Survey of Civic Learning Opportunities for Out-of-School Youth in the Adult Education and Literacy System

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Today more than 1 million young people (ages 16 to 24) enroll in adult literacy programs each year. Many enter programs in order to work toward their high school equivalency while others enroll to learn English or to acquire basic literacy skills. Within the last few years, the education of youth within the Adult Basic Education and Literacy System has received increasing attention. One reason is that the overall number of youth ages 16 to 24 has grown as the children of the "baby boomers" have come of age. The number of immigrant youth who enter programs to learn the English language and improve their literacy skills has also grown considerably in recent years. Public attention to this issue has been exacerbated by reports on youth who are dropping out of school (or being "pushed" out) as a result of new high school exit test requirements and more demanding school accountability guidelines. .

Civics education and civic engagement have always been a key mission of many adult literacy and immigrant education programs. Yet, prior to this research, no national study of the civics education and civic engagement practices of this group of young learners had been undertaken. To begin to map this terrain, CIRCLE asked staff in the Literacy and Lifelong Learning Program at SRI International to conduct a literature review and initial survey of adult literacy programs that serve youth and offer some form of civics-related education or civic engagement activities. A total of 468 programs from 46 states, the District of Columbia, and 2 U.S. territories responded to the online survey in fall 2004. Respondents were primarily teachers and program administrators who worked in a variety of adult education contexts, including programs based in adult education centers, public schools, libraries, community centers, community colleges, correctional institutions, and work places, and within family literacy programs. Although the survey was voluntary and does not include a representative sample of all adult literacy education programs, it does provide some initial indications of the type and extent of civics education practices in the adult education field.

This report begins by highlighting the fact that each year 40% of all those enrolled in the adult literacy programs funded by the federal Workforce Investment Act are ages 16 to 24. In 2002-2003, 43% of all enrollment in these programs consisted of English language learners (ELLs), followed by adult basic education (ABE) students (40%) and adult secondary education (ASE) students (17%). A large number of these students are members of ethnic or racial minorities, with 42% of the total enrollment categorized as Latino or Hispanic, 20% as black or African-American, and 8% as Asian. Funding for adult education programs is limited, and many programs, particularly those serving English language learners, have long waiting lists. Most students attend class for only a few hours a week and most teachers work part-time.

Several key findings emerged from our analysis of the nature of civics education and civic engagement within the programs represented in our survey, including the following:

- The majority of programs responding to our survey felt that civic engagement was important to their staff and to students, regardless of age.

  Nearly two-thirds inform students of community events and activities, and more than half include civic engagement as part of their overall program mission.

  Nearly half involve students in program decision-making.

  One in five programs offer special courses on civic engagement (mostly preparation for the citizenship exam).

  A few programs involve students highly in advocacy efforts to bring about community change.

- Many youth find that adult literacy programs better serve their needs by offering flexible schedules and more individualized learning. Some young learners are incarcerated or mandated by the courts to attend programs. Others are recent immigrants who do not have high school credentials but are too old for traditional high schools.

- Youth participation in adult basic education programs has increased in recent years, for a variety of reasons. Those mentioned most frequently included more students dropping out of high school because of a lack of interest or lack of support from home or school, older youth returning to get a GED in order to get a job, students being reassigned to adult school programs by the school district, or a combination of these factors.
- Adult education programs have modified their content/curriculum by involving young learners in setting class goals, developing new class rules or norms, and hiring support staff, such as counselors.
- The intergenerational mix of youth and adults in the same class has had a strong impact on civics education activities, both positive (by allowing for peer teaching and mentoring) and negative (since youth can be more disruptive).
- Programs responding to the survey identified professional development for instructors as their primary need to better support civics education.
- Only half of the respondents to the survey were able to evaluate changes in civic skills and civic engagement among students, but among those who did evaluate change, more than 80% listed learner engagement in new practices such as registration to vote and voting, passing the U.S. citizenship test, increased participation in advocacy efforts, participation in parent-teacher groups, and increased use of community resources.

Program practices respondents used to promote civic participation among youth in adult basic education programs included the use of reading (such as newspapers, voter education materials, citizenship materials, and materials related to community issues), followed by discussion, writing activities, and (for some programs) project-based activities and Internet research. In addition, many programs used guest speakers from the community and conducted field trips outside the classroom when funding allowed. Other programs reported collaborations with community organizations outside the classroom (such as for community service or community advocacy activities, community interviews or surveys). A number of programs held program-wide events, such as voter registration drives, student-organized or -led fairs or workshops, health fairs, meet-the-candidates nights, and cultural exchanges.

Our review of the literature revealed many examples of civic engagement related resources and activities beyond the individual school level. For example, the New England Literacy Resource Center maintains a Civic Participation and Citizenship Collection Web site. In addition, they publish The Change Agent, a journal for adult education that emphasizes social action. The Equipped for the Future Project (EFF) has developed content standards based on what adults need to know and be able to do in three key adult roles: as citizens/community members, parents, and workers. Many states use the EFF standards to develop activities based on a citizen "role map" that describes what adults need to know and be able to do as citizens. The Easy Voter Guide Project provides easy-to-read information to Californians and Nevadans on why and how to vote, as well as resources for teachers. From 2000 to 2003 the U.S. Department of Education provided funding for a number of innovative demonstration projects for immigrant youth and adults as part of The English Literacy and Civics Education Demonstration Project. In addition, VALUE, a national organization made up of adult learner leadership organizations from 40 states, holds a biennial conference for adult learner leaders and involves participants in advocacy activities to support adult literacy education.

The final section of the report draws on the findings of our survey and literature review, as well as on the recommendations of The Civic Mission of Schools, to suggest five key areas where further work by practitioners, researchers, and policy-

makers is most needed.

1. Practitioners of adult literacy education have developed many innovative strategies for linking classroom activities to the roles that out-of-school youth (and adults) play as citizens and community members, workers, parents, and family members. Many of these activities could be a resource to educators who work with youth at the K-12 and postsecondary levels.
2. More attention needs to be devoted to the development of standards and classroom practices that address civics-related skills such as problem solving, decision-making, and working cooperatively with others.
3. Better tools for assessing civics knowledge and skills should be developed, and the achievement of civics-related skills and goals should be included as an outcome measure that "counts" in adult education.
4. Professional development activities that allow teachers to learn more about how to teach civics-related knowledge and skills to youth should be developed and disseminated.
5. Rigorous studies (including longitudinal research) of the long-term effects of civics-related adult education for youth and adults should be undertaken.

The appendices include a bibliography of recommended curriculum materials, instructional resources, and Web sites compiled from the literature and from survey results. These resources will be shared with respondents to the survey and other adult educators with an interest in promoting civic engagement among youth.

For many young people, adult education offers a "second chance" to obtain a high school credential, to develop literacy skills, or to succeed in a new country and a new language. With more support, it can also represent a second chance for youth to develop civic knowledge and skills and lifelong patterns of civic engagement. We hope that this study will lead to further collaborations between policy-makers and adult literacy educators.

YOUTH IN THE ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND LITERACY SYSTEM: AN OVERVIEW

Within the last few years, the education of youth within the Adult Basic Education and Literacy System has received increasing attention. One reason is that the overall number of youth ages 16 to 24 has grown as the children of the "baby boomers" have come of age. Another is that the increased demand for a more highly skilled workforce has led to growing concerns about young people who lack basic academic and other "work readiness" skills. This concern has been exacerbated by public attention to youth who are dropping out of school (or being "pushed" out) as a result of new high school exit test requirements and more demanding school accountability guidelines. The number of immigrant youth who enter the school system without proficiency in the English language and with limited literacy skills has also grown considerably in recent years.

