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Building for Better Democracy

Final Report On the Illinois #CivicsIsBack
Civic Education Initiative

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Contents

Section I: Background and Major Themes	2
Theoretical Framework of the Illinois #CivicsIsBack Model	3
<i>Figure-1: The New Chicago School Framework</i>	5
Year 1 Major Themes: Seeds of Change	6
<i>Figure 2: Teacher-Centered Practice Shift in IL High School Civics Education</i>	9
Year 2 Major Themes: Exponential Growth and Propagation of Practice	10
<i>Figure 3: Difference in Student Dispositions and Skills with a Civics Course and Without</i>	12
Year 3 Major Themes: Building up the Soil for the Future	13
Section 2: Impact of HB 4025 over the Last Three Years	15
Impact on Course and Social Studies Standards Implementation	15
<i>Figure 4: Teacher Knowledge of Illinois Civics Legislation and Social Studies Standards.</i>	18
<i>Figure 5: Implementation Level of HB 4025 and Social Studies Standards</i>	20
Impact on Students	20
<i>Figure 6: Teachers' View of Students Response to the New Pedagogy</i>	21
Impact of, and on Mentors	22
Impact on Stakeholders	24
Section 3: Assessment of the #CivicsIsBack Implementation Model	28
Strengths of this Model	28
Regional Mentor-Based Implementation with Strong Central Support:	28
Full Accessibility to Exceptional PD	31
Central Support, the Illinois Civics Team, and Funding	33
Embedding "How" and "Why" of Civics in the Law	34
Creating a Movement for Civics with Partnerships	35
Gaps and Challenges	35
Capacity overload, in the backdrop of an intense implementation plan, was named by multiple stakeholders.	36
An explicit focus on equity by promoting culturally-responsive teaching was needed.	36
Evening out mentors' capacity and commitment across regions is an ongoing challenge.	37
Focus on Grassroots (Teachers) May Have Sacrificed Grass-Top Buy-In	38
Barriers teachers faced in implementation	38
<i>Figure 7: Teachers' Perception of Barriers to Implementation</i>	39

Section 4: Sustainability & Applicability of the Illinois Model	41
Teacher Capacity and Disposition	41
<i>Figure 8: Teachers' Comfort Level in Using Active Instructional Strategies (2019)</i>	43
<i>Figure 9: Most and Least Comfortable Pedagogy</i>	45
<i>Figure 10: Perception of Other Teachers' Capacity to Implement HB 4025</i>	46
Embedded Support Systems, Allies, and Champions	48
<i>Figure 11: Sources of Support for Ongoing Implementation</i>	50
Illinois as a Unique Context for HB 4025 Implementation - and Its Applicability to Other States	53
Section 5: Looking Back, Looking Forward & Recommendations	56
Contributing Factors to Illinois' Success	56
1) Comprehensive approach to Civics teaching capacity-building	56
<i>Figure 12: The Spread of New Practice Curve</i>	57
2) Growing Capacity and Disposition through Empathy and Encouragement	57
3) Keeping an Eye on Systems Change	58
4) Selecting the Right Leadership for the Context	59
5) Early and Strong Commitment to Pockets of Excellence	60
Remaining Challenges and Recommendations	61
(i) Continue to Support Teachers through Scaffolded PD and Cross-disciplinary Civics	62
(ii) Value and Nurture the Mentor Community	63
(iii) Rely on (and Support, if possible) Talented Partners to Carry the Torch	65

Section I: Background and Major Themes

Illinois is seen as a leader in the field of civic learning and education within the national civic learning community. Though its success could be seen as “meteoritic” by a casual observer, the efforts to improve civic education in Illinois is at least a decade-long. In 2009, the Civic Blueprint report for High School in Illinois was published in a partnership between the McCormick Foundation, CRFC, and the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition. The report was both a culmination and a genesis of years of advocacy and coalition-building efforts to strengthen civic education across the state. With the strategic stewardship of McCormick Foundation, in August 2015 House Bill 4025 (HB 4025) was signed into law requiring all high school students across Illinois to complete a semester-long civics course starting with the class of 2020. The law also mandated the use of research-backed proven practices in civics in addition to content-based direct instruction (i.e. current and controversial issue discussions, service learning for informed action, and simulations of democratic processes).

The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) has been working with McCormick Foundation as a research partner to provide a dynamic and utilization-focused evaluation of the Foundation’s efforts to support teachers and school districts in implementation. At the heart of McCormick’s Illinois Civics Team effort to support the civics course implementation was to support teachers in adopting best practice pedagogies and embed them in their civics curriculum. The Illinois Civics Team designed a peer-to-peer mentor-based model in which they recruited teachers who were specially trained to be regional mentors to high school teachers and school districts across the state. The 34 teacher mentors were part role model, part coach, part resource and part advocate to teachers in their region and led a grassroots movement to change teaching practice in civics across the state.

This report provides a detailed assessment of implementation efforts in the past three years through the perspectives of high school teachers, the peer mentors, and stakeholders in the Illinois civic education ecosystem. The report has data from three main sources collected over the summer of 2019: (i) 19 in-depth interviews with peer mentors; (ii) 22 in-depth interviews with stakeholders including professional development (PD) providers, university and

institutional partners, Chicago Public Schools (CPS personnel), district administrators, curriculum specialists, and more; (iii) and a survey of high school teachers across the state (number of respondents=57). The appendix provides a list of partner and mentor interviewees. The report also contains comparative analysis from the annual reports CIRCLE provided in the last two years that included data from mentors, teachers, and partners surveys in Year 1 and mentor and student surveys in Year-2.

Theoretical Framework of the Illinois #CivicsIsBack Model

In conceptualizing the way in which HB 4025 triggered waves of changes in the way Civics was taught across Illinois, we applied Lawrence Lessig's "The New Chicago School" theory (or sometimes known as Pathetic Dot Theory),¹ which was originally formed as a way to explain how the lives of people in a society become regulated and changed. While the Illinois team designed the implementation framework completely independently from CIRCLE, we draw on this well-known theory to identify key elements of Illinois' transformation of the civic education ecosystem to frame our own assessment of the model. These elements are the law, the market, the norms, and the "architecture." This theory, as illustrated in Figure 1, explains how HB 4025, directly and indirectly, influenced educators and other stakeholders and ultimately, the landscape of civic education in Illinois over time. In this formation the "dot" in the middle is an individual who is involved in civic education, often a teacher, a district supervisor, or an education official. The idea is that individuals' dispositional and behavioral shift is influenced by a number of factors, and in our case, the scale and depth of change in Illinois' civic education landscape as a whole was also influenced by these factors, as the most important shift happened in classroom instructional practices, driven most directly by classroom teachers. An important variation in our case from the original theory is perhaps that teachers, by collective actions and norms, can influence the four elements, not just be influenced by them. Below we define each component of this framework, briefly.

(1) **The Law**, in this study includes HB 4025 and the Illinois Social Studies Standards, as well as other teaching-related regulations such as the Danielson Framework which is used

¹ Lessig, Lawrence. (1998). The New Chicago School. The Journal of Legal Studies. 27. 661-91. 10.1086/468039.

