

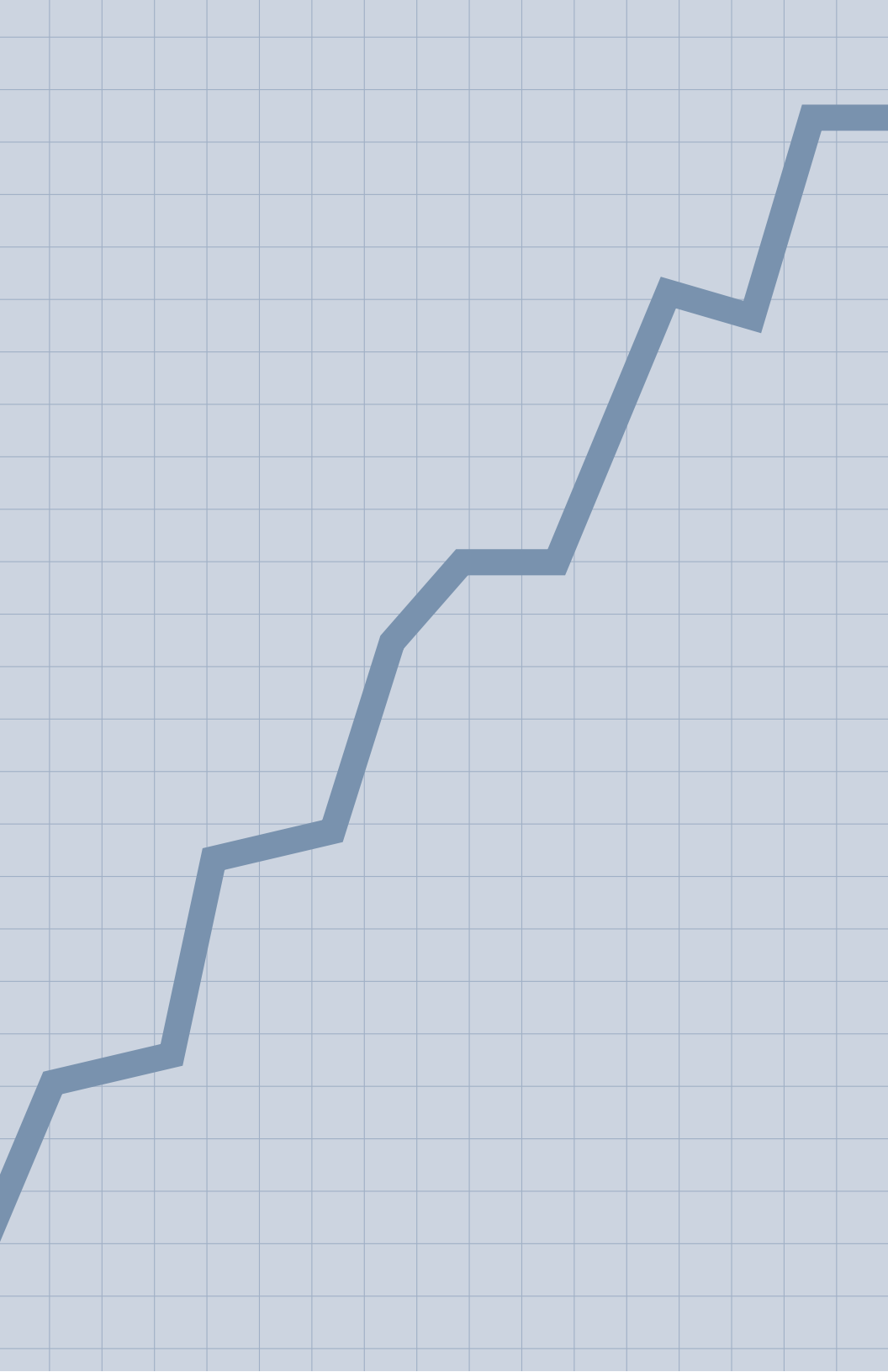
Research



on programs



CENTER FOR CIVIC EDUCATION



We the People Students' Political Knowledge Rated Higher Than That of Peers and College Students

A 2006–2007 study of the **We the People** program conducted by RMC Research Corporation matched 822 program participants to 735 similar students in high school government classes. In addition, **We the People** students' post-survey scores were compared with those of 119 political science students at two Colorado universities.

We the People participants made significantly greater gains than comparison students in their understanding of

- ★ Core values and principles of democracy,
- ★ Constitutional limits on governmental institutions, and
- ★ Rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Participants improved civic skills, including the ability to analyze issues, debate, persuade, and achieve group consensus.