FEDERAL DATA ON ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION ENROLLMENT

Greater attention to the needs of the youth population within the adult basic education system is merited since today they represent nearly 40% of all students enrolled in adult basic education classes. According to the Division of Adult Education and Literacy at the U.S. Department of Education, during the 2002-2003 school year 13.8% of the 2.7 million students enrolled in federally funded adult education programs were ages 16 to 18 and 25.5% were ages 19 to 24. These numbers include youth enrolled in classes for students with limited literacy skills (often referred to as adult basic education, or ABE), those enrolled in adult secondary education (ASE) or GED (high school equivalency) preparation classes, and language minority youth and adults enrolled in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes. (In this study, we will refer to these programs under the umbrella category of "adult literacy education" to distinguish them from

other forms of adult education.) In 2002-2003, ESOL was the largest sector within the system, with 43% of all enrollment. This was followed by Adult Basic Education programs (39.5%) and Adult Secondary Education (17.5%). A large number of students enrolled in these programs are members of ethnic or racial minorities, with 41.8% of the total enrollment categorized as Latino or Hispanic, 19.8% as black or African-American, and 7.5% as Asian.

Services are provided in a wide diversity of settings, including community colleges, public schools, adult schools, community-based organizations, correctional facilities, and volunteer-based literacy programs such as those affiliated with churches and libraries.

The large majority of these programs receive some federal funding through the Workforce Investment Act of 1998; some are also funded or supplemented by state, local, or private organizations. We use federal data in this report because it is much more difficult to document trends within state and local programs. Many of these organizations compile statistical data using different age ranges to define youth and do not always use similar categories of information. For example, many do not identify adult basic education as an independent category, separate from other forms of continuing education (Roloff & Di Tommaso, 2004). Most of the U.S. Department of Education data reported here can be found on the Web site of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/proginit.html#adulted).

GED COMPLETION BY YOUTH

Whereas a greater proportion of young people are now enrolled in college or have completed a bachelor's degree than in 1972, the percentage of young people who have completed less than a high school diploma remained steady between 1972 and 2000 at about 20% (Lopez, 2002). However, it appears that youth may be recognizing the need to earn an equivalent to the high school diploma at a younger age than in the past. While the total numbers of people taking the test have remained relatively stable, the average age of GED test takers has gone down steadily since 1992. By 2001, 38.4% of GED test takers were 19 years old or younger and 26.9% were 20 to 24 years old, with the average age of GED test takers at 25.2 years (Roloff & Di Tommaso, 2004, p. 21). This trend has coincided with an increase in the proportion of youth to adult learners in Adult Secondary Education programs.

Beyond the GED, other alternatives also exist for high school dropouts within Adult Secondary Education programs. In some areas, adult high school programs allow students to obtain a school district diploma by earning high school credits on their own or as part of adult education classes (often called "adult high schools"). Another option available in some states is the External Diploma Program. This program awards a diploma based on students' demonstration of proficiency in a number of academic as well as life skill areas, such as health, employment, and consumer knowledge. It should be noted that, to discourage high school dropout, many states do not allow students to take the GED until age 18 (Hayes, 1999, p. 87).

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Within the field, enrollment in federally funded ESOL classes has quadrupled over the last two decades. Across the country, many programs maintain long waiting lists that can involve waits of a few months to more than a year. Some states employ a lottery system for determining enrollment, and others are forced to turn away interested English language learners (Tolbert, 2001). Because of welfare and immigration reform legislation, adult education programs have seen a surge of interest in acquiring citizenship among immigrants. Enrollment in specialized citizenship preparation classes has risen, and "getting citizenship" has been voiced frequently by learners as their goal for studying English as a second language (ESL).

Preparing immigrants for citizenship has been increasingly challenging. The recent influx of immigrants to the United States have relatively lower education levels than immigrants who arrived in the 1970s and 1980s and are more likely to have

incomes below or near the poverty level (Tolbert, 2001). Those who are likely to participate in ESOL classes have been found to be younger and newer to the United States, and to have achieved a higher level of education in their native language (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). To address this challenge, from 2000 to 2003 the U.S. Department of Education distributed approximately $70 million per year to states as part of the English Language/Civics program. In addition, another $6.3 million was allocated during this period to develop innovative demonstration projects. Programs associated with these initiatives will be described later in this report.

FUNDING FOR ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION

Overall, compared with education in other sectors, funding for adult basic education and literacy is quite limited. In fiscal year 2003, federal funding totaled only about $571 million. Most of the funds are distributed through basic grants to states and are allocated by a formula based on the number of persons over age 16, who have not completed high school in each state. States distribute funds to local providers through a competitive process. Under the Workforce Investment Act, adult education plans may be part of state unified plans for workforce development or may cover only adult education. Limited funding has many consequences for the field. Some programs are experimenting with ways to retain students longer by offering more intensive instruction to fewer learners. Most programs, however, have open-entry, open-exit policies in order to serve as many students as possible, and most students attend classes just a few hours a week. Overall attrition rates are high.

The ability to improve the capacity of the field to serve youth is also hampered by the part-time nature of the teaching force and by the working conditions of teachers. Of 140,000 adult education personnel working during the 2002-2003 school year, only 21,000 were full-time. Seventy thousand were part-time, and 49,000 were volunteers. Most part-time teachers are paid an hourly wage and seldom receive preservice training. Paid planning time to develop lessons and paid professional development are also limited. Teacher attrition is also high within the field because many teachers lack benefits and a strong career path.

THE ONLINE SURVEY

To better understand the civics education and civic engagement activities that take place within adult literacy education programs that serve youth, the challenges they face, and factors that hinder or support their efforts, SRI International conducted an online survey. The online survey was selected as the preferable method for its ease of delivery, its potential for fast turnaround with no data cleaning requirements, and its cost-effectiveness. Our aim at this point was exploratory. Although we received a fairly large number of responses (468) from 46 states, it is important to keep in mind that we did not make efforts to collect data from a representative sample of programs, nor did we conduct any kind of follow-up to verify the responses. The survey data provide valuable information, however, that can be used to inform more systematic research studies and to provide initial guidance to practitioners and policy-makers. Project staff developed the survey draft on the basis of the research questions posed in the project proposal and our review of the literature. The draft survey was also reviewed by two project advisors: Taylor Willingham, Director of Texas Forums for the LBJ Presidential Library, and a researcher for the Kettering Foundation, a nonpartisan public policy research organization that develops tools to promote civic engagement; and Andy Nash, an adult literacy and ESOL specialist who has been instrumental in designing a national Web site on civic engagement for the New England Literacy Resource Center. The survey was widely promoted by posting invitations to participate on many national online discussions in which our target population participates. The invitation contained a link that respondents could click on for easy access to the online survey. In addition, the survey was sent to leaders of key national adult literacy organizations. Many of our collective contacts forwarded the survey invitation via e-mail to additional state and/or regional online discussion lists and sent personal reminders out during the

last 2 weeks before the deadline. (A copy of the survey can be found as Appendix A.)

We used the SurveyMonkey service to deliver the survey and collect the data. SurveyMonkey performed routine statistical analyses on the data, including counts of responses and calculations of percentages. The open-ended responses were further categorized and analyzed by staff to determine common themes. Our aim in analyzing the data was to identify key issues and promising practices in the provision of civic engagement instruction to youth in adult education. Because the scope of this project did not allow for data collection from a full or a representative sample of adult literacy programs that engage youth in civics education nationally, only relatively simple and descriptive analysis of the survey data was deemed appropriate. (Reported percentages have been rounded to their closest whole number.)

