



University of Nebraska at Omaha DigitalCommons@UNO

Project Summaries

Service Learning and Community Engagement
Examples

8-29-2002

CityWorks Evaluation Summary

Joseph Kahne
Mills College

Bernadette Chi
University of California - Berkeley

Ellen Middaugh
University of California - Berkeley

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slceprojectsummaries>

 Part of the [Service Learning Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kahne, Joseph; Chi, Bernadette; and Middaugh, Ellen, "CityWorks Evaluation Summary" (2002). *Project Summaries*. 28.
<http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slceprojectsummaries/28>

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Service Learning and Community Engagement Examples at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Project Summaries by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu.



CityWorks Evaluation Summary

August 29, 2002

Joseph Kahne, Ph.D.
Professor, Mills College

Bernadette Chi
University of California, Berkeley

Ellen Middaugh
University of California, Berkeley

This research was funded with a grant from the Surdna Foundation. The authors take sole responsibility for the information and conclusions presented in this report. For further information, please contact Joseph Kahne, Mills College, Oakland, CA 94613. Phone: (510) 430-3275 E-mail: jkahne@mills.edu

CityWorks Evaluation Executive Summary

Interviewer: What are your feelings about government and politics?

Student 1: It's boring.

Interviewer: When you say it's boring, what's boring about it?

Student 1: The subject matter.

Student 2: Yes, very true.

Student 1: It's not just the work. It's what the work is about. We don't care about it.

-High school seniors from a traditional government classroom.

Interviewer: Has this class changed the way you think about government?

Student 1: Entirely. Before this, I didn't care about government.

Student 2: Exactly.

Student 1: I was just like; it's not part of my business. I'm living my life, they can -- they make the laws. I'll follow the laws. Fine. But now, it's like I know why the laws are here and how they make the laws.

Student 2: And how can you change them if you want to...

-CityWorks students

This report summarizes findings from our study of the Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF) CityWorks curriculum. This high school government curriculum was designed to respond to growing recognition of the need to promote commitments and capacities associated with civic engagement. Our data consists of pre/post surveys from CityWorks classes and control classrooms. We also observed classrooms and collected interview data through focus groups.

- We found ($p < .05$) that the CityWorks curriculum promoted greater commitments to Participatory Citizenship, Justice Oriented Citizenship and Interest in Service than non-CityWorks classes. We can say with 90% confidence ($p < .10$) that the CityWorks curriculum promoted greater commitments to Personal Responsibility, Knowledge of Social Networks, Leadership Efficacy and Civic Efficacy than non-CityWorks classes.
- Data also indicated that Cityworks fostered greater gains in knowledge than traditional classrooms as measured by the content assessment.
- We found that participating in simulations, service learning, and exposure to role models all increased students' sense of their capacities and commitments. Of these, simulations and exposure to role-models had the broadest impact.
- We found that opportunities to "learn about aspects of society that need changing" and opportunities to "work on issues that matter to students" had broad positive impact on students' sense of their capacities and commitments.

CityWorks Evaluation Summary

Interviewer: What are your feelings about government and politics?

Student 1: It's boring.

Interviewer: When you say it's boring, what's boring about it?

Student 1: The subject matter.

Student 2: Yes, very true.

Student 1: It's not just the work. It's what the work is about. We don't care about it.

-High school seniors from a traditional government classroom.

I. Introduction

The following report summarizes our evaluation of the Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF) CityWorks curriculum. The curriculum was designed to become part of high school government courses and to respond to growing recognition of the need to promote commitments and capacities associated with civic engagement (Ostrom, 1996).

Over the past several decades, studies of civic education have raised doubts about the capacity of high school government civics courses to influence students' civic commitments and capacities (Dudley & Gitelson, in press; Jennings, 1974; Langston & Jennings, 1968)¹. For the most part, however, these studies assess what is rather than what could be. If civic and political engagement became a more central goal, and if high quality professional development and curriculum were implemented, civics courses might well make a more meaningful contribution to students' civic commitments and capacities.

As a means of considering desirable models for civics education, the CRF curriculum is worthy of attention. First, it provides a vision of how to move local government and civic participation into the heart of high school government curriculum. Frequently, government courses focus on academic knowledge related to the operation of government and related institutions rather than on the roles citizens can and need to play locally to participate effectively in a democratic society. In short, most social studies curricula help students understand what government is rather than why they should be active in civic life (Gonzales, 2001; Leming, 1985). In the CRF curriculum, knowledge regarding how government works receives extensive attention, but this information is taught in the service of helping students learn to participate effectively in civic life.