Additionally, participants outperformed college students on all items in the comprehensive test, including knowledge of early American history, constitutional limits on government institutions, and the relationship of the United States to other nations in world affairs.

The current report is available online at www.civiced.org.



National Finals Participants Outperform Peers and Adults

Surveys conducted annually from 1999 to 2007 reveal that high school students who compete at the **We the People** national finals possess significantly greater knowledge of American democratic institutions and processes than the average American citizen.

Students surveyed in 2007 were found to

- ★ Outperform the national sample of high school students participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in every category of civic knowledge delineated in the survey
- ★ Correctly answer five key knowledge questions asked in the American National Election Studies at a rate of 73%, versus 17% of adults and 8% of high school students
- ★ Exhibit less political cynicism
- ★ Report greater interest in keeping track of political affairs, influencing the political structure, and participating in community leadership
- ★ Express greater support for First Amendment principles and rights

The current report is available online at www.civiced.org.



Alumni Vote at Higher Rates Than Peers

A 2004–2005 survey of 552 **We the People** alumni reveals that they are better informed and more politically engaged than their peers. Voting rates are higher among alumni than for nonparticipating peers surveyed in the 2004 American National Election Studies (ANES).

- ★ 92% of alumni reported voting in November 2004, in contrast to 78% of those surveyed in the ANES study
- ★ 85% of alumni said they had voted in all previous elections
- ★ 63% reported being very interested in national politics and national affairs
- ★ 53% of alumni read the newspaper often, and 64% paid a great deal of attention to political stories and public issues; 41% of ANES respondents had not read a daily newspaper in the previous week, and 30% had not watched a national television news broadcast in the previous week
- ★ 83% of alumni held that it was essential or very important to keep up to date with political affairs, in contrast to 34% of American college freshmen
- ★ 60% of alumni discussed national politics and affairs nearly every day or every day
- ★ Since January 2003, 26% of respondents volunteered to work for a candidate running for office; 16% made a financial campaign contribution; 29% took part in a protest, march, or demonstration; fewer than 4% of ANES respondents took part in any of these activities
- ★ 65% of alumni thought influencing the political structure was essential or very important; 20% of college freshmen agreed

Due to self-selection by respondents, these findings should be considered as suggestive rather than generalizable to all We the People alumni. A full report is available online at www.civiced.org.

Students Display Increased Political Tolerance

In 1993, in a report titled “Secondary Education and Political Attitudes: Examining the Effects on Political Tolerance of the **We the People** Curriculum,” Stanford University professor Dr. Richard Brody studied the attitudes of 1,351 high school students from across the United States.

Dr. Brody found that students who participated in the **We the People** program were

- ★ More politically tolerant than the average American
- ★ More tolerant than high school students using other curricula
- ★ More self-confident and perceived fewer limits on their own political freedom and hence were more willing to extend those rights to others
- ★ More likely to increase their tolerance if they participated in the competitive simulated congressional hearings
- ★ Less restrictive of freedom of the press, speech, and the advocacy of radical or unorthodox ideas
- ★ More willing to grant freedom of assembly to groups with diverse opinions

This report is available online at www.civiced.org.



Students Outperform Others on History and Principles of the U.S. Constitution

Independent studies by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in 1988 and 1991 revealed that high school students who participated in the **We the People** program

- ★ Outperformed university students on political knowledge
- ★ Increased their interest in the Constitution and Bill of Rights
- ★ Scored 38% higher than the comparison group on political philosophy questions

Based on the superior performance of students at all levels, ETS concluded that the “program achieved its major instructional goal of increasing students’ knowledge of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.”

The studies are available online at www.civiced.org.



Project Citizen Students Outperform Peers in Civic Skills and Knowledge

In a 2006 study of middle and high school students from Michigan and Colorado, RMC Research Corporation found that **Project Citizen** students, in contrast to the control group,

- ★ Increased their levels of civic knowledge
- ★ Improved their civic discourse skills
- ★ Demonstrated better public policy problem-solving skills
- ★ Improved their essay-writing skills

Participants benefited similarly from the program regardless of gender, home language, or participation in extracurricular activities, although some ethnic differences were revealed.

The current report is available online at www.civiced.org.