LIMITATIONS

While we feel that the results of our survey include many interesting findings, a few caveats are in order prior to our presentation of these findings. First, we learned in conducting this survey that many programs lack consistent statistics documenting their efforts. This lack of consistency presents an obvious limitation to the interpretation and application of our survey results. Although the problem of poor documentation has been reduced somewhat over the past several years, following the institution of a new outcomes-based National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS), data availability and quality still remain a problem and hampered the ability of survey participants to respond to some of our questions. The NRS, however; has yielded many positive outcomes. (For example, the data on youth enrollment we have reported were not available just a few years ago.) The NRS also links federal funding in part to the demonstration of learner progress on core outcome measures, including educational gains based on approved standardized tests, the receipt of the GED, and/or entry into or retention in employment. Optional outcome measures in a category related to community goals also exist. They include the achievement of citizenship skills needed to pass the citizenship exam, voting registration, and increased involvement in community activities. However, since programs are often stretched even to collect core data, the collection of optimal outcome data has been uneven. (See http://www.nrsweb.org/ for more information on the National Reporting System.)

As another caveat, we recommend that readers look beyond the somewhat bleak picture of the field revealed in some aspects of the descriptive statistics presented in this report and also recognize the tremendous amount of vitality and innovation within many programs that serve out-of-school youth revealed by our survey. The strong response to our survey, the willingness of respondents to contribute often lengthy detailed responses to our open-ended questions and the eagerness of the respondents to know what others around the country are doing so they can improve their own practices are a testament to the interest of practitioners in civics education and civic engagement. We now turn to the results of that survey.

BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FROM THE SURVEY

A total of 468 adult literacy education practitioners responded to the survey. Of these, 49% identified themselves as literacy program administrators and 32% as instructors. Of the nearly 19% who identified their role as "other," most were in administrative roles, such as program coordinators and executive directors. The next largest group were other program staff, such as office managers, grants coordinators, or technology coordinators. Additional respondents in the "other" category included those with dual administrative/instructor roles, professional developers, and state or regional representatives. Forty-six states and the District of Columbia were represented, with the highest response rates from California, Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Virginia. (Survey results in table format can be found in Appendix C.)

The largest number of respondents identified themselves as primarily associated with a local school district (38%). Other respondents were associated with community-based organizations (22%), community colleges (16%), libraries (9%), and volunteer organizations (4%). Additional responses in the "other" category included adult/continuing education programs and educational consortia; nonprofit groups, such as faith-based organizations and museums; universities; local/state/national government agencies; and programs in correctional settings.

Most programs (46%) described themselves as primarily urban programs, while 29% were rural programs and 20% were suburban. Of the programs that selected "Other," some were in mixed rural and urban settings and others represented county, regional, or statewide programs.

The largest number of programs (38%) were mid-size, serving from 30 to 200 students. An additional 26% described themselves as large, multisite programs serving more than 500 students. A quarter (25%) served between 200 and 500 students, and 11% served fewer than 30 students.

When asked whether their programs provided some of their instruction in any special settings, 27% of respondents indicated that they provide instruction in the workplace, 26% in correctional settings, 18% in community technology centers, and 15% in housing complexes. Many respondents (70%) selected the "other" category in response to this question. These included 34% in college or school campuses, 21% in "multiple settings," and 19% in community agencies such as city halls, one-stop centers, or community centers. When asked about the full—part-time and paid/volunteer status of their instructors, the largest number of respondents specified that most were part-time paid instructors.

YOUTH IN THE SURVEYED PROGRAMS

We asked programs to identify the percentage of their enrollees who were students between the ages of 16 and 24. Only 65% were able to do so—partly, perhaps, because many of the respondents were teachers who do not have access to enrollment data. In other cases, however, this inability to categorize participants may be due to the overall difficulties programs have in collecting program data. As we will see later in the findings, with their resources stretched so thin, many programs do not have the time or funding to collect the data they might like to have. Of the 65% who did respond to this question, 10% reported that 75% to 100% of their enrollees were youth. Another 10% reported that youth represented 50%-74% of their enrollees. The largest number (41%) reported that from 20% to 49% of their enrollees were youth, 19% of programs said 10% to 19% of their enrollees were youth, and 20% said 0% to 9% were youth. In terms of numbers of youth served in their programs, the largest number of respondents (51%) reported serving small numbers of youth (1 to 25). Another 21% served 26 to 75 youth, 8% served 76 to 100 youth, 10% served 100 to 250 youth, 6% served 251 to 500 youth, and 4% served more than 500 youth.

Respondents reported that youth were enrolled in a variety of kinds of programs. Eighty-nine percent had at least some students enrolled in adult secondary education, diploma, or GED classes. Sixty-four percent of programs listed that they served at least some of their youth in adult basic education classes; 42% had students in ESOL, 20% in family literacy, 9% in citizenship classes, 20% in vocational education, and 30% in some kind of

work readiness or transition-to- work classes. A few respondents also mentioned other kinds of classes, such as juvenile justice classes, leadership training, computer education, and alcohol and substance abuse education.

In our survey, we asked respondents to give a rough estimate of how the percentage of youth in their programs had changed over the past 5 years. More than half of those who responded to this question (56%) reported that the numbers had increased. Another 44% stated that they believed that the percentage had remained the same or, in a small number of cases, decreased. It should be noted, however, that only 280 of the 468 respondents answered this question. Presumably, the other respondents did not have sufficient information to answer the question.

FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

This section describes the key findings from the survey. The section includes respondents' responses to the following categories of questions: why youth enter adult education programs, the role of civics education and civic engagement in programs, the level of interest of programs and students in civics, program support for civics education, how programs have responded to increased numbers of youth, issues related to having older and younger students in the same class, and respondents' perceptions of the levels of change in students' civic engagement.

WHY YOUTH ENTER ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Although several factors have been identified in the literature as contributing to participation of youth in adult literacy education programs, we wanted to know what respondents on the front line saw as the reasons youth enter their programs. We asked them to indicate the reasons for increased participation by youth that they saw as first, second, and third most important from a list of possible reasons we provided. We also provided an "other" category where they could write in their own reasons. The following were the most frequently cited reasons from our list, in decreasing order of frequency:

- More students dropping out due to a lack of interest in school.
- More older youth returning to adult education to get GED in order to get a job or a better job.
- More older youth returning to adult school to get a GED in order to enroll in post-secondary education or training.
- More students being reassigned to adult school programs by the school district.

Many respondents chose to use the "other" category and to write in their responses. Among these responses, the most commonly cited were:

- Enrollment of immigrant students who are not able to participate in other programs because of low language level, little or no formal education in their native country, or being too old for high school programs.
- Enrollment of youth who are mandated by the courts to attend programs, or incarcerated youth attending adult literacy programs in correctional facilities.
- Youth find that adult literacy programs better serve their needs than traditional school or community college programs at the time they enter, because of features such as the flexible schedules, intensive one-on-one tutoring, and a proficiency-based approach.

Overall many respondents commented on a combination of interacting factors, many of which are related to an overall lack of support in the K-12 system. The comments of the respondents below reflect the complexity of reasons why youth come to programs.

