdf.

[31] Gary Schmitt, Frederick Hess, et al., "High Schools, Civics, and Citizenship: What Social Studies Teachers Think and Do," American Enterprise Institute, 2010, p. 47, available at: http://www.aei.org/publication/high-schools-civics-and-citizenship/.

[32] Rebecca Burgess, "Civic Education Professional Development: The Lay of the Land," American Enterprise Institute, 2015 available at https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Civics-Education-Professional-Development.pdf.