Indonesian Students Participate More in the Political Process

In 2002–2003, a Center-sponsored study surveyed 1,435 Indonesian middle school students, half of whom had participated in **Kami Bangsa Indonesia**, a translated and adapted version of **Project Citizen**. The survey incorporated pre- and post-tests with equivalent control groups at each school. Students of eighty-four different ethnicities and each of the five sanctioned religious groups (Muslim, Protestant, Catholic, Hindu, and Buddhist) took part in this study. Holding socioeconomic status, religion, gender, and age constant, participating students were shown to have

- ★ Gathered more information about existing problems in their community from a wide variety of sources (e.g., officials, lawyers, judges, interest groups, and scholars)
- ★ Participated more in the political process by meeting with groups and officials, persuading others to support solutions to community problems, and attending council meetings
- ★ Taken part in more protests and expressed greater interest in politics and media use

In addition, 49% of participants went beyond the scope of the program and attempted to influence local officials to enact their policy proposals. Of these, 13% were successful in getting officials to adopt their proposals.

The current report is available online at www.civiced.org.



Students in Indiana, Latvia, and Lithuania Show Improved Civic Engagement

In 1999–2000, Dr. Thomas Vontz, Dr. Kim Metcalf, and Dr. John Patrick of Indiana University measured the effects of **Project Citizen** on civic development, defined as “one’s achievement of civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions [enabling] responsible and effective participation by citizens in their democracy.”

The researchers found that **Project Citizen** had a

- ★ Positive and statistically significant effect on students’ civic knowledge with no significant differences among nations
- ★ Positive and significant effect on students’ self-perceived civic skills
- ★ Positive and significant effect on students’ propensity to participate in civic and political life

Positive effects of **Project Citizen** were largely independent of personal and contextual factors, such as nationality, gender, ethnicity, or plans to attend college.

For a complete copy of “Project Citizen and the Civic Development of Adolescent Students in Indiana, Latvia, and Lithuania,” visit <http://eric.ed.gov> or www.civiced.org.



Bosnian and Herzegovinian Students Show Improved Political Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes

In May 1999, two thousand Bosnian and Herzegovinian middle and senior high school students were surveyed. Half had participated in **Project Citizen** and half had not.

Participants showed statistically significant improvement in

- ★ Participatory skills and political knowledge – participants were more likely to have contacted public officials about problems in their community, gathered information from a variety of experts, expressed greater confidence in their knowledge about local government, and felt more skilled at explaining problems. If given the opportunity, they would have voted at higher rates than nonparticipating peers.
- ★ Political attitudes – participants had a more active view of themselves as citizens and increased their levels of political tolerance for various groups, such as environmentalists, women, religious groups, human rights groups, and student groups.
- ★ Political values – participants were more supportive of the rule of law; of fundamental rights of expression, assembly, and participation; and were less authoritarian.

The report “Beyond Communism and War: The Effect of Civic Education on the Democratic Attitudes and Behavior of Bosnian and Herzegovinian Youth” is available online at www.civiced.org.



Assessment Study Results

In 1998, Dr. Kenneth W. Tolo of the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin, conducted an assessment of the **Project Citizen** program.

Dr. Tolo and his team found that participating students

- ★ Believe they can and do make a difference in their communities
- ★ Develop enhanced understanding of the complexity of public policy
- ★ Develop a commitment to active citizenship and governance
- ★ Learn important communication skills

Researchers found that competitions provided students with an important learning experience and promoted visibility that led to increased support for the program.

For the full report, "An Assessment of We the People: Project Citizen," visit www.utexas.edu/lbj/pubs/books/wepeople.html or www.civiced.org.



Increased Knowledge of the U.S. Constitution and Improved Tolerance

During the 2000–2001 school year, students in twelve school districts participated in a carefully constructed combination of Center programs, including **We the People**, **Project Citizen**, and **Foundations of Democracy**. The schools were in six urban districts, two private districts, three Indian reservations, and one rural area.

Using experimental and control groups in a pre- and post-test design, researchers found that students who participated

- ★ Significantly increased their knowledge of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights in all sites
- ★ Increased their tolerance toward others

For more information about this research, contact Maria Gallo at gallo@civiced.org.



Increased Self-Control, Knowledge, Awareness of Rights and Responsibilities, and Positive Attitudes Toward the Community

Between 1995 and 1997, 314 fifth- and sixth-grade students in Bell Gardens, California, participated in a study to assess the effectiveness of curricular materials developed by the Center and the Constitutional Rights Foundation in the prevention of violent and antisocial behavior.

Using a combination of focus groups and survey research with control groups, researchers found

- ★ Increased self-control among fifth-grade students
- ★ Positive changes in attitudes toward law and authority
- ★ Improved understanding of how to use principles of authority to solve problems
- ★ Gains in knowledge
- ★ Increases in positive attitudes toward the community
- ★ Greater interest in social studies classes
- ★ Greater awareness about students' rights and responsibilities as citizens

For a copy of the report, contact Ken Rodriguez at rodriguez@civiced.org or visit the Center's website at www.civiced.org.



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