> *Many students have lost interest in traditional school and have not succeeded at a home school. These are students who have been in trouble again and again and have been given up on by many people in their lives.*

> *Most of the young people who enroll in our program have left high school because they were failing--even though they could succeed, given the right circumstances, they just 'slipped through the cracks.' I suspect the chief reason is undiagnosed learning disabilities/differences.*

> *Our young adults stated that their main reason for leaving High School is peer pressure, drugs, violence… and misunderstanding between HS staff and parents or misplaced files in the High School. A high percentage of young adults are parents and they have to deal with welfare and sometimes even welfare doesn't want to pay the childcare provider so they can not do the GED or high diploma program.*

> *More students are claiming that they don't fit into a high school environment. High schools are also referring students to adult education classes due to "No Child Left Behind" because they are not passing the mandatory tests. Students have also lost a sense of 'future' and don't seem to understand the consequences of not having an education*

> *Students who are in high school come to our program because, as English Language Learners, they want additional ESL practice outside of school hours. For those youth 16-24 who are not in school, they attend because 1) other education is not available to them or 2) they do not have sufficient English skills to enroll in community college programs.*

THE ROLE OF CIVICS EDUCATION AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN PROGRAMS

When asked how civic engagement is a part of their programs, programs indicated that they:

- Inform students of community events and civic activities (71%).
- Include civic engagement as part of the overall program mission and/or goals (53%).
- Encourage student participation in program decision-making (45%).
- Coordinate joint civic engagement activities with other agencies (36%).
- Include related topics as part of their staff development and/or volunteer training (35%).
- Ask students during intake whether they have civic engagement goals (34%).
- Plan civic engagement activities that take place outside of class (28%).
- Have civic engagement as a criterion for evaluating their program success (24%).
- Offer one or more courses on civic engagement (20%).

Another 15% of respondents wrote in other civic engagement activities. These included voter education and registration; requiring or encouraging students to engage in community

service; conducting classes on civic engagement, leadership, voting rights, community activism, politics, and government; getting a library card; conducting issues forums; and distributing materials, such as voting information.

THE LEVEL OF INTEREST OF PROGRAMS AND STUDENTS IN CIVICS

Most survey respondents indicated that civic engagement was important to their overall program goals. Sixty-two percent rated civic engagement as "somewhat important" or "important; address occasionally," while 22% said that it was "important" and they "address [it] frequently." Another nine percent rated it "very important; among our top priorities." Respondents believed, however, that civic engagement was less important to their students than to the program staff. Most survey respondents (62%) reported that they believed that fewer than a quarter of their students, regardless of age, had learning goals related to civics education, while 72% felt that fewer than a quarter of their youth enrollees had civics-related learning goals. Only 9% of respondents felt that more than half their overall student population had civics-related goals; for youth, the figure was only 5%.

Just over half of respondents stated that they do not collect data on the differences between the civics-related goals of their older and younger students. About one in five respondents reported a difference between the civics-related goals of their youth and their older learners, but there was no consensus regarding the differences. The responses that follow give a sense of the range of opinions provided by respondents:

> *Some youth are not interested in the community. They are more worried about 'I' and "what is going to happen to me." My older students are interested in finding out how they can get the rights they lost (voting, bearing arms, etc) back after they have served their time. The youth are only interested in what the community can 'give' them. Can they get a job, training for a job or free schooling. Older students have a different outlook and are aware there is 'no free ride.'*
>
> *We find youth tend to be more open to learning from community service experiences, react favorably to being introduced to local leaders in public office or decision-making roles. We inspire, challenge youth to take responsibility for sharing information, speaking to publicly elected officials formally and informally. We find adults to be a bit more shy and less confident in approaching elected/public officials. Many are immigrant families whose priority is to work, pay the bills and raise their families. They tend to not want to be perceived as 'rocking the boat,' and less likely to interact. We are offering a community-based government class to help adults learn that elected officials are approachable, and they have a voice that elected people need to hear.*
>
> *Older students, particularly those with families seem to have a broader picture in mind and understand the many levels, layers, and opportunities for civic engagement. Younger students still seem to see it as 'Have you registered to vote yet?' and are not at a point to engage with their community as are the older students.*
>
> *Many of the youth students are not interested in or are disillusioned with the political process. For example they say they don't vote because there's 'no point'. They are less excited about the freedoms available to them as U.S. Citizens than say, a Chinese immigrant - for obvious*

> *reasons.*

PROGRAM SUPPORT FOR CIVICS EDUCATION

When asked about the kinds of support they needed in order to implement civics education activities, respondents identified "professional development for instructors" as a top need (54%). Half of the respondents selected "awareness of/ access to relevant materials and other instructional resources" as an important need. (This finding is supported by the large numbers of respondents who indicated that they would like to receive copies of this report and urged us to include whatever resource lists we were able to share.) Not surprisingly in the underfunded field of adult literacy education, many programs (46%) also mentioned "better funding options for civic engagement." "Other" responses reflected the need for more program resources in general–more staff and/or more full-time staff, time for planning and collaboration with other instructors, Internet access in the classroom, child care, and counseling support services for students.

Many respondents also used this question as an opportunity to express their desire for policy-related changes. One cluster of responses voiced the concern that basing program performance on the outcomes of standardized (reading and math) tests meant that they did not receive credit or support for their civics-related activities. To spend more time and energy on civic engagement activities, one respondent noted, we need funding that is evaluated on that basis.

Other respondents pointed out how difficult it is for adults and out-of-school youth to find the time for civic engagement. One respondent focused his discussion on the fact that agencies and employers should pay for workers to attend adult literacy education classes. Another respondent brought up the issue of not having time for civic engagement this way:

> *All of my students wanted desperately to improve their own lives. They were not interested in civic engagement because they saw it as a waste of time better spent dealing with their own lives. Until many people and institutions that already have a decent standard of living start to model civic engagement by giving their employees time to engage civilly as well, I don't see how they can expect it of those who have the least.*

HOW PROGRAMS HAVE RESPONDED TO INCREASED NUMBERS OF YOUTH

When we asked practitioners how their programs had responded to the increase in youth enrollment, the top five choices were:

- Modified the content/curriculum of existing classes somewhat (46%),
- Offered teacher professional development related to serving youth (33%),
- Instituted new or different class rules and norms (31%),
- Created ABE/GED/ESOL classes with curriculum designed for youth (28%),
- Created special in-class activities aimed at youth (23%).

Programs differed on the issue of modifying their curriculum for youth enrollees. Many programs have adopted more hands-on activities and course content that is more relevant to youth, while other programs feel it is important to treat their younger students as part of the larger group. Among those who feel they have not needed to change their curriculum are those at two ends of the spectrum in terms of their approach to teaching and learning. Programs that employ an individualized approach to instruction (having students work mostly independently in workbooks with the teacher moving between students) feel that this approach allows them to meet the needs of participants at any age. On the other end are programs that are group centered and highly participatory, which also feel they have not needed to make special adaptations. In these programs, the curriculum is already designed to focus on the immediate needs identified by students, based on their everyday experiences. In this case, needs identified by

youth, such as housing, legal issues, and teen parenting issues, are addressed within the existing student-centered needs assessment process. Some practitioners feel their programs should not change as a result of youth enrollment, as reflected in this statement from one respondent:

> *I think it's a mistake to make curriculum changes geared to youth, at least our youth here in this area because one of their complaints is that they are so streetwise by the time they come to community college, they don't want people talking down or creating special activities for them. They feel so marginalized anyway; they just want to be part of the group, and they do very well with the other adults—the young mothers, the young men from drug court, etc., etc. It's quite satisfyin*g to see it work.

A number of programs mentioned that they have needed to create new or different class rules and norms, such as stricter attendance policies, policies related to consequences for misbehavior, and ground rules for student interactions with one another. Programs varied in the extent to which disruptive behavior of youth led to program changes. For some, the setting of more explicit rules was enough to take care of behavior-related problems; others mentioned the need to hire security staff and to have separate attendance hours for their students under age 18. Many programs mentioned that they have added counselors to help the youth in their programs deal with personal, family, and employment problems. Some have also partnered with special job training programs for youth.