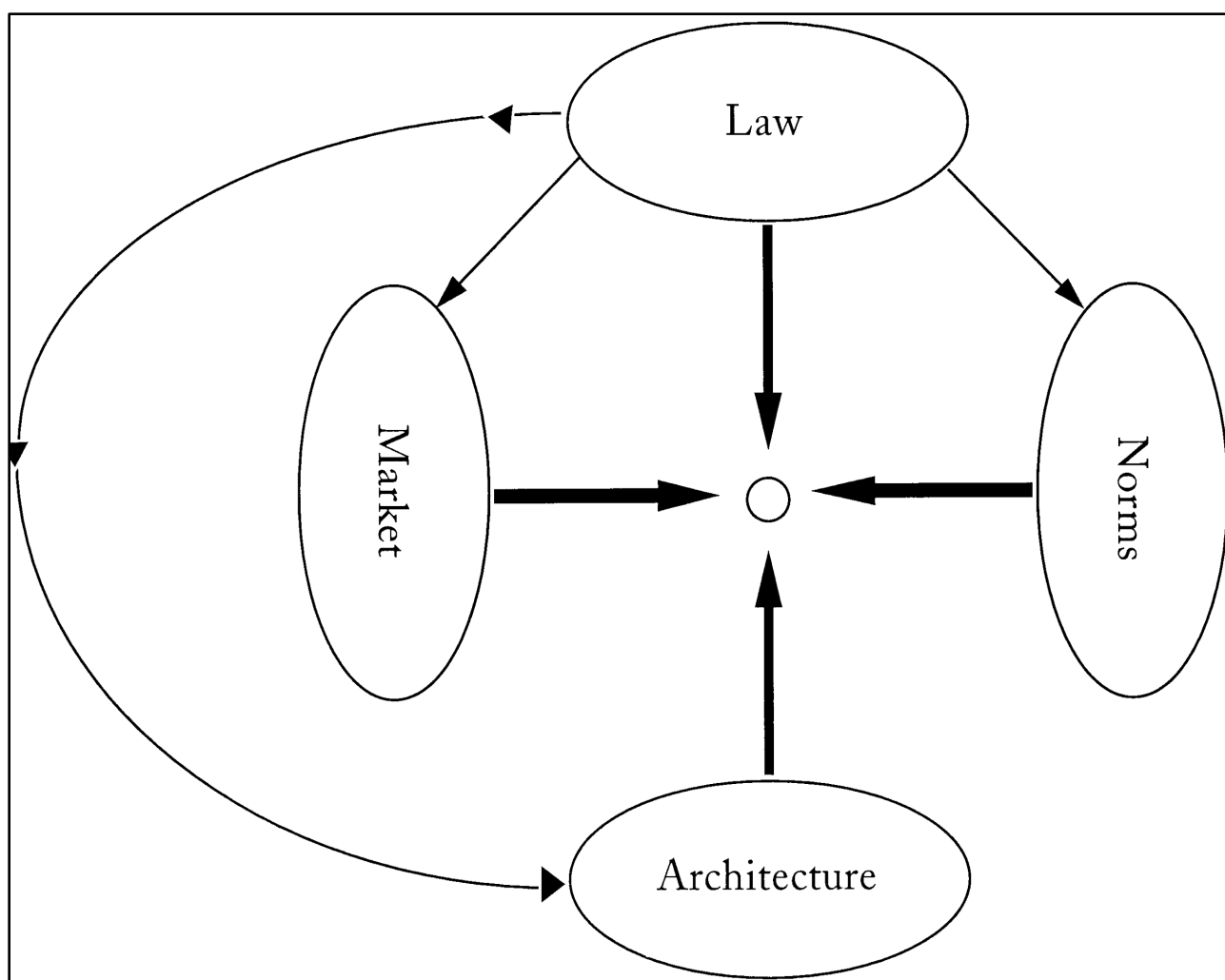
to evaluate teacher performance. As noted before, HB 4025 mandates a semester of high school Civics, and use of four Civic Mission of Schools Proven Practices while the Illinois Social Studies standards affect K-12 grades and are anchored by inquiry-based learning. These three regulatory “laws” worked in concert with one another, meaning that all three were presented as complementary policies that helped teachers and districts “meet all the mandates.” Therefore, it did create a new market demand for more Civics training, excitement/anxiety, and awareness through the campaign “#CivicsIsBack.” However, as this framework clearly suggests, the law can be powerful or ineffective depending on how the other factors play out.

(2) **Norms**, in our view, are the central force of change in Illinois’ Civics landscape because people came together to drive the advocacy efforts despite their differences, and teachers, individually and collectively, are powering the major shifts in students’ experience of civic education statewide. **Social norms** regulate behavior through “enforcement of a community,” and in the case of Illinois’ civic education efforts, it’s through the community of teachers including the peer mentors, the expectations of school and district administration. Since HB 4025 does not have a mandated assessment or external accountability tied to it, the perception and buy-in of the new practices and standards, which are communicated in multiple, but often informal ways (such as teacher groups, or within a local school), is a key determinant of a teacher’s decision to shift his or her practices. Our interview data and survey data suggest that the perception of buy-in by school and district leaders increased among teacher mentors, meaning that positive norms about the changes in Civics instruction were developing. Furthermore, the implementation strategies in Illinois included efforts to ensure that teachers could access personalized professional development (through local PD opportunities, comprehensive newsletters, blogs, and a website) and to develop a sense of community among teacher mentors, and teachers who were trying new practices in their own classrooms. Over time, support and buy-in helps to build a positive norm (and expectation) that enforces continued use of the new instructional practices.

(3) In the economics realm, **markets** regulate “through the device of price.” In this case, the HB 4025 influenced the demand (and supply) of civic learning, teaching, curriculum creation, and professional development. Eventually the initiative also came to influence how

new teachers are trained. HB 4025, through its clear mandates, created a market demand for more Civics and teacher training. In meeting this demand, resources were supplied in the form of funding from a large number of institutional and corporate funders, spearheaded by the McCormick Foundation. Philanthropy played an essential role in Illinois especially because the state funds were not allocated to implementation of HB 4025 due to large deficits in Illinois state funding. Law-based mandates can create a market demand, but without resources to meet the demand, the law could be unproductive.

Figure-1: The New Chicago School Framework



In talking to various stakeholders, everyone alluded to how HB 4025 created a baseline of awareness and keenness to seek out resources and information. PD providers said it expanded the scope of their work as most of them operated in Greater Chicago and had not

worked extensively in other parts of the state. District superintendents and curriculum specialists said that they had more enthusiasm from teachers and a push for PD particularly that reviewed the law and recently updated Social Studies standards.

(4) **The architecture** in this framework refers to the surrounding ecosystem of constraints - “whether made or found” - that directs behavior. Lessig further notes that in real-world (as opposed to cyberspace, where this theory’s most well-known application is), these factors are often outside of anyone’s control. Two things that are in this domain that #CivicsIsBack addresses explicitly, are the distance from resources and opportunities and financial capacity. Generally speaking, the further away schools are from cities where nonprofits are based, and the less financial resources schools have, the less likely they are to have professional development and buy-in. The team addressed these head-on by offering all professional development at no charge and delivering in-person workshops to local schools, often on the far edges of the state. Their collaboration with regional offices of education (ROEs), local institutional partners, and the accompanying mentor network also removed barriers to participation and continuous improvement. Increasing accessibility to training and support no matter where teachers lived is a key feature of this effort, and the one that demonstrates what thoughtful design and investment can accomplish. That said, barriers are reduced, but not completely removed. Teachers still experience constraints that impact their ability to implement new practices. For instance, if the school is located in a community with very few community organizations, it is more difficult to offer service learning opportunities and in communities where residents are politically polarized, teachers may need extra support and training before they start incorporating controversial issue discussions in their classrooms. The implementation team was tuned into this dynamic and often offered alternatives and different ways to enter into these practices, as we will touch on later.

Year 1 Major Themes: Seeds of Change

HB 4025 was the major lever of state power used to demand a change in civics teaching practice and civic education and it certainly helped focus attention on what the mandate required and what would implementation in compliance with the law look like. This was

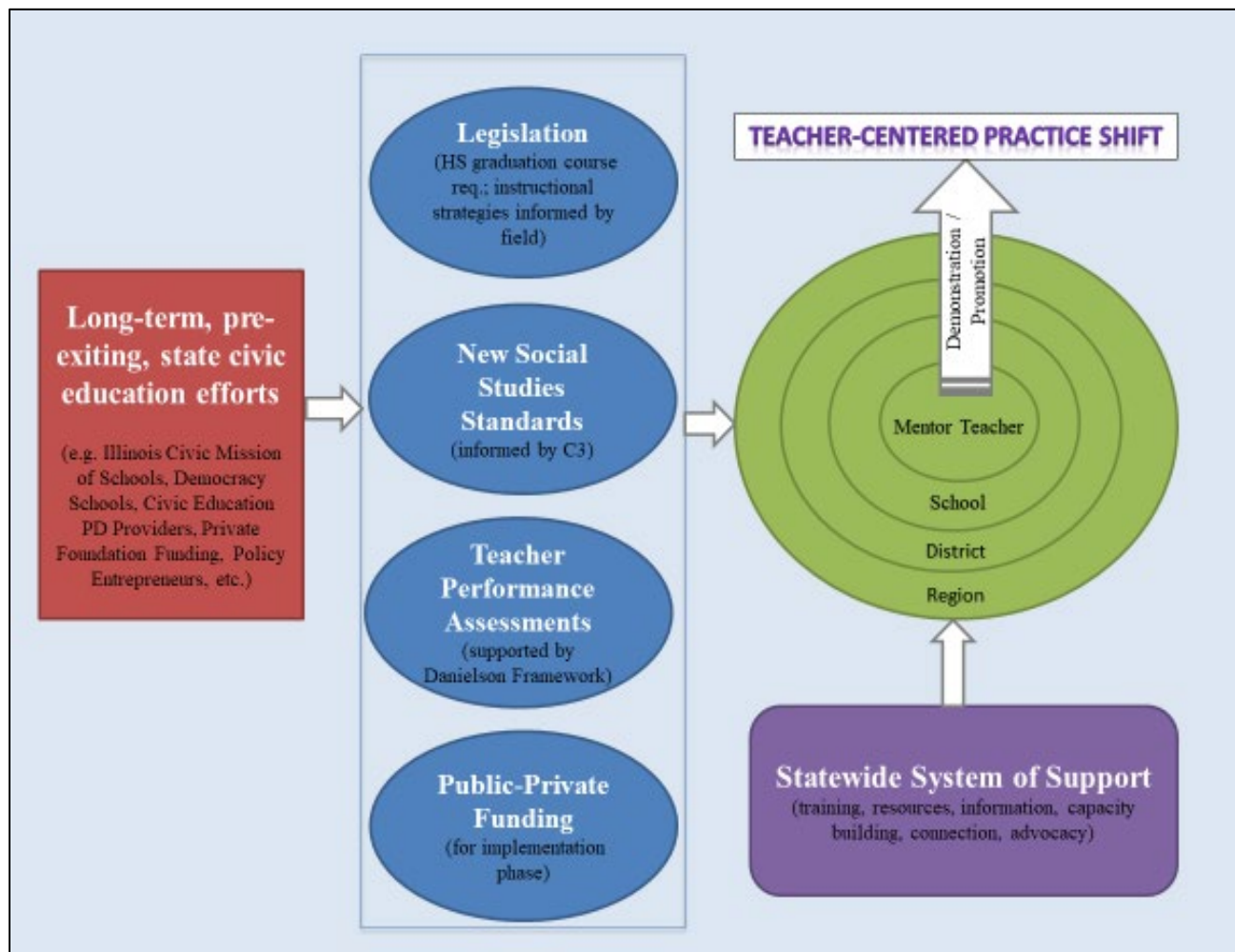
particularly effective in focusing attention of school district administrators and partners such as universities with pre-service programs, PD providers that cater to school and teacher demands, and institutional partners such as ROEs that would need to facilitate the implementation efforts. At the same time, the implementation was clear that the law was one of several levers. In the absence of a formal regulatory mechanism for accountability such as testing or official reporting mandate attached to HB 4025, #CivicsIsBack efforts invested in a grassroots cultural shift, by building norms and positive dispositions among teachers from the beginning. In our Year 1 assessment report (2016-17), CIRCLE noted how the legislation and ensuing support from Illinois Civics team triggered a wrap-around campaign from the #CivicsIsBack hashtag to systematic outreach to all regions through ROEs and regional mentors and started to create a cultural shift (“norms”) in teachers’ understanding of practice and pedagogy. A majority of the efforts in that year was on awareness building and human-centered network building. While statewide implementation efforts in essence fell on the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), their Regional Offices of Education (ROE) and local school districts, the law provided local control in implementation as it did not mandate a test or accountability system. Thus, the ultimate responsibility of implementation and sustainability of a high-quality civics course lies with individual high schools and teachers. In addition, the legislature did not appropriate funds for implementation or offer financial incentives to promote compliance, thus the implementation strategy in year-1 was focused on creating and communicating an inspiring vision of civic education for teachers and schools. McCormick Foundation provided strategic support and funding to support such efforts for implementation. This also made teacher professional development and scaffolded learning the critical element to implementation and sustainability.