Second, the curriculum employs a broad range of strategies as a means of promoting active engagement. These curricular experiences were designed to foster motivation to learn, commitment to participate, and participatory skills. Assessing the impact of these

¹ On a more optimistic note, Niemi & Junn's (1998) analysis of NAEP data suggests that civics curricula, particularly ones that make room for discussion on a wide range of topics, can have a significant and reliable impact on political knowledge which Delli Carpini & Keeter (1996) have found to be an important predictor of political participation.

approaches can help us understand the desirability of their use in civics curriculum more generally.

Study Design:

To keep this report concise, we have omitted a detailed discussion of our conceptual framework (with associated literature review) and of our methodological approach. This framework as well as the scales used to measure varied outcomes is based on a prior study Joel Westheimer and Joe Kahne conducted of ten exemplary educational programs that were part of the Surdna Foundation's Democratic Values initiative². Appendices A and B contain more detailed descriptions of our measures and quantitative findings.

In order to assess the impact of this curriculum, we collected pre and post survey data from 204 students. The surveys were designed to capture information related to students' civic attitudes and competencies. We also conducted extensive interviews with six participating teachers and conducted eight focus groups with 36 high school seniors. Our goal was to attain a description of what happened in their classrooms as well as to assess the impact of the curriculum.

Our ability to assess the impact of the curriculum was aided by the use of two control classrooms. Two of the six teachers who implemented the CityWorks curriculum also taught one class each of similar groups of students following the format they had used in previous years. These two classrooms constitute our control classrooms. Our best data regarding the impact of the CityWorks curriculum comes from comparing the outcomes in these two CityWorks classrooms with the outcomes in the two control classrooms.

In addition, drawing on data from all the classrooms we studied, we used Multivariate Linear Regression (MLR) to assess the relationship between teachers' use of particular curricular components and desired student outcomes.

In what follows, we describe our findings regarding the program's impact and practices responsible for this success. We conclude by discussing the implications for both the CityWorks curriculum and civic education in general.

² The framework related to outcomes used in this study is discussed in Westheimer and Kahne, 2002. The framework for processes related to impact used in this study is described in Kahne and Westheimer, 2000. This study's methods and frameworks will be detailed in a paper currently being prepared for an academic journal.

II. Impact on Civic Outcomes

Interviewer: Has this class changed the way you think about government?

Student 1: Entirely. Before this, I didn't care about government.

Student 2: Exactly.

Student 1: I was just like; it's not part of my business. I'm living my life, they can -- they make the laws. I'll follow the laws. Fine. But now, it's like I know why the laws are here and how they make the laws.

Student 2: And how can you change them if you want to...

-CityWorks students

Comparisons Of Pre And Post Surveys As Well As Focus Group Interviews Indicate That CityWorks Promotes Civic Development.

As detailed in Table 1, students exposed to the CityWorks curriculum exhibited greater gains on civic outcome measures than those in the control classrooms. (For a more detailed table, see Appendix B). This counters common findings that civics courses do not have a meaningful impact on outcomes related to the democratic purposes of education (Langston & Jennings, 1968; Jennings, 1974).

TABLE 1

**Impact of CityWorks compared to Non CityWorks Government Curriculum
CW sample (n=46) and Control sample (n=50)**

Outcome	Impact ³	Statistical Significance
I: Personally Responsible Citizen/person	.16*	.09
II: Participatory Citizen	.37**	.03
III: Justice Oriented Citizen	.27**	.04
IV: Social Networks	.37*	.07
V: Leadership Efficacy	.24*	.09
VI: Local Gov't Important		
VII: Interest in Politics		
VIII: Political Efficacy		
IX: Civic Efficacy	.22*	.10
X: Social Trust		
XI: Vision to Help		
XII: Interest in Service	.47**	.03

This table compares the impact of the curriculum on students who were exposed to CityWorks with those who were taught by the same teachers but did not use the

³ ** Indicates Statistical Significance (P<.05).

* Indicates Marginal Significance (P<.10).

CityWorks curriculum. Column One identifies the different measures. Column Two identifies the differential impact of the two classrooms. Column Three provides data related to statistical significance. If a number is provided in Column Two, it means that we are confident that the CityWorks curriculum had a greater impact on students than the traditional curriculum. The bigger the number, the bigger our estimate of the difference.