ISSUES RELATED TO HAVING OLDER AND YOUNGER STUDENTS IN THE SAME CLASS

When it came to civics-related learning, the issue of having youth and adults in the same class engendered some of the most strongly felt comments of the entire survey. Although the intergenerational issue was not applicable for some respondents, the majority (56%) saw the intergenerational classes as having a positive impact on their students' civic learning and the establishment of a learning community within the classroom. Many respondents cited the positive influence of older students as role models for community involvement and attitudes toward learning, while the youth brought energy and a degree of boldness that the older students may lack. Older students had rich life experience that brought civic issues to life for the youth, while the youth shared their expertise with technology and helped older students learn about new trends. Frequent mention was made of the rich discussion and opportunities for the two groups to learn from each other. Peer teaching and mentoring were mentioned frequently.

> *Many of my younger students listen and learn from their older classmates. Particularly in regards to alcohol and drug abuse and the long-term impacts of substance abuse in my older students' lives. Most of my older students have spent years in prison, some committing murders due to alcohol use; the younger students learn that unless they walk a straight path, they will probably wind up in prison as well. Many of the younger students also realize that unless they finish their educations, then they too will wind up with a long history of short-term jobs and never alleviating the poverty cycle. It's a pretty cool thing to watch my younger students developing close relationships with students who are 20-40 years older than themselves.*

> *I think older students definitely have an effect on our younger students' ways of approaching social and community issues that come up in our program. But the younger students have definitely affected*

> *older students' sense of how able they are to raise their voices about issues that upset them and are important to them.*
>
> *It enables peer teaching as well as enables older students to share their experience(s). Also, each group poses questions and raises issues that the others perhaps would not have thought or been courageous enough to ask or raise. All in all the multigenerational class has deepened the learning experience for all, not to mention, prompted lively discussion.*

Some respondents saw certain factors as making a difference in terms of whether an intergenerational class worked or not. The age mix was cited by several respondents as key—if the balance shifted toward older students, the youth were influenced positively by those students. However, if there were more youth than older students, the youth became disruptive and the older students felt uncomfortable and, in some instances, dropped out of the class. Another factor cited was academic level. If the educational levels were very divergent, both age groups were frustrated, but if they were fairly even, the age mix worked well. Respondents often said that the students needed to be open to the intergenerational setting and the teacher needed to have both the interest in seeing this approach succeed and the skills to keep potentially disruptive behavior under control and establish an inclusive learning community with the diverse group. The attendance status of the youth made a difference, as well. If they were court-mandated to be in class, one respondent noted, they were usually disruptive.

RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE LEVELS OF CHANGE IN STUDENTS' CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

When asked whether their students' levels of civic skills and civic engagement had changed as a result of program- and classroom-related activities, 51% responded that they did not know. This finding is perhaps not surprising since most programs do not report on civics- and community-related outcomes. Most (59%) respondents reported that they did not have any measures or tools for assessing civic engagement as a learning outcome. In addition, the respondents' comments also allude to the fact that most do not have good tools to measure student change in these areas or funds to conduct longitudinal studies of students' lives outside the classroom.

About a quarter of respondents (25%) reported that they did have some ways to measure student change. These included student self-reports, interviews, focus groups, surveys, and reports on goals set and achieved. In some programs, this process was formalized, as with the California Library Literacy Service's Roles and Goals Form. In others, the goals were tracked on locally developed forms or databases. Outcomes such as passing the citizenship test, documentation of voter registration, obtaining a library card or driver's license, participating in a parent-teacher conference, or volunteering for a community organization, are tracked in some programs and state systems, whether in portfolio form or through periodic surveys or checklists. State systems mentioned include Ohio's ABLELink, TESPIRS (Texas Even Start Program Information Reporting System), and Wisconsin's State Adult Education EL/Civics modules (curriculum units with measurable capstone experiences).

One hundred twelve respondents shared more anecdotal comments on the kinds of changes that their students had made in their levels of civic engagement. The most frequent responses were related to increased knowledge of voting-related issues or student participation in campaigns or political committees. (One respondent even said that some of her students had run for city council.) Examples related to studying for and passing the citizenship test were another frequent response. Respondents also mentioned participation in letter writing campaigns, advocacy, and volunteerism as evidence of increased civics skills and civic engagement. They reported on the production of television programs, presentations given to state representatives, activities where students sought information from agencies, participation in parent-

teacher groups, and increased use of community resources, such as libraries.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AND MODELS

This section weaves together what we have learned from survey respondents and from our review of literature about promising civics-related educational practices. Some of these are classroom-based practices and models; others address program wide educational activities and activities that take place outside the classroom.

CLASSROOM-BASED PRACTICES AND MODELS

READING, DISCUSSION, AND WRITING

Activities that incorporate reading, discussion, and writing led the list of successful practices identified by our survey respondents; 80% reported using this approach. Several respondents described having their students follow an issue of interest (such as the 2004 election) in the newspaper and discuss what they read. In some instances, discussion and debate made the issue more personally meaningful to the students. Expressing their opinion through activities such as writing letters to the editor or writing articles for student or community newspapers, helped the students think through the reasons for their opinions and clarify their personal voices.

When asked what materials they used to support their students' goals related to civic engagement, real-life materials were respondents' top choice. Real-life materials offer attractive features to adult education programs: they can be very relevant to students' interests and needs, they can be quite current, and they are often widely available for no or little cost. Newspapers were the most frequently cited choice of material (82% of respondents). The second most popular choice (65%) was voter education materials, supporting the strong emphasis on voter education activities within many programs. Three-fifths (60%) of respondents indicated that they use community organization forms, flyers, brochures, and other real-life materials, such as citizens' guides showing names of local government leaders, free state maps and tourism guides, free department of motor vehicles booklets, and voting guides. More than half (57%) of respondents reported using citizenship materials in their civics instruction. One resource frequently mentioned by respondents from California was the Easy Voter Guide, described in the box on the following page.

THE EASY VOTER GUIDE PROJECT

Beginning in 1994 as the "Key to Community Voter Involvement Project," the Easy Voter Guide Project has as its mission to make information about why and how to vote, along with what is on the ballot, accessible to Californians (and now Nevadans, as well) who often do not participate in the voting process: those with limited literacy or English language skills, new citizens, youth from 18 to 24, and disabled individuals. The project started with funding from the California State Library and used community-based market research to uncover deeper reasons for low voter turnout. The researchers discovered that many common excuses for not voting rest on a foundation of information needs and low self-efficacy. Nonvoters frequently do not know the candidates or issues, don't believe that their opinion matters, don't know how to vote, and are intimidated by the process.

The Easy Voter Guide Project created a three-stage model for increasing voter participation. Issues forums, conducted by peers trained in framing issues and facilitating dialogue, provide an opportunity for participants to engage with public issues and see that their opinion counts. The resulting appetite for action is fed by peer-led voting workshops and materials that cover the why and how of voting. The peer-edited Easy Voter Guide provides nonpartisan information about candidates and ballot measures in an accessible format and language (it is produced in five languages). "Layman's language," large type, color and photos, definitions of basic terms, and background information are key to the guide's appeal. The same types of peer-prepared material—context about the issues and their connection to voting and public policy, information about the basics of the voting process, and a nonpartisan view of ballot content—are also available on the project's Web site, www.easyvoter.org.