Concurrently, Illinois had also adopted new, inquiry-centered K-12 social science standards (adapted from the NCSS College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) framework) that helped augment implementation efforts and the Illinois Civics Team made deliberate efforts to demonstrate the connection between the practices mandated by HB4025 and the newly passed standards. The team also helped teachers see the compatibility between the Danielson Framework of Effective Teaching used in the performance evaluation of teachers and the HB 4025 mandated practices.

Figure 2 illustrates this through the central column and how that helped move the needle on teacher practice in the first year of Illinois Civics Team's implementation efforts.

By the end of Year 1, the peer teacher mentors created a foothold in their schools and assigned regions as conduits for more information and resources on the civic education law and professional development opportunities. The 34 teacher mentors received a four-day intensive workshop that helped develop a cadre of trained professionals and a community of teachers that spearheaded awareness and networking efforts in their assigned regions. The Illinois Civics team also provided high-quality and free professional development opportunities to high school teachers by traveling to a dozen local regions and interacting with teachers and administrators. CIRCLE pre-post survey analysis from the local summer PD workshops showed that they increased teacher confidence and positive dispositions towards the mandated pedagogical practices, meaning that participating teachers often felt that they now understood why the new practices could help students learn Civics content better and develop strong civic dispositions, and that they were familiar enough with the new instructional strategies to use sample lessons, strategies and pedagogy that they learned. The report will further explore the exponential benefits of such PD and interactions for teachers that scaffolded learning and implementation in the last three years.

Figure 2: Teacher-Centered Practice Shift in IL High School Civics Education



The most notable change in attitudes and understanding among teachers in year one was in service learning for informed action that helped teachers realize how to integrate it in practice, but most teachers including mentors still noted that it was “extremely” or “very” challenging to implement. A vast majority of teachers and mentors in year one also reported at least partially implementing each of the four recommended practices, though the fidelity or quality of these practices was still uneven and teachers expressed different levels of knowledge between the prescribed practices. We explore this more fully in the next section. Post-summer trainings, the Illinois Civics team and mentors continued to build a network of support for civic education and our analysis revealed that many teachers and districts showed an increased awareness of the law and the social studies standards.

Year 2 Major Themes: Exponential Growth and Propagation of Practice

In Year 2, the Illinois Civics team continued training the cadre of teacher mentors as well as expanding professional development to teachers and administrators across the state. This was possible also due to Mary Ellen Daneels who joined the team as a full-time lead teacher during her sabbatical from her home district of West Chicago (where she had taught high school Government for over two decades) and contributed to the exponential growth and leadership buy-in of the initiative. In addition to conducting nine two-day, free professional training institutes across the state with regional mentors, she was able to provide additional training sessions throughout the academic year that were differentiated to meet diverse needs. These were sometimes given to the district across grades and subject areas so that teachers can understand how to implement the K-12 Social Studies standards, and other times, they were given to support teachers who were starting to use the new practices under HB 4025.

As a research partner, CIRCLE worked closely with the Illinois Civics team to develop a teacher coaching tool, which was piloted during the year, and supported the development of a rubric. We partnered with twelve high schools across the state that agreed to administer our survey to their students ($n=3,203$)² for the first time in order to gauge the law's impact on student experience and competency. We also provided customized reports of the student surveys to each participating school. Over three fourths of the participating students took a social studies course³ in the past year (the first year of Civics implementation), thereby, allowing comparisons between those who did and didn't take the course along a variety of behaviors, values, and knowledge items.

While not a randomized control trial, and therefore difficult to infer causal links, our results do suggest tangible benefits to student development garnered from taking the new social studies

² We received a total of 3,286 responses, however 83 responses were dropped as they were less than 50% complete. Of the remaining 3,203 responses, 140 partial responses were kept as they were more than 50% completed. In total, 3,203 survey responses were analyzed.

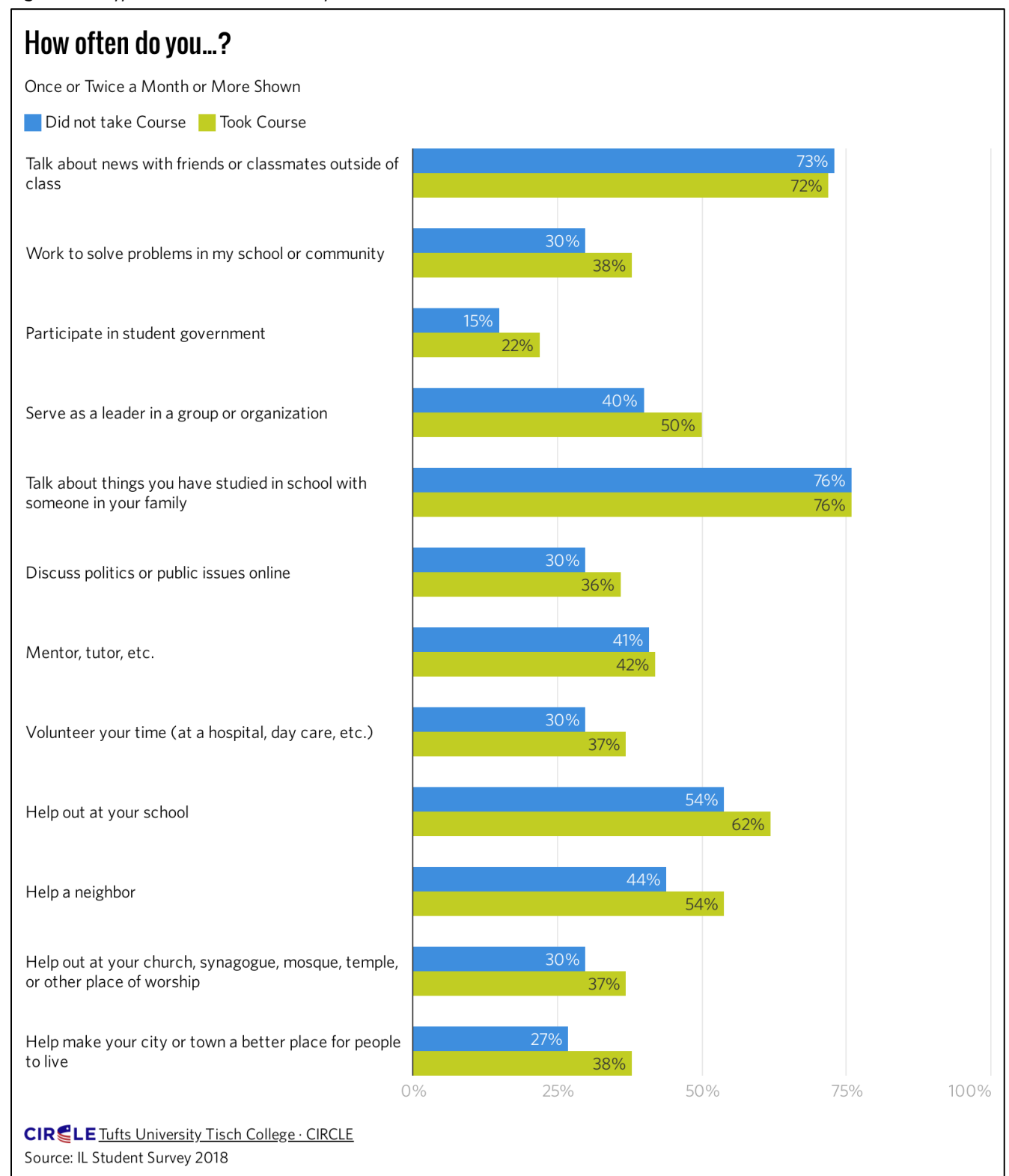
³ We did not specifically ask about a "Civics" course because high schools varied, at least at that time, in what they called the course in which new practices and Civics contents were introduced. It was often American Government but it could also be Civics.

course. Students who took a civics course that is aligned with the new requirements experienced a number of positive outcomes such as better classroom climate promoting critical thinking and deeper learning, more likely to report that they discussed current events, and a deeper connection and commitment to making a difference in their communities.