To summarize Table 1:

- We can say with at least 95% confidence ($p < .05$)⁴ that the CityWorks curriculum promoted greater commitments to Participatory Citizenship, Justice Oriented Citizenship and Interest in Service than non-CityWorks classes.
- We can say with 90% confidence ($p < .10$) that the CityWorks curriculum promoted greater commitments to Personal Responsibility, Knowledge of Social Networks, Leadership Efficacy and Civic Efficacy than non-CityWorks classes.
- In the rest of the cases, while the pre-post gains were not statistically significant, they were greater in the CityWorks classrooms than in the non-CityWorks classrooms.

Qualitative Focus Group Data:

Our qualitative data aligned well with these findings. Students who participated in CityWorks classes were consistently positive about the curriculum and provided helpful details regarding ways in which the curriculum had impacted their capacities and commitments. For example, CityWorks students reported the following sentiments:

If I was never in this class, if something was wrong in my neighborhood, I wouldn't have known what to do. But now, since I'm in this classroom, if I think something's wrong in my neighborhood or something, I know where to go. Go to the City of Council, call the Chamber of Commerce. Before, if I wasn't in this class, I wouldn't have known what to do.

You really do get involved, and your interest increases, and when they say, "what is it to be a good citizen?" then you have something to say like, "yeah, being involved with your city is being a good citizen."

I never really thought about it before until we started learning about it because you know how you have other things to do but then once you realize it, you want to do something to make a difference.

⁴ This is the standard normally associated with statistical significance.

III. Impact on Content Knowledge

Data suggests that CityWorks fostered greater gains in knowledge than traditional classrooms as measured by the content assessment.

Given the success of the curriculum in fostering attitudes and skills, we were also curious about the effect of the curriculum on how well students learned content related to government. To investigate this in the first year of the study, CRF staff developed a 15-item content assessment, including 3 NAEP questions. We compared the results of students who participated in CityWorks to students in non-CityWorks classes and saw clear evidence that CityWorks students outperformed their counterparts on most of the items.

TABLE 2: Content Assessment

Summary Content of Item	Control Classes % Of students answering correctly	CityWorks Classes % of students answering correctly
Charter like Constitution	24.7	75
Identify county officials (unincorporated vs. incorporated)	6.2	10.9
Sources of local government revenue	8.2	40.6
Voting plan (at-large, representative)	20	41.2
Form of city govt. (weak-mayor, strong council)	35	44.8
“Minorities best served” (at-large, representative)	45.8	38
Misdemeanor tried in municipal court	67	85.7
Governor head of state executive branch	11.7	39.6
I.D. agencies (non-prof, spec. dist, govt) 1% of control identified all five, 17% identified none	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 15 25 27 14 17	5 4 3 2 1 0 8 24 30 22 6 10
Action to change munic law (similar to NAEP)	42.6	82.5
Editorial – endorse candidate	13	22.2
NAEP – federal jurisdiction	59.4	71.4
NAEP – state jurisdiction	20.4	43.5
NAEP – zoning variance	29.7	66.1
Type of meeting to attend - zoning	21.4	61.2

IV. Practices Responsible for Success

Basically, as long as you're not being read to out of the textbook, it's positive in school because half the kids don't listen when you're reading out of textbooks. But when you have to get involved, it's a different story. – A CityWorks Student

Our study also investigated the relationship between exposure to certain curricular features and the impact of the course on students. Examining these relationships is important for two reasons. First, it can help us understand what contributed to the success of the CityWorks curriculum and how to strengthen it. Second, it can help us identify the curricular strategies most likely to enhance students' civic capacities and commitments.

The importance of this discussion was driven home when we saw the differing impact of the six CityWorks classes we studied. Some CityWorks classrooms spurred much larger gains than others. Indeed, statistically significant declines on measures of several desired outcomes were noted in one CityWorks classroom.

Since teachers use curriculum in varied ways, in addition to assessing the overall impact of the CRF curriculum, it is also important to identify ways of using the curriculum that lead to the greatest impact. For this reason, we investigated the relationship between variation in teachers' classroom practices and outcomes.

The Relationship Between Desired Outcomes and Simulations, Service Projects, and Exposure to Role Models/Speakers

I like the simulations. Like, when we did a court case and stuff and where we actually had to set up lawyers, the defense and the prosecution and stuff like that. I enjoyed that. It helps you understand – I mean, it's fun but it also gets you to understand the actual process, like what they go through. It's short. I mean, we didn't go through the whole hours of process like real ones do but you get a short understanding of what it's like. So I enjoyed the simulation more than anything.

As a first step, we assessed the impact of three strategies that are emphasized in the CityWorks curriculum: the use of simulations, use of role models (through field trips, bringing in outside speakers, etc) and engagement in a service project (See Table 3). Using Multivariate Linear Regression, we examined the impact of these strategies on the desired student outcomes.