In addition to being available on the Internet, the Easy Voter Guide is distributed through a network of more than 1,000 organizations within California. Some partner organizations, like the Youth Leadership Institute (www.yli.org), create their own youth version of the Guide, which counts 16 to 24- year-olds among its editors and reviewers. "Peer delivery is a powerful motivator," says project director Susan Clark of Common Knowledge (http://www.ckgroup.org/home.html). "Our partners can embed the tools in a youth 'wrapper' to better reach the youth audience."

The Easy Voter Guide is supported through continued collaboration of the California State Library, the League of Women Voters of California, and the California Secretary of State's Office. A number of newspapers, businesses, schools, civic and community organizations, county voter registrars, city clerks, adult literacy programs, community colleges, and adult schools help circulate nearly 1 million copies of the guide each election.

Less frequently chosen materials for civics education include published workbooks or texts, which were chosen by 39% of respondents. (Appendix D contains list of titles and publishers named by respondents.) Respondents also mentioned locally produced materials (21%), student-produced materials (10%), and other materials (25%), such as teacher- produced videos, commercial videos, downloadable PowerPoint presentations, community guides, newspapers, booklets, and Internet sites.

Special federal funding for English literacy and civics education has also led to the development of materials for teachers who are working with immigrant adults to develop their civics skills and prepare for the citizenship test. Some of those activities are described in the box on the next page.

CITIZENSHIP PREPARATION FOR IMMIGRANT LEARNERS

To support the development of innovative practices in civics education for immigrant adults from 2000 to 2003, the U.S. Department of Education's English Literacy and Civics Education Demonstration Grants Program funded projects to address a range of curriculum topics and activities. These include expanding English language skills through problem-solving activities, understanding local resources and services, citizen instruction, integrated English language and civics tutoring, computer literacy for immigrants, and curriculum and professional development.

Projects funded as part of this initiative include The Process of English and Civics Education (PEACE), a site by developed by California Literacy to offer a low-level ESL curriculum incorporating civics education. The core text features pictures and true stories of immigrants who have been change agents in their homes, workplaces, and communities, and is accompanied by a handbook regarding students' basic rights in the United States. http://www.caliteracy.org/education/esl-civcs/index.html

Also funded through this initiative, PBS ESL/CivicsLink is a Web-based professional development system for ESL teachers and programs. Through self-directed, interactive, online learning, ESL teachers can increase their ability to integrate ESL instruction with civics education. http://civicslink.ket.org/login.xml

The increased attention and funding for civics education led to other kinds of initiatives, as well. The New England Citizenship Project, for example, was an 18-month project, funded by the Lincoln and Therese Filene Foundation, through which citizenship educators explored the possibility of teaching "beyond" the 100 citizenship test questions.

Other resources related to civics education for immigrants include Citizenship News (http://www.citizenshipnews.us/), a site designed to keep citizenship educators updated on pertinent naturalization and citizenship test issues, including information about the new test and updates on key changes in policy and practice, and Civnet (http://civnet.org), an online resource with lesson plans usable or adaptable for adult education.

YOUTH INSTRUCTIONAL MODELS

Few respondents mentioned using materials developed by and for youth in K-12 or postsecondary education or adopting comprehensive models for curricular change. A recent edition of the research-to-practice publication Focus on Basics, however, highlighted one example of how a model developed for youth workforce preparation was imported into an adult literacy education context and led to a move from individualized to group-based instruction within a group of programs in Kansas City (see box on following page).

THE YOUTH CULTURAL COMPETENCE MODEL

One example of a city -wide reform initiative designed to better serve the needs of youth within adult basic education took place in the metropolitan Kansas City area (Topper & Gordon, 2004; Geary, 2004; Weber, 2004). In 2000, members of the Metropolitan Alliance for Adult Learning (MAAL), a consortium of local adult educators, came together to discuss their concern that well over half of their learners were youth under 25 and that fewer than might be expected were being retained in their programs and were completing their GED. The alliance began to explore the Youth Development and Research Fund's model of youth workforce preparation, Youth Cultural Competence (YCC). After holding a series of focus groups with youth to learn about the kinds of music they listened to, what movies they went to see, and who their "heroes" were, they shifted from open-entry, open-exit individualized programs to small-group instruction. The group sessions integrated elements of popular culture with critical reading, math, and language arts activities.

The YCC program is grounded in three major programmatic components: youth involvement, including involving youth in a substantive role in educational decision-making; positive peer influence, including a focus on young people's developmental needs for "opportunities to belong" and "feelings of efficacy and mattering" (Weber, 2004, p. 7); and youth popular culture. The involvement of youth in planning has an added outcome of socializing new students to an "ethos of achievement" (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2002). Youth consulting teams, leadership groups, and student government structures helped youth to gain the motivation, experience, and skills they may need later in life to participate in other forms of civic engagement.

INTERNET RESEARCH, USE OF WEB SITES, AND OTHER USES OF TECHNOLOGY

Internet research was identified as a successful instructional practice by 54% of survey respondents. Students used the Internet to find information about potential volunteer opportunities in their community, find material about a community agency to share with the class, and do a wide variety of other kinds of research.

Many teachers also visited Web sites to download materials. In our survey, we listed Web sites we had identified as offering civics-related resources for teachers and students. Of these, the top five Web sites or online discussion lists identified as being used in relation to the teachers' civic engagement instruction/preparation were:

- The National Institute for Literacy Web site: http://www.nifl.gov (35% of respondents).
- Easy Voter Guide Web site: http://www.easyvoter.org (31%).
- Equipped for the Future discussion list: http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/discussions/nifl-4eff/equipped_for_future.html (19%).
- Verizon Literacy Campus Web site: http://www.literacycampus.org (15%).
- English Literacy Civics Education Resource Center Web site: http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/ELCweb/Home/h_A.htm (15%).

It is interesting to note that the two resources that specifically address youth—the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development (http://www.theinnovationcenter.org) and the Civic Practices Network Topics: Youth and Education page (http://www.cpn.org/topics/youth/index.html) garnered the least amount of response (0.4% and 1.3% respectively). Perhaps the adult education community is not as familiar or does not yet identify with resources to support work with youth. It should be noted that 24% of respondents did not know which Web sites or discussion lists were being used, and 15% said that none were being used in their programs.

Other respondents mentioned using instructional software (29%), e-mail advocacy (8%), and online discussion lists (4%). Why these practices are not used by more of the respondents is not clear, but their limited use may be due to several factors: a lack of appropriate instructional software, lack of access to computers and the Internet, or inability to find relevant online discussion lists at an appropriate level. Teachers may not be as comfortable using some of these approaches or may not know how to integrate them effectively into their instructional practice. One respondent said that they discouraged students from using program computers to contact their legislators because the computers were purchased with federal funds.

LECTURES AND SPEAKERS

More than half of survey respondents (57%) reported using speakers as part of their civic instruction. Guest speakers, ranging from city officials and candidates to representatives of various community agencies, were invited to the classroom to talk about community issues or the services their agencies offer. One respondent felt that "politicians should visit classrooms more and provide young adults with the opportunity of working for them as volunteers and hear their opinions. A lot of our students feel that no one is paying attention to their ideas and they are afraid to talk because they haven't finished their high school education and they don't feel capable of [being] leaders in the community." Some programs have helped students to develop their leadership roles by encouraging them to be speakers in adult education classrooms. The National Issues Forum (described below) is one source of guest speakers and facilitators that was mentioned as being used by several respondents.