Mentor engagement in Year-2 squarely focused on working individually with teachers and providing them with training workshops including local and state-wide conferences. The mentors continued to grow their network and relationships at all levels and strengthened their skills as a trainer by providing more support to teachers in implementing the civics law requirements rather than building awareness which was the focus of year one. In general, mentors reported being comfortable training teachers on new instructional strategies tied to the civics law.

The major challenge they noted was the resistance from teachers to changing traditional teaching methods that was also bolstered by the fact that “administrators unfortunately do not see the value of the requirement.” We discuss further in the report below on how relationship building and professional development for administrators helped remove some resistance and aided many teachers in shifting their practice. Lastly, our year two analysis showed a convergence between the mentor and student data in that they both expressed the beneficial outcomes of new instructional strategies on student engagement.

Figure 3: Difference in Student Dispositions and Skills with a Civics Course and Without



Year 3 Major Themes: Building up the Soil for the Future

From the beginning, the Illinois HB 4025 initiative had a three-year implementation plan, which was that the high school Civics law implementation will get three years of intense investment, accompanied by ongoing monitoring and evaluation. This by no means meant that the implementation would be complete, and no further work would be needed, but rather, a way to develop a strategic time table that would create a system and a certain level of capacity to maintain and advance the goals of HB 4025. We have likened Illinois' model to that of a nurturing gardener as described in our early report as follows:

By seeding champions, demonstrating use, and fertilizing judiciously with training, support, resources, and connections, the Illinois civic education efforts seeks policy implementation through a cultural shift in practice germinating from the ground up.

While Year 1 and Year 2 focused on “seeding” and “growing” teacher leaders and teacher capacity and administrator buy-in by investing in direct training, resources and outreach, Year 3 and thereafter had a strong focus on ensuring the **systems** that produce and influence teaching and learning of Civics are set up in a way that serves Illinois students equitably for years to come. Continuing with the gardening analogy, the implementation is now in the phase in which the soil is fertile and capable of producing strong seedlings and even other flowers to bloom without intensive involvement of the gardeners. It is not to say that “the garden” needs no care. But rather, it has built up a healthier ecosystem that benefits from responsive and thoughtful care.

Through the three years of implementation, we observed our partners in Illinois build intentional, and systemic support systems to produce, support, and grow informed and passionate civic participants through Illinois' education system. A lot of the ongoing efforts in this vein came to fruition in Year 3, while teacher professional development continued to spread across the state, with more and more training responsibility placed on mentors, most of who continued their service since Year 1. Returning to our theoretical framework for a moment, creating a network of long-term and highly-skilled Civics educators who also have the skills to train other teachers is a significant gain to the “Architecture” part of the ecosystem because

mentors provide coverage in far-reaches of the state, several hours' drive from Chicago, and more importantly, those mentors have the local cultural expertise and trust among educators that no national or statewide organizations can match.

During Year 3, Illinois teacher licensing board, in partnership with Pearson, also decided to include questions about the HB 4025 pedagogies in its Political Science licensing exam with consistent outreach and support from the #CivicsIsBack team, especially Mary Ellen Daneels. This shift in how teachers are licensed (a change in "the law") is a major long-term gain for the implementation efforts because, if proficiency in those pedagogies are tested, then they will be taught in pre-service training. So, as the in-service training efforts have reached a large number of high school teachers and start to take a backseat to a new wave of middle- and elementary teachers, all new teachers will be required to demonstrate at least some proficiency in those pedagogies moving forward. The #CivicsIsBack Campaign also engaged a network of professional development providers as partners and often grantees over the past years in a way that strengthened the local community of professional organizations because they often saw one another at trainings and received information about opportunities to provide training in different communities over the years. The initiative also challenged local PD providers to shift how they work with schools to meet their needs, and think more deeply about ways in which their curriculum aligns with standards.

By the end of Year 3, a network of advocates centered at McCormick Foundation (led by Dr. Shawn Healy, Director of the Democracy Program) succeeded in passing a law to integrate a semester's worth of Civics in middle school. With the Middle School Law, Illinois became the only state to successfully embed a full semester of Civics in both middle school and high school, with specific guidance on *how* to implement Civics.

In the section below, we describe cumulative findings of our three-year evaluation focusing on the direct outputs and impact our analysis revealed.

Section 2: Impact of HB 4025 over the Last Three Years

This section details the assessment of impact efforts by McCormick's Illinois Civics Team for the past three years. CIRCLE has been following implementation efforts and providing feedback. For such a large and diverse state with an ambitious mandate for transformative change in teaching practice, the implementation of the mandate and alignment with social studies standards has been very successful.

Two-thirds of the schools revised an existing course to meet the law's requirements (63%). Fifty percent of the schools have fully integrated and aligned teaching to the social science standards. Eight-five percent of the teachers who attended PD training on civics course implementation said they started to implement some of the instructional strategies and content covered in that training. Eighty-three percent of the teachers say they see increased civic engagement in their students after implementing best practice pedagogies. Three-quarters of the teachers (75%) had contact from their regional peer mentor. The law's transformative impact has been largely on mentors and stakeholders that experience a paradigm shift in how they approach civics education teaching and learning across the state. For mentors, the shift in teaching practice and leadership was a powerful tool for self-development as a teacher and to help other teachers. For partners, a compelling vision and support to a larger agenda than their organizational vision and to work with teachers across the breadth of the state with very different perceptions and needs was eye-opening and helped expand their mission as well.

Impact on Course and Social Studies Standards Implementation

Implementation of the civics course is well underway in the high schools where two-thirds (63%) have fully implemented the requirements and the rest of the third have started to plan and revise a course to meet the requirements of the law. Half of the schools (50%) in the survey said they fully integrated the social studies standards as well. Eighty-five percent of the teachers who attended PD on civics course implementation started to incorporate some best practice strategies. However, 50% of the schools in the state are still trying to train teachers.

As noted in the Theoretical Framework section of the report, three different “policies” (HB 4025, The K-12 Social Science Standards and Danielson Framework) were intentionally presented as inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing by the Illinois Civics team as an implementation strategy. Our in-depth interview data from peer mentors and stakeholders confirmed that this strategy of “connecting the dots” worked well. Mentors and stakeholders mentioned that it was serendipitous that complementary documents (standards and HB 4025) and pieces of information came together in a timely manner. With support of information from McCormick, these two documents together helped teachers understand the legislation and requirements while simultaneously aligning them to the new standards. It helped with the fidelity of implementation in the spirit of the law that prescribed best practice instructional strategies and helped teachers understand the inquiry-based standards that aligned with these pedagogies. As mentioned above, the Democracy School Network (also housed at McCormick Foundation) is a growing and increasingly diverse network of high schools across the state to integrate civic learning across the school in a holistic way. A number of schools (currently at seventy-four) that were part of the network were more prepared to implement the new law and standards. Fifty-six percent of the teachers in the survey said their schools were part of the Democracy School Network. Some teacher mentors through their great work on implementation in their schools created enthusiasm to join the Democracy School Network as well.