We found that all three strategies supported the desired outcomes. Among the three strategies, simulations and role-plays had the broadest and most significant positive impact on civic outcomes. This finding is important because simulations are at the core of the CityWorks strategy. Learning about and meeting people and groups who work to make society better (which we label "exposure to role models"), was not prominently

emphasized in the curriculum. However, this opportunity also had a strong positive effect and could be made a higher priority in the curriculum.

Service-learning experiences also had a positive impact, but they were linked to fewer civic outcomes than were experiences with role models and simulations. Given that so much energy is focused on service-learning pedagogy as a means of promoting civic engagement, it is important to note that other strategies such as simulations and exposure to role models, may also work well and are worthy of careful attention.

TABLE 3
Effect of Teaching Strategies on Civic Commitments and Capacities⁵
(n=154)

Civic Outcomes	Classroom Practices Responsible for Success		
	Role-play, simulation.	Service-learning.	Exposure to role models/speakers.
Personally Responsible Citizen	.18**	.18**	
Participatory Citizen	.17**		.19**
Justice-Oriented Citizen	.18**		.25**
Social Networks	.19**	.16*	
Local Gov't is important	.15*		.20**
Interest in Politics			.33**
Political Efficacy			
Civic Efficacy			
Social Trust	.28**		
Vision to Help			
Interest in Service			.18**
Increased Commitment	.21**	.20**	.16**
Increased Capacity	.22**		.27**
Interest in Politics	.26**		.22**
Course Satisfaction	.23**		.33**

This table identifies the impact of simulations, service-learning projects, and exposure to role models on a number of desired outcomes. If a number is provided, it means that we are confident that this teaching strategy promoted a given outcome. The bigger the number, the bigger our estimate of the impact of this practice.

The relationship between other classroom qualities and desired outcomes

In addition to the use of service-learning, simulations, and role-models, prior work (Kahne & Westheimer, 2000) as well as interviews we conducted with students during the pilot phase of this curriculum suggested several other classroom qualities were

⁵ Only statistically significant (**p<.05) and marginally significant (*p<.10) results are displayed.

important to examine. These qualities included opportunities to debate issues, learning about causes of problems in the community, learning how to improve the community, learning how local government works, talking about issues that matter to the student, avoiding frustrating experiences, and working on issues that matter to the student. These foci also align with curricular features that have been identified by scholars as linked to civic development (Niemi & Junn, 1998; Ehman, 1980; Hahn & Tocci, 1990; Blankenship, 1990; Torney-Purta, 1986).

Using Multivariate Linear Regression, we assessed the impact of classroom qualities on student capacities or commitments as measured by comparisons of pre and post surveys and in a post-survey administered at the end of the program (see Table 4). We include these instruments in Appendix A.

TABLE 4
Effect of Classroom Features on Civic Commitments and Capacities⁶
(n=154)

Outcomes	Classroom Practices Responsible for Success							
	Debated Issues	Learned about causes of problems in my community	Learned about things in society that need changing	Learned how to improve my community	Learned how local government works	Talked about issues that matter to me	Worked on issues that mattered to me	Learned that community work is frustrating ⁷
Personally Responsible Citizen			.16**				.14*	
Participatory Citizen							.16**	
Justice Orientation			.18**	.20**				
Social Networks								
Local Gov't is important			.15*				.16*	
Interest in Politics			.13**				.14*	
Political Efficacy					.16*			
Civic Efficacy								
Social Trust					.14*		.25**	
Vision to Help							.17**	
Interest in Service								
Increased Commitment				.29**	.11*	.18**	.14**	-.11*
Increased Capacity			.15**	.17**	.12*	.20**		
Interest in Politics	.15**		.17**			.20**		-.20**
Course Satisfaction	.29**	.20**						-.11*

This table identifies the impact of varied classroom experiences on numerous desired outcomes. If a number is provided it means that we are confident this experience fostered the given outcome. The bigger the number, the bigger our estimate of the impact of this practice.

While we found that all of the classroom features tested had a desired effect on at least one outcome, two classroom practices were most consistently related to the desired outcomes. Specifically, when students “learned about things in society that need changing” and “worked on issues that mattered to them”, they exhibit positive changes on

⁶ Only statistically significant (**p<.05) and marginally significant (*p<.10) results are displayed.

⁷ The negative sign in this column indicates that when community work was frustrating, students civic commitment, interest and course satisfaction decreased.

numerous desired outcomes (See Table 4). This suggests that while many classroom practices have the potential to make civics curriculum more compelling and meaningful, learning about and working on social issues may be a particularly effective way to promote desired goals.