NATIONAL ISSUES FORUMS

The National Issues Forums (NIF) process has been used successfully with adult education and high school students throughout the country to help students learn how to deliberate about social issues. Through NIF, educators and other interested groups may obtain moderator training and participant booklets, videotapes, and teachers' guides. Materials are available in reading levels suitable for use with adult literacy students. Forums may be conducted within classrooms or on a larger scale, involving other community members in a "town hall meeting" setting. Led by a trained moderator, participants consider different approaches to specific social problems, such as health care, immigration, illegal drugs, or juvenile crime. At the conclusion of a forum, participants may vote on the solution of their choice and share their results publicly through the Kettering Foundation. Participation in the deliberative process helps students learn how to engage constructively in public dialogue and affirms that their voice is important. More information about NIF is available from http://www.nifi.org/index.aspx.

LEARNER-CENTERED APPROACHES TO LEARNING

About half of respondents reported using problem posing (49%) or project-based learning (46%). Problem posing is identified with a critical approach to literacy. It involves working with students to identify problems and issues outside the classroom, to critically evaluate the roots of the problem and to plan how to take action for change. The publication The Change Agent (http://www.nelrc.org/changeagent/) contains examples of this approach. Project-based learning also involves students in identifying their needs and conducting projects around real world needs. Respondents to the survey mentioned class-wide projects, such as researching and conducting mock political campaigns that led to mock elections, producing videos on issues of interest, and creating games based on understanding issues in the local community.

One key resource mentioned by a number of survey respondents was Equipped for the Future (EFF). EFF is a standards-based reform initiative developed by the National Institute for Literacy. The EFF framework provides teachers with tools to help them develop curriculum based on students' real-world goals. Helping students to achieve their goals related to citizenship and community action has been a key focus of EFF. Many teachers have developed and shared lesson plans related to helping students to realize their citizenship goals. The box on the following page provides an overview of EFF.

EQUIPPED FOR THE FUTURE (EFF)

One reform initiative that has been influential in focusing the attention of adult educators on civic engagement is Equipped for the Future. The Equipped for the Future project began in 1994 when the U.S. National Goals Panel asked the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) to help further define the National Goal for Literacy and Lifelong Learning that "every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship". NIFL began this work by asking 1,500 adult literacy and ESOL learners to talk and write about what they felt they needed to know and be able to do to fulfill this national goal. A synthesis of these data revealed that these adults and out-of-school youth came to education programs to fulfill four key purposes: (1) to gain ACCESS to information to orient themselves in the world around them; (2) to develop VOICE and express their ideas and opinions with the confidence that they will be heard; (3) to take ACTION in order to solve problems and make decisions individually and with others; and (4) to find a BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE so they can keep up with a changing world.

Further work in partnership with adult literacy programs around the United States led to the development of "role maps" that define what adults need to know and do in three primary roles: citizen/community member, worker, and parent/family member. Each role map includes a central purpose for the role, broad areas of responsibility that are critical to achieving that purpose, and key activities that further define the broad areas of responsibility.

The Citizen/Community Member Role Map (shown in Appendix B) is a composite of activities and skills that adults identified as being necessary to being effective citizens and community members. From 1995 to 1997, NIFL funded three organizations (the Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee, The New England Literacy Resource Center, and the Mayor's Commission on Literacy in Philadelphia) to develop the role map. These programs listened to hundreds of adults and out-of-school youth talk about their experiences and ideas related to civic participation and citizenship. More details about this initiative can be found in the February 1998 issue of The Change Agent, a journal focused on social justice issues for adult educators and published by the New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC).

EFF partners in 25 programs from around the country then extended their work to identify what effective performance looks like in the three roles and used that information as a starting point to identify a set of 16 standards for adult basic education. Today, the EFF standards have been adopted in a number of states and are used by practitioners at the local and regional levels in many others. The work of EFF is now being coordinated through the Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee. Web sites containing examples of how to use the EFF framework to design teaching, learning, and assessment activities related to civic participation and citizenship can be found at http://eff.cls.utk.edu/resources/default.htm.

PRACTICES AND MODELS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

FIELD TRIPS AND COMMUNITY ACTION

Field trips were identified as a successful practice by 59% of respondents to our survey. Common field trips included trips to the library to get a library card, attending school board meetings or meet-the-candidate nights, and visiting sites of historical significance, such as state capitols, the Statue of Liberty, or the Liberty Bell. Instructors also created "scavenger hunts" to encourage their students, especially immigrant students, to visit and become more familiar with key community resources. Some programs reported that funding issues prevented them from using field trips as an instructional practice.

Participation in "town hall" meetings/forums, activities related to conducting community interviews and mapping issues in the community, and activities related to community action or social change were all selected by fewer than 20% of respondents. Among those mentioned by respondents were efforts by California programs to bring their students to Sacramento on Legislative Day, where they could meet with their legislators and advocate for continued support of literacy programs, and a project to lobby for the development of a skateboard park. Community service projects were described by many respondents as a means of helping their students become more familiar and involved with their communities. Most often, students were given a selection of community service opportunities from which to choose, such as reading to preschoolers, visiting nursing homes, and assisting with food or clothing drives.

Additional examples of community-action-related activities can be found in the literature written by and for adult educators. The New England Literacy Resource Center is a key source of information about adult education for social change. Some of its projects are described in the box below.

THE NEW ENGLAND LITERACY RESOURCE CENTER

The New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC; http://www.nelrc.org/) offers many resources for teachers interested in civics and social change issues. Its journal, The Change Agent, focuses on social justice issues for adult educators, providing examples from practice, research, and reflections by educators on the implications of their work for social change. Each issue focuses on a different topic, such as voting, racism, and the environment. The Civic Participation and Community Action Sourcebook (1999), edited by Andy Nash, contains many teacher-written articles in which teachers describe and reflect on the civic participation and community action activities they have conducted with their students. Teachers participating in these projects found that these group reflection experiences helped lay the groundwork for developing the civic engagement skills of their students in a variety of ways. Through NELRC, Andy Nash has also created a Civic Participation and Citizenship Collection that contains annotated Web sites and original materials that cover a wide range of topics related to community action and active citizenship. This collection was built with an emphasis on informed activism to serve educators of adults and out-of-school youth in diverse settings.

Some materials on the site contain valuable insights regarding how to create an intergenerational community within an adult literacy or ESOL classroom and how to use that community as a point of departure for discussing broader issues, such as: What does it mean to be a community? What does it mean to be a good citizen? How are you active in your community?

PROGRAM-WIDE COMMUNITY EVENTS

Many of the community-related events mentioned by survey respondents were conducted as program-wide efforts. The most popular program-wide efforts were related to voter registration drives and workshops (52%), followed by program workshops on community topics (36%). Student-organized and/or/ -led fairs/workshops garnered 17%. Other events included holding a mock political convention or mock election, hosting meet-the-candidates nights on immigrant rights, holding a health fair, conducting Cultural Exchange Evenings introducing different immigrant communities to the native-born community, and having a float in the Martin Luther King Day parade.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

Another cluster of program-wide activities, rather than events, mentioned by respondents can be grouped under the category of student leadership. These included weekly student government meetings, student-to-student meetings across the program to learn about broader community issues, student-sponsored events to engage in advocacy through producing literature, student advisory committees, and student leadership institutes. Some programs have helped students develop their leadership roles by encouraging them to be speakers in other classrooms.

Adult literacy student leadership efforts at the state, local, and program levels became more organized with the advent of a national adult learner leadership organization named VALUE (described in the box below).

VALUE ADULT LEARNER LEADERSHIP ORGANIZATION

Within the field, a growing number of state and local programs have taken steps to involve adult learners in the leadership of their organizations. These activities help adults develop their leadership and advocacy skills and help programs be more responsive to the needs and interests of learners. In some programs, learners play a key role in recruiting others to participate in adult education programs. Other learner leaders participate in speaking engagements, often addressing youth in their communities in areas such as staying in school and staying away from drugs. In addition, many state adult learner organizations have played a key role in efforts to advocate for increased funding (or against funding cuts) for adult literacy programming. Many states have found that the strongest testimony to state legislative bodies has come from adult learners who speak about their own personal experiences. Many states now hold learner leader conferences that include workshops to help adults in literacy programs develop their leadership skills and to share their experiences with others. In 1999, a national organization named VALUE (Voice for Adult Literacy United for Education) was formed to build and strengthen adult learner leadership at the state, community and local levels. VALUE holds a biannual conference, which is attended by representatives from as many as 40 state organizations. To learn more, visit the VALUE Web site (http://valueusa.org).

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In late 2002, CIRCLE and Carnegie Corporation of New York convened a series of meetings with some of the nation's most respected scholars and practitioners in civics education. In their report, The Civic Mission of Schools, they expressed deep concern at the numbers of Americans who have disengaged from civic and political institutions, especially young people, who are now "less likely to vote and less interested in political discussion and public issues than either their older counterparts or young people in past decades" and concern that "many young Americans may not be prepared to participate fully in our democracy now and when they become adults" (Carnegie Corporation & CIRCLE, 2003, p4). The participants in the meetings acknowledged that individuals do not automatically become competent and responsible citizens but rather must be educated for citizenship. In today's world, they reflected, schools are among the few institutions that have the capacity to reach large numbers of young people and equip them with the civic and political knowledge and related skills they need to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

With 1 million young people (ages 16 to 24) enrolled in adult literacy programs each year, the Adult Basic Education and Literacy System represents an important school-based venue for the development of civics-related knowledge, skills, and practices, especially for minority and economically disadvantaged youth. As we have seen, many adult literacy educators already implement many of the promising practices recommended by The Civic Mission of Schools (see below).

SIX PROMISING APPROACHES TO CIVIC EDUCATION

1. Provide instruction in government, history, law, and democracy.
2. Incorporate discussion of current local, national, and international issues and events into the classroom, particularly those that young people view as important to their lives.
3. Design and implement programs that provide students with the opportunity to apply what they learn through performing community service that is linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction.
4. Offer extracurricular activities that provide opportunities for young people to get involved in their schools or communities.
5. Encourage student participation in school governance.
6. Encourage students' participation in simulations of democratic processes and procedures.

The Civic Mission of Schools, p.6

With regard to the promotion of the civics education and civic engagement of youth through the Adult Literacy and Basic Education System, we suggest that policy-makers consider the five key recommendations described below in future planning.

1. Practitioners of adult literacy education have developed many innovative strategies for linking classroom activities to the roles that out-of school youth (and adults) play as citizens and community members, workers, parents, and family members. Many of these activities could be a resource to educators who work with youth at the K-12 and postsecondary levels.

   As this survey has shown, many adult educators have developed innovative approaches that integrate the development of civic awareness, skills, and action with the acquisition of basic skills. Programs are refining the use of project-based learning models and standards-based frameworks (such as Equipped for the Future) that use learners' real-world goals as a starting point for community- and civics-related activities to help learners gain access to the information they need to orient themselves in the world; develop a sense of their own voice so they can express their ideas and opinions; and learn to think critically, solve problems, and work cooperatively. Many practitioners have also found innovative intergenerational approaches to learning, ones in which both adults and youth benefited from working with each other. Too often the collective wisdom that has been developed by these practitioners has not been widely documented or disseminated because of a lack of funding. More funding needs to be provided to allow for the publication and further refinement of case studies, promising practices, and teacher training models based on the work of these practitioners. The results should be disseminated not only to adult educators working with youth but also to K-12 and postsecondary educators to allow for a cross-fertilization of ideas and approaches.

2. More attention needs to be devoted to the development of standards that address civics-related skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, and working cooperatively with others.

   Although more research needs to be done to illuminate the components of education for citizenship in a democracy, many experts agree that students do not just need knowledge about citizenship and government. The role of oral and written communication skills, and skills related to interpersonal communication and decision making are also important to civic development (Patrick, 2003; Kirlin, 2003; Stotsky, 1991). Competency in English; a strong vocabulary; the ability to write letters; the ability to participate in meetings by taking part in decision-making, planning or chairing a meeting; and giving a presentation or speech have been identified as skills related to civic education (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Verba and his colleagues found that the possession of these civics skills can be a more significant predictor of political participation than an individual's job level, organizational affiliation, religious attendance, or native language. (Education levels, vocabulary, and citizenship status are also significant predictors of political participation mentioned by Verba)

   The question of how to teach problem-solving, communication, and interpersonal skills is an enduring question within education. It is currently a critical one within adult education in part because these same "soft" skills are often ones that employers say are lacking among youth and, in their roles as workers. Traditionally, these skills may have been learned in the family and community, in trade guilds, in churches, and in community groups. Today, however, it is often schools that are being asked to shoulder this burden. We need additional research to help us develop models for teaching these skills.

3. Better tools for assessing civics knowledge and skills should be developed, and the achievement of civics-related skills and goals should be included as an outcome measure that "counts" in adult education.

   In our era of accountability, what gets measured is often what gets taught. One factor that limits teachers' ability to address civics related skills in the classroom is the lack of valid, reliable, and relatively inexpensive methods to assess them. Youth and adult educators, policy-makers, and researchers need to join forces to design content and performance standards and assessments that address this need. In doing so, they can draw on the work of the National Standards for Civics and Government (Center for Civics Education, 1994) and the Civic Assessment developed and administered through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). They can also build on the Equipped for the Future adult learning standards and other assessment tools that have been developed by adult educators.
4. Professional development activities that allow teachers to learn more about how to teach civics-related knowledge and skills to youth should be developed and disseminated.

   As the interest in the results of this survey testifies, adult literacy educators who work with youth and adults are eager for more information about how to teach civics knowledge and skills and for teacher resources they can use. However, most teachers within the field have very limited access to professional development. Policy-makers should continue to advocate for funding to provide teachers with the training they need to offer high-quality instruction. Civics educators who work with youth in K-12 education, postsecondary education, and community-based organizations should collaborate with adult educators to come up with innovative solutions for training teachers and program administrators.
5. Rigorous studies (including longitudinal research) of the long-term effects of civics-related adult education for youth and adults should be undertaken.

   Although the research literature contains information about core components of civic knowledge and skills, these have yet to be verified through systematic empirical studies. Further studies need to be undertaken to examine how and under what conditions youth take the skills they have learned in the classroom and apply them to life outside the classroom and to lifelong participation in citizenship and community life. Research by Verba et al. (1995) indicates that people do not simply choose to participate on their own in civic life but are recruited into participation. Further, this recruitment takes place within social networks. If this assertion is true, we need to learn more about how the social networks of youth and adult literacy learners influence their civic engagement. In particular, we need to learn whether and how activities undertaken as part of adult education serve as a means to promote participation in civic life among youth who otherwise might not participate in civics-related activities.

   For many young people, adult education offers a "second chance"—for a high school credential, for developing literacy skills, or for succeeding in a new country. With more support, it can also represent a second chance for youth to develop civic knowledge and skills, and lifelong patterns of civic engagement. Our literature review and survey of 468 adult education teachers and administrators has allowed us to begin to "map the terrain" related to the civics education of youth in adult education. We hope that this study will be just the beginning of further collaborations between policy-makers and adult literacy educators.

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