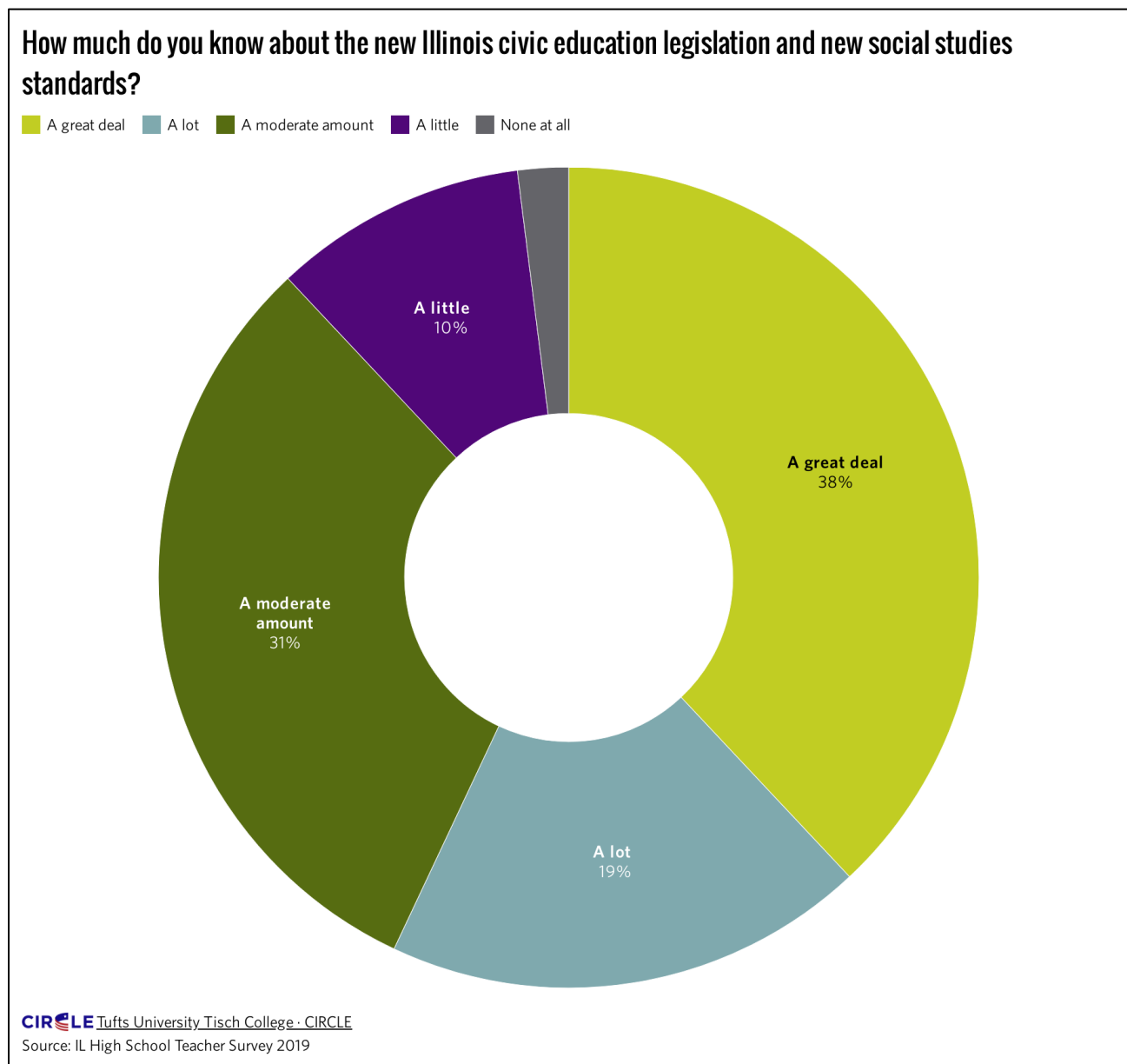
After three years of awareness building and implementation, 57% of high school teachers in Illinois said they understand a “great deal” or “a lot” about the civic education legislation as well as the social studies standards. That’s a great improvement from the previous years, particularly when the mandate was passed (Figure 4).

Since 2019-2020 is the year that HB 4025 identified as the full implementation year (i.e., class of 2020 must successfully complete a semester-long Civics class before graduation), a majority of the teachers at the very least understand what is required (88%; those who know a “great deal” (38%); “a lot” (19%) and a “moderate amount” (31%). Any sustainability and continuation efforts should focus on the teachers that know “a little” (10%) or even those who

know “moderate amount” (31%) so they can learn and implement best practice strategies as well.

As the bar chart below shows (Figure -5), about two-thirds of schools revised an existing civics course to better meet the requirements and have thus fully implemented the requirements (63%) and another third of the schools are in planning or have started to revise a course to meet the spirit of the law (31%). Two in five teachers said their schools created and implemented a new Civics course (42%). Fifty percent of the schools also fully integrated the social studies standards and the rest are partially implemented. This shows the extent of the success of the Illinois Civics team in reaching high schools across the state and communicating how they could best fulfill the law’s requirements by either revising an existing course or helping to create a new one.

Figure 4: Teacher Knowledge of Illinois Civics Legislation and Social Studies Standards.



Two out of five teachers also said that their schools encourage teachers to use the best practice instructional strategies specified in the law (43%). This is a positive development particularly since we had seen in Year One and Year Two of implementation teachers had not received a lot of administrative support to improve teaching practices. However, to shift teaching practices and school “norms” teacher training is essential and it is where the Illinois Civics team allocated most of its efforts. More than one in three teachers said their schools

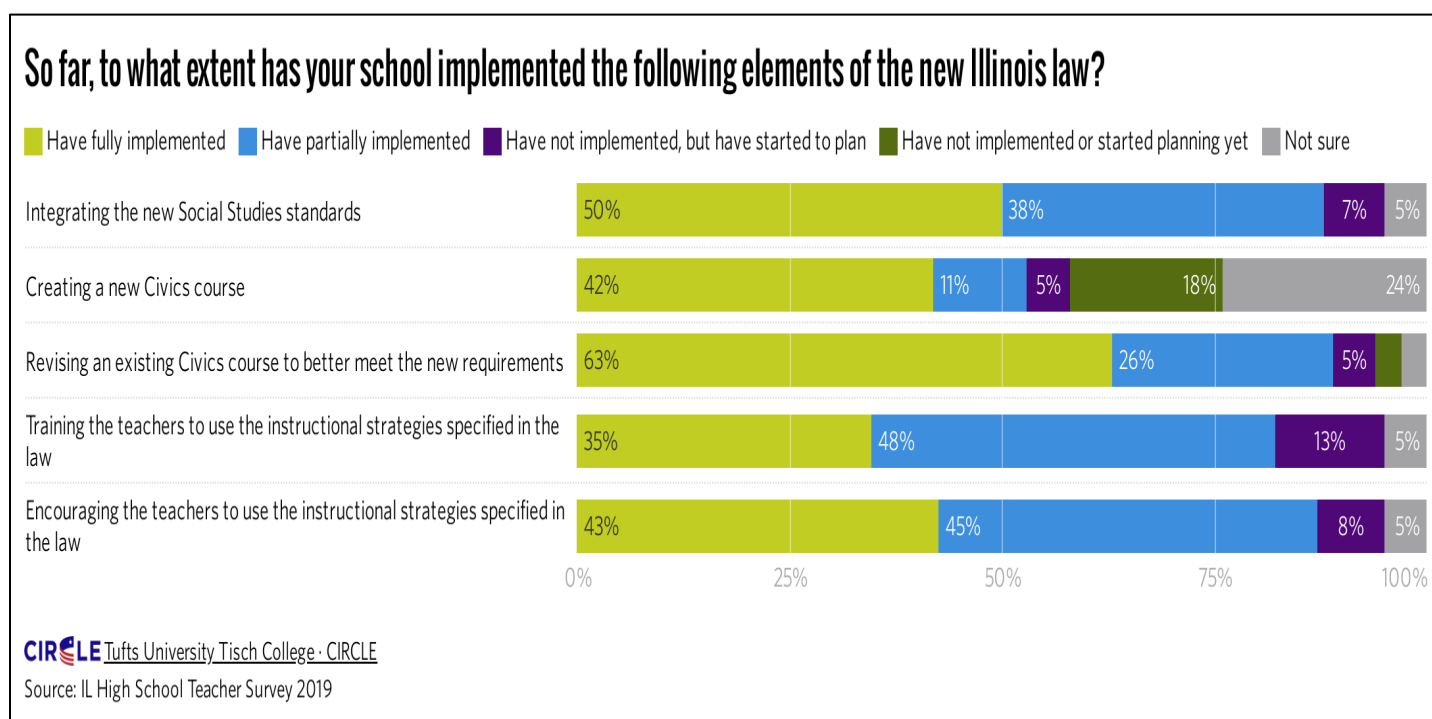
fully trained teachers to use the best practice pedagogies (35%). Almost fifty percent of the schools are still trying to train teachers and one in five (18%) have not really started.

Eighty-five percent of the teachers who attended PD training on civics course implementation said they started to implement some of the instructional strategies and content covered in that training. For a really neglected area of professional development and support for teachers, the uptick in teachers receiving training to shift and improve practice is a testament to the Illinois Civics team efforts.

Of course such teacher development and support is an on-going cycle and clearly many schools and teachers still need it. Section-4 of the report focuses on teacher professional development and explores what teachers have mastered and where they still have ongoing needs. When asked about challenges related to full implementation of the law, many teachers said it is still “a great deal and a lot of work” particularly since they’re still learning to embed the instructional strategies in their curriculum and integrate them with the content they teach as one teacher’s response shows, “One semester is really challenging to cover all the old content we were expected to teach as well as implement new material like a service learning project and more controversial issues.”

There is still some resistance to change as one teacher said “[a] stand-alone Civics course doesn't make sense” and another shared that “[my] largest struggle has been trying to get teachers that are set in their ways to understand the importance of the new standards.” Teachers are also struggling with student engagement and making this relevant to them when students seem “more concerned with driver’s licenses” as well as “documenting and demonstrating student growth.” As the next sections show, once teachers master embedded practice the shift in student engagement and enthusiasm is evident and a driving force of motivation for many teachers to continue to learn and implement more inquiry-based teaching practice.