Our data regarding the prevalence of such opportunities makes this finding all the more important. We asked CityWorks students to rate the prevalence of opportunities for these practices on a scale of 1 to 3 (1=not at all; 3= a lot). As detailed in Table 5, students reported that opportunities to work on issues that matter to them were among the least common (2.15). Since this was one of the opportunities most strongly related to desired outcomes, the impact of the curriculum might have been greater had this practice received more attention.

**Table 5:
Prevalence of Curricular Opportunities
(n=154)**

Curricular Opportunity	Average Rating
Learned how local government works	2.53
Learned about things in society that need changing	2.30
Debated Issues	2.28
Learned how to improve my community	2.24
Learned about causes of problems in my community	2.22
Learned that community work is frustrating	2.17
Talked about issues that matter to me	2.15
Worked on issues that mattered to me	2.15

V. Implications

Implications for CityWorks Curriculum:

- Our survey and student interview data suggest that when implemented well, the CityWorks curriculum supports civic development by enhancing both motivation to participate in civic life and self-assessments of related knowledge and skills.
- Given the positive impact of the curriculum and the capacity of the Constitutional Rights Foundation staff to support associated professional development, consideration of options for more widespread adoption appear warranted.

- At the same time that expansion appears warranted, there was significant variation in student outcomes by classroom. This suggests it is also important to look for ways emphasize practices linked to desired outcomes through curriculum revision and professional development.

Implications for the field of Civic Education:

- As a curriculum that has potential for large-scale implementation, CityWorks appears effective in promoting civic engagement. This finding takes on added importance because of: 1) widespread recognition of the need to support development of young people's civic commitments and capacities and 2) empirical findings that high school government courses (the K-12 curricular component with the potential for the most direct links to civic priorities) often fail to further these goals.
- In addition, this study highlights the importance of a number of curricular components that can improve civic education. Factors that appear particularly influential were the curriculum's focus on local government as a context for engaging students in simulations, interactions with role models, discussions about aspects of society that need changing, and work on issues that matter to students. While it is important to remember that the size of the sample constrains our ability to generalize, the findings suggest that these practices are worthy of attention in larger and more specified research studies. The infrequent use of such pedagogical and curricular approaches in social studies classrooms suggests that curriculum and professional development in these areas could meaningfully enhance the impact of civic education.

Bibliography

- Blankenship, G. (1990). Classroom climate, global knowledge, global attitudes, and political attitudes. Theory and Research in Social Education, 18(4), pp. 363-386.
- Delli Carpini, M.X. & Keeter, S.K. (1996). What Americans Know About Politics and Why it Matters. New Haven Yale University Press.
- Dudley, R.L. & Gitelson, A.R. (in press). Political literacy, civic education, and civic engagement: A return to political socialization?
- Ehman, L.H. (1980). The American school and the political socialization process. Review of Educational Research, 50(1), pp. 99-119.
- Gonzales, M., Riedel, E., Avery, P., and Sullivan, J. (2001). Rights and obligations in civic education: A content analysis of the national standards for civic and government. Theory and Research in Social Education, v.29(1), 109-128.
- Hahn, C.L. & Tocci, C. (1990). Classroom climate and controversial issues discussions: A five nation study. Theory and Research in Social Education, 18(4), pp. 344-362.
- Jennings, M.K. & Niemi, R. (1974). The political character of adolescence. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kahne, J. & Westheimer, J. (2000). Teaching democracy: What schools and colleges need to do. Unpublished Manuscript. Presented at the American Educational Research Association's Annual Meeting, April.
- Langston, K. & Jennings, M.K. (1968). Political socialization and the high school civic curriculum in the United States. American Political Science Review, 62: 862-67.
- Leming, J. (1985). "Research on social studies curriculum and instruction: Interventions and outcomes in the socio-moral domain." In Review of Research in Social Studies Education: 1976-1983, Bulletin no. 73, edited by William B. Stanley, 123-213. Washington, DC: National Council for the Social Studies.
- Niemi, R. & Junn, J. (1998). Civic Education. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ostrom, E. (1996). Civic education for the next century: a task force to initiate professional activity. PS: Political Science and Politics, 29: 755-58.
- Torney-Purta, J. & Schwille, J. (1986). The civic values learned in school: Policy and practice industrialized nations. Comparative Education Review, 30(1), pp. 30-49.
- Westheimer, J. and Kahne, J. (2002). "What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy." (Manuscript under review). To be presented at the American Political Science Association's Meeting in Boston in August, 2002.