Figure 5: Implementation Level of HB 4025 and Social Studies Standards



Impact on Students

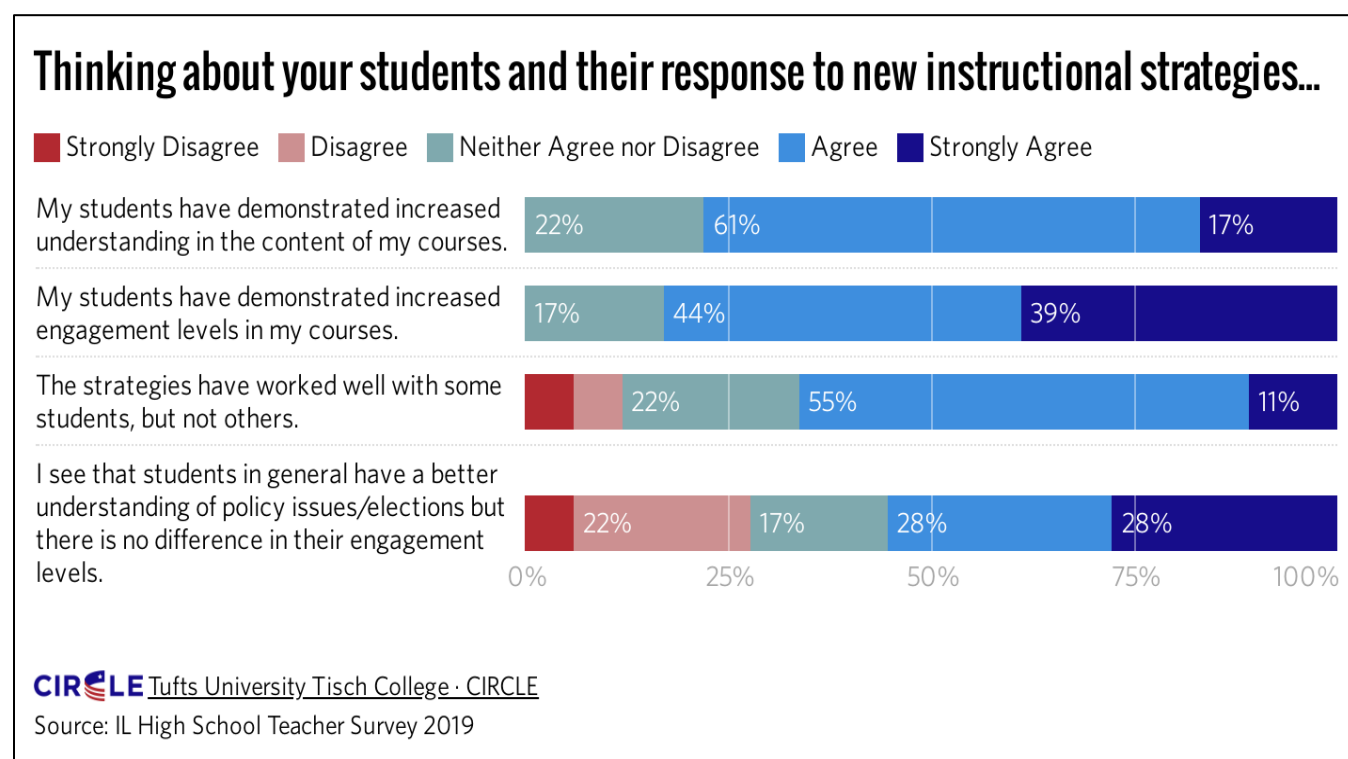
To understand the impact of HB 4025 on students, we worked with districts to field a student survey in Year-2 and asked teachers and stakeholders to reflect on the law’s impact on the students they work with in Year-3 survey and interviews. Impact on students has been quite phenomenal where an overwhelming majority of the teachers (Year-3 survey of teachers) say their students have increased engagement levels (83%) and this corroborates the survey responses and positive civic development witnessed in Year Two of implementation.

High School teachers (from Year-3 survey) who have been implementing inquiry-based civics with best practice pedagogies reported high levels of student comprehension and engagement in their courses. 8 out of 10 teachers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that students demonstrated increased understanding (78%) and increased engagement levels (83%). Figure 6 also shows that two-thirds of the teachers also said that the instructional strategies have had a better impact on some students than others (67%).

This was also corroborated by our interviews with mentors and partners. One mentor said the main impact on students she saw was that more than “rote memorization” of the Constitution; this was about applying skills in civic life. Other partners that worked with students on different civic programs and initiatives remarked repeatedly that the powerful impact is in students discovering they have a voice. One partner said they have been working with high school students for a while particularly on taking different types of (informed) action and most students say,

“Yeah, I could do that. But is it going to matter? Will it actually make a difference if I send a letter to my congressional representative? If I sign a petition? If I do these things? I can do it. Yeah, but will it matter? And...Now...a few years later..... They don't ask them anymore ...And they know that their choices matter...”

Figure 6: Teachers’ View of Students Response to the New Pedagogy



The extensive survey of more than 3,000 high school students in Year Two (2017-18) showed clearly that students who took a social studies course experienced more supportive classroom environments that encourage civil discourse. Students who took a social studies

course were more likely to say that they discussed controversial issues. They were also more likely to say that they felt safe expressing their opinions. Perhaps as a result of being more likely to discuss controversial issues in a safe environment, students who took a course were more likely to say that they were encouraged to consider multiple views on controversial issues. Students who took a civics course were also more inclined to have a connection and commitment to their community. Teachers and partners working with students witnessed the impact of youth civic engagement when they realize their voice and their choices matter through a more inquiry-based teaching practice in civics than traditional textbook based curriculum.

Impact of, and on Mentors

Mentors are a signature feature of Illinois' implementation model, and a necessity because of the size and cultural, political, and demographic diversity of the state. Because of their importance, while assessing the impact on teachers it became clear that having a "local 'go to' (person) with questions and support" was quite helpful in understanding and implementing the law. Many teachers mentioned these mentors acted as a guide for learning the best practices, distributed a monthly newsletter with helpful links and resources, clarified the state civics standards, and provided a "wealth of information" including PD opportunities. One teacher also said that peer mentors provided "accountability and support in regional implementation." Seventy-five percent of teachers had contact with their regional mentor at some point, with thirty-five percent reporting they had been in contact with their mentors at least once a month.

In speaking with mentors, the major impact on them was on their own teaching practice and the network building and capacity to provide support to other teachers or partners in their region. Being in a leadership role and connecting teachers to resources and information as well as increasing their network of teachers for cross-collaboration and support was very powerful to mentors, particularly those that stayed with the cohort for two to three years. Mentors said it was "professionally gratifying" to have those professional conversations and learn and teach with other teachers and partners such as PD providers or the lead mentor Mary Ellen.

Mentors also really valued their own cohort and the professional conversation and ideas they exchanged with each other. Some of them said that it helped them understand their own teaching practice and shift from a content-based to inquiry-based practice through encouragement and concrete ideas such as lesson plans and strategies from their trainings and conversations with other teachers. In other words, some, though not many, were able to support a local professional learning community. As one mentor said,

"... my involvement [as a] Civic Mentor has probably been the most influential thing on my teaching career... has kind of transformed by way of thinking ...in the sense that I used to be very set on the curriculum and how do I get through everything and everything is important and now I'm just able to look at it from more of a perspective of okay what skills do I really want my students to come away with and focusing on those key topics and going more into depth rather than okay I have to get through it all and it's really helped me kind of let go of that attachment of curriculum. Yes, the curriculum is important but I feel like my students are getting [more] out of it and I feel like that applies not just to my Civic classroom but [all] the social studies disciplines that I teach now"

Many mentors in contiguous counties formed deeper connections and collaborated on ideas and projects. For mentors, the in-person training together with other teacher mentors was a powerful and transformative experience both because of their own learning and understanding but also being led by a master teacher like Mary Ellen that helped explain concepts and Barb Laimins that helped coordinate the mentors' efforts. Other partners and stakeholders also pointed out that mentor teacher training is critical as a form of "adult learning and adult transformative experience... in addition to student transformative experience." This model helped shift the modality of cultural "norms". The section below will explore this more on what are the strengths of this mentor model both to the teachers that participated as well as in disseminating and implementing the requirements of the law and standards. As one mentor said that,

"...with the leadership of Mary Ellen and the... regional training... what was valuable for me was ... to hear other teachers talk about their experiences to know that they were good

things and good instructional strategies being implemented in other schools in another district. It has been somewhat satisfying to have people follow up with me after those conferences to say, hey, can you, you know, you shared some things or you presented a lesson about something that I think I'd like to try or do something".

Impact on Stakeholders

Stakeholders refer to the cross-cutting network of partners representing media, law, education, private sector, communities, and philanthropy that goes back ten years and pushed the law together. The appendix shows the diverse list of stakeholders we interviewed in-depth, mostly those that work closely with teachers and school districts such as PD providers, district superintendents, administrators, school principals, curriculum specialists, and more. The biggest impact was the paradigm shift in the work and vision of stakeholders and the shift in perception and teaching practice they witnessed in teachers they worked with. They said they were forced to think outside of their 'own' area and agenda particularly and look at the larger picture and cultural change in civic education and how they could facilitate and fit in it.

Previously, most of the PD providers were concentrated around Chicago, but through the #CivicsIsBack initiative, they had the opportunity to expand both geographically and organizationally by challenging themselves to cater to a different audience and demand across the state. Many PD providers mentioned how the summer workshops in different regions allowed them to interact with different teachers and understand their needs; many of them were called back by individual mentor teachers and teachers that attended their sessions. Some PD providers and institutional partners said that it was a "natural fit for us" to work with the Illinois Civics Team even if civics was not directly stated in their organizational mission.

One unintended, but unsurprising consequence was that some PD providers and organizations could not cater to the new territory both geographically and in terms of the different demand. Subsequently, they suffered financially due to loss of demand and organizationally as they could not expand. This may also speak to the maturation and sophistication on the part of schools. In part due to the training given by this network and the McCormick Team, curriculum directors and teachers understood what would help them teach

the standards and the Civics course better, and what would not and made informed choices of PD providers. Looping back to our theoretical framework, HB 4025 and subsequent investment made the supply-demand to not only scale up as a whole, but more selective at the same time because consumers became more educated. If the suppliers (PD Providers) could not respond to the shifting market needs, they did not remain. In absence of systemic evaluations of most major curricula and PD providers in the Civics field nationwide, we think it is rare (if not unique) to see such an active Civics market.

As one PD provider explained the organization's shift in perception of their audience and reflection on their own curriculum;

"I'll say challenges but I'm not sure if that's the right word...qualitatively different one is around the nature of the programming and so because our materials were written with a Chicago audience; we've been able to translate that in implementing in other urban areas but moving to rural areas has provided one of the challenges. It's opened up our eyes to the fact that well, we always know by design that our work is contextual. So there's no [set] framework, you know, we do think and the steps of the process are pretty universal, but what it looks like in a small town or in a rural area is different than what it's gonna look like in an urban area so that became really clear to us.

...Yeah, programmatically as we moved outside of Chicago there were issues of access [and] geography...So it's not what people think that it's the issues that students choose. There's variation... but I'll be honest with you not as much as you'd think like students are all around the country don't care about your age, your race, your economic status; young people are struggling with issues of mental health from bullying, depression, substance abuse, body image, LGBTQ...it shows up in different ways, but it's adolescence right? A lot of this is universal and they're worried about their futures...so it wasn't so much the issues. It was like 'oh, I really want to get involved in a campaign and work in an election, but there's nothing for a hundred miles from my house' or you know just kind of those more logistical issues. Or you know, like I live really far from my school and staying after school where the teacher is

like 'I'm the only social studies teacher in the school and I'm the track coach and I'm a girls' basketball coach'. So how do we you know help people with these new challenges?"

Other stakeholders said that the "informed action" piece in the legislation and its practical interpretation with service learning helped connect different dots for them and how they could align their work and approach to what was required by the legislation and the revised standards. Institutional partners said that the legislation and standards require not just a focus on best practice instructional strategies, but on how to integrate them in the classrooms and align with the curriculum--this takes time and reflection and a feedback loop of working with teachers and scaffolded learning for embedded practice.

Many stakeholders said that they have witnessed the transformation in teaching practice as one stakeholder said, "The shift is less on the content itself, but about the skills." They said that the legislation was not just about student learning outcomes in civic education, but also about "adult transformation in learning and teaching". And many stakeholders approached it in a variety of ways to help teaching in this paradigm shift from content-based teaching to inquiry-based teaching focused on skills. Some said they broke the standards and legislation components into "chunks" and built upon it; others worked with teachers and curriculum specialists to meet them where they are at. As one stakeholder explained that at the heart of changing teaching practice was how teachers viewed their students and what they could do;

"...the genesis for all other struggles is how teachers see their students. I think that at its best Civics and you know all courses but ...specifically participation is really about students exploring identity; exploring communal [power]; individual power; exploring power structure(s)....systematic structure ...powers and isms and things like that that are both either, you know, helping or stymieing them in their efforts. But it is really at its best ask[ing] students to be really brave; to be really thoughtful; to be really critical thinkers; to put their ideas out there to construct their understanding collectively [and] to take action collectively."

Recently (in the fourth year of implementation), Mary Ellen Daneels coordinated a PD Provider convening where they came together and worked together to achieve deeper alignment between the IL Social Science standards and their existing training materials. Though this convening happened shortly after we concluded formal data collection, personal communications with various PD providers (i.e., personal communications with Kawashima-Ginsberg) indicate that this convening was a win-win for the providers because they; a) gained clear understanding of how to support teachers they are serving by helping them connect the curriculum they offer with the new standards; and b) connecting with other professionals who do similar work and finding learning and support from each other. From the implementation team's perspective, there is a value in convening this informal professional learning community (PLC) because the more PD providers are able to demonstrate a clear alignment between what they offer and the standards, the better the teacher needs are met, further promoting rigorous implementation without the team's direct involvement moving forward.

The report will explore this further in another section, but the Middle school legislation and mandate offers continuity in this work for both the PD providers and institutional partners and they feel better poised to work with teachers in different regions.

Section 3: Assessment of the #CivicsIsBack Implementation Model

The McCormick Foundation's vision of #CivicsIsBack initiative was based on improving student outcomes in civic education through shifting teaching practice. As shown above, the central entity in this endeavor were high school teachers who were supported in changing and improving teaching practice through peer teacher mentors in their respective regions, a lead mentor and master teacher Mary Ellen Daneels, and a support system of funding, personnel and other resources through McCormick Foundation. Section-2 above showed the impact of this largely successful initiative on these teachers, mentors and stakeholders in the system. This section explores how the model worked in implementation and what were the strengths and assets that contributed to its success and what were some gaps and challenges.

The primary strength of the model is that it created a grassroots movement for transforming teaching practice in high school civics and enlisted a corps of teachers to be role models and experts to help other teachers also grow and learn to adopt best practices in civics instruction. The Illinois Civics team itself constituted a remarkable team of current and former civics teachers that thoughtfully planned the initiative and its roll out; Mary Ellen Daneels as the lead mentor was a powerful role model for teachers, mentors and stakeholders in how she both motivated them to transform teaching practice as well as demonstrated how it could be done. Strategic stakeholders also remarked that Shawn Healy's leadership was dynamic and responsive to the needs of the teachers and state civic education system that allowed for such successful implementation. This includes funding and supporting regional PD that was high-quality and free to teachers and mentors across the state as well as having a research partnership to get critical feedback in real time.

Strengths of this Model

Regional Mentor-Based Implementation with Strong Central Support:

- The primary strength of the initiative was the corps of peer teacher mentors who were well-trained and able to further spread the practices in a scaffolded, culturally-responsive way. This was enabled by the strong central staff,

especially the lead teacher mentor Mary Ellen Daneels who trained the mentors with an explicit encouragement to start small, and adapt practices to where they teach. Dr. Shawn Healy, Director of the Democracy Program at McCormick Foundation was often viewed as a present, strong, and collaborative leader.

- ***Lead mentor- Mary Ellen Daneels and strategic support from Shawn Healy:***

- Peer mentors, teachers, and administrators alike said that working with Mary Ellen Daneels was an incredible experience that helped connect the dots on how to implement the mandate and the standards as well as how to embed the best practice pedagogies. One partner said “she is a superhero and she's amazing.”
- Most teachers and mentors specifically said that the most impact on their teaching practice and shift from content-heavy to inquiry-based teaching was because of her. They also said that the PD providers provided a lot of good material to work with and working with Mary Ellen further showed them how they could integrate such material in their classrooms.
- One institutional partner described the value of having Shawn Healy’s guidance and support with Mary Ellen Daneels’ expertise as essential to creating such change in Civics, *“I think it was good that he [Healy] brought himself as a person who had a lot of the research and data and the know-how..... And I think it was important that he showed up, he cared enough to go across the state and share that with everybody. That's important. And then ... he chose a teacher who is very active and very good...bringing in a lot of tools. So that's really important that he had a highly effective teacher. Not just, let's develop them (teachers) and see if one does those (instructional strategies) and let's hope we got the development. I mean, he started from the very beginning with good development. I think that's really important.”*

- ***Using teachers as peer mentors***

- Partners and teachers said that having peer mentors was a good model to spread awareness and resources since “teachers trust teachers.”

- As one mentor said that it made a difference to teachers to have “one of you” who is struggling on a daily basis and teaching to reach out and give information and resources on how to implement the mandate.
- ***Having local teachers as mentors in different regions***
 - Apart from the fact that the peer mentors were teachers that understood what it meant to translate the mandate and standard requirements in classroom practice; it also mattered that they were local teachers who understood the regional context in such a diverse state.
 - As one mentor captured it; *“I can bring in someone who basically just does professional development ...cram this down your throat type thing. This felt more like “Okay, We're All in This Together”. Everyone has to do this... let's teamwork... let's build off of each other type atmosphere and just the fact that we were local context for the people so that it wasn't just oh I'm communicating with someone up in Chicago you know...”*
- ***Creating a cadre of expert mentors across the state***
 - This was a powerful cohort building experience for the teachers in the program as they had a “fellow in the trenches support network”. They were able to bounce ideas off of each other and share resources or lessons and many of them said they will continue to collaborate and grow and at the very least benefit their school and students.
 - One mentor described how isolating it could be being a social studies or civics teacher when a lot of focus is on STEM subjects and curriculum. So, having a cohort of like-minded teachers across the state has created a great collaborative and supportive network, *“I felt a little bit like, I was just kind of on my own, you know, fighting the good fight and it was just great to, like, hang around with people and work with people who are like, no, we agree...this is essential, and we need to improve what we're doing ...generally feel like it has been a really good program, you know. I do feel*

I have benefited as a civics teacher from the program probably, you know, a lot more than people who live around me and are not involved in this program."

Full Accessibility to Exceptional PD

- In Civics research, we usually find that high quality professional development is out of reach of many, if not most, teachers. The Illinois #CivicsIsBack Campaign aimed to tackle the accessibility issue head-on, and they addressed accessibility based on research and everyday experience of teachers by making it not only free, but also physically, emotionally, and technically accessible. As a result, the #CivicsIsBack PD's were highly valued by those who received it. We believe this comprehensive definition of "accessibility" separates Illinois from other similar initiatives.
- ***Free PD***
 - The coalition of funders provided enough resources to make all PD available at no charge to all Illinois schools whether it was given directly by the McCormick team or through another PD provider who was funded through the initiative. This took away an obvious financial barrier that often stops educators from accessing any Civics-specific PD, let alone a high-quality one.
- ***PD made available in local districts***
 - From the beginning, the Illinois team delivering PD directly to local regions across the state was a priority because the lack of access in rural parts of the state was already a known issue. Making PD accessible in all regions of the state is an essential path towards ensuring that all students of Illinois benefit from HB 4025, not just those who live in affluent suburbs where funding for PD is often available and PD providers can easily come and provide training. Thus, the regional outreach design was created so that the Illinois Civics team has a systematic way of reaching all regions.

- Teachers and mentors said that it was also compelling as the team brought in so many different PD providers outside of Chicago to cater to west and southern Illinois and they think that catering to different needs and capacities and interaction with a diverse set of teachers was mutually beneficial.
- *High Quality, Personalized PD*
 - While there are many ways to define “high quality” in Civics PD, our assessment of Illinois PD was that it is of exceptional quality because they were research-based, experiential, scaffolded and personalized. They incorporated strategies that have a research-base of success (e.g., controversial issue discussion pedagogy studied and further refined by Diana Hess and Paula MacAvoy), and created PD sessions where teachers were able to first learn what it is like to be a student in a class using the new strategy, and then getting a chance to practice it before going into the real classroom. Furthermore, the level and intensity of PD was tailored to teachers’ experiences, skills, and dispositions. PD sessions were rigorous, but also offered many ways to make modifications for teachers who did not feel fully prepared to use the practice as introduced right away. Because PD sessions were given in person by experienced PD providers (and especially Mary Ellen) they were able to offer alternative topics, different ways to frame the practice or enter into a new practice as teachers expressed questions or discomfort. Just as yoga masters offer students alternative ways to enter into a pose with same or similar benefits, the PD providers focused on the intent and impact of the practice, rather than exactly *how* teachers get there.
 - This tailoring became second nature, but began with micro-assessments of teachers. In the first year, we surveyed teachers just before the PD sessions and produced topline results. After reviewing the findings, the team would quickly make adjustments to the tone and composition of the PD institute for mentors. Taking teacher inputs systematically and seriously, they were able to truly meet where teachers were geographically, technically, and dispositionally, so that all barriers, not just the cost barrier, were taken down.

- Teachers and mentors emphasized that the PD was powerful as it was set up in a way that allowed you to "mimic" the model in the classroom and know how it would play out. The PD sessions were interactive and helped show teachers how to do activities and simulations in their classrooms.

Central Support, the Illinois Civics Team, and Funding

- The McCormick Foundation committed three years of funding and central support which both ensured momentum and consistent support to teachers and schools for implementation efforts. Put another way, the McCormick Foundation was the anchor institution for the statewide efforts to bring and sustain Civics in Illinois. Having an anchor is important because McCormick served as a one-stop shop for information (not only about McCormick's initiative, but various organizations statewide), as conveners for mentors and providers, and a source of expertise and guidance. As a result, the initiative maintained a strong and unified presence throughout the initiative.
 - All mentors emphasized how much overall support they received from McCormick and the Illinois Civics team and partners described in detail how their connection and relationships with teachers and the team deepened.
 - "Money is really important" in championing a cause as one stakeholder put it, and McCormick Foundation did just that in not only passing the mandate, but implementing it thoughtfully.
- The funding and the thoughtful support and follow up with mentors and stakeholders is the key element in the success of this initiative and the transformational shift in how civics is being taught in the state. As one district level stakeholder shared "... *being a PD provider is that you have to be in a place where you can talk through your thinking the challenges, like wrestle with the big picture with other folks that are other practitioners or else we ended up getting to where I perceived civic training and partnership has been in the past which is siloed ... and everyone has their own puzzle piece of the puzzle... [and]...it doesn't lend itself to cohesion. So what Shawn and Mary Ellen did was, you know... bring folks together*

around a common vision.... Because it's about the process. And this is about transformation. It's not about how to do the strategy. It's just a new way of teaching."

- Additionally, there are "a lot of mandates" as one stakeholder said, but it was not just the funding and support that McCormick Foundation provided, but the "community supported and connected to researchers, partners... which is so key"

Embedding "How" and "Why" of Civics in the Law

- External policy advocates are often surprised by the fact that HB 4025 embeds why students in Illinois should have Civics as a course, but also *how* that Civics course is taught by prescribing four Proven Practices relevant directly to classroom instruction. While we are not fully familiar with the history of how the pedagogies came into the law's language, anecdotes suggest that Civics in Illinois historically had an almost exclusive content focus because the course, when it was taught, was aimed at passing the "Constitution Test" which is not that widely used anymore in classrooms across the state. But if passing a constitution test was a widespread perception of "why" we teach Civics, it makes sense that the law could be used as a tool to dispel that myth by bringing in new and more engaging pedagogy to grow citizens who not only know about our systems of government and its processes, but also know where they stand on issues, have a voice in our democracy, and have the capacity to take informed action. This strategy seemed to have a positive impact.
 - One district level partner said that even though instructional strategies stated in the law are prescriptive, it's actually effective as it gives a direction to teachers and districts without dictating frequency or implementation methods and is "literally like the gateway drug to teachers." The report will describe the reactions and impact of having these pedagogies prescribed and implemented in classrooms in the next section.
 - Many stakeholders also said that this model of prescribing and supporting civics instruction through such teaching strategies is expandable and scalable as something districts and teachers can do and the middle school bill is evidence of the need and demand of that from teachers across the state.

Creating a Movement for Civics with Partnerships

- Stakeholders across the state agreed that this was not just about one program, but building a movement of change in civics and how it is taught. They agreed that there were many successful ingredients listed above including the mentor network and the good-quality, “exciting and innovative” PD, but another element was partnerships at every level. As one partner said, *“I think there’s one other key thing that helps to make it possible and what drove it is district leadershipand I think this had to do also with McCormick championing [it]...if you have funders putting money behind it district leaders see that [and] they’re much more open to learn about it...”*
- The Illinois Civics team created awareness and a shared vision that was communicated to key stakeholders and teachers across the state. Some partners argued that the “trickle down” effect created the awareness and demand for high-quality civic education.
 - One national organization that deepened its work in Illinois while working with the Illinois Civics team gave a thoughtful response on this; *“Civics and the quality, I think is all over the map, depending on teachers, depending on structures, setting up funding, depending on political support, depending on external partners. You know, just a whole host of factors. The quality piece is all over the map. But when you see here, every school and district is like “oh s**t, we have to have civic engagement and a civics class...” And so it’s forcing districts to create space for this in their schools. And I think again. The qualities range wildly, but I do think McCormick’s been able to provide a floor of support. So we haven’t had people feeling like they have nothing to go on. So, I think I think it’s been a big step forward and so I’m excited to see what can happen with long-term support and if we can really get a statewide coalition of educators working and talking together...”*

Gaps and Challenges

When HB 4025 was signed into the law, there was a buzz for change and the Illinois Civics team diligently supported efforts for implementation. As discussed [above](#), there were multiple key factors that contributed to the success of this change, but as with any large-scale

implementation efforts there were some gaps and challenges that teachers and stakeholders pointed out.

Capacity overload, in the backdrop of an intense implementation plan, was named by multiple stakeholders.

- Multiple stakeholders and teachers pointed to a risk of overloading teachers who served as mentors. While it was effective to deploy teachers to spread information and resources, they also have a lot on their plates already and so they have limited time and effort left to devote it to something else. On a similar theme, some interviewees felt concerned that so much of the actual PD rested on one person - Mary Ellen Daneels - who renewed her sabbatical each year to continue serving in her Lead Mentor Role. Many feel close to Mary Ellen because they built a partnership with her and felt genuinely worried that the workload could be too much for anyone. In our assessment, having an exceptional (and hard-working) lead mentor was a significant driver of success of #CivicsIsBack, but when imagining how this type of model could be viable in other states, it is difficult to imagine placing the same load on one person.

An explicit focus on equity by promoting culturally-responsive teaching was needed.

- Some interviewees noted that more explicit focus on equity despite diverse students' needs would improve the initiative, meaning that more focus was needed to promote the use of culturally-responsive pedagogy in conjunction with those practices to ensure that students of all backgrounds benefit equally from the initiative. As one partner explained that any such initiative needs *"... an equity forward lens, you know... you cannot make it so that this is just equitably distributed, but also is able to be differentiated in a way that meets the needs of different schools and different students. Teacher(s) ...don't have access to that kind of information. There are a lot of other demands that schools and teachers have on them. And they can't see the opportunities to converge civic learning..."*⁴

⁴Although this input should be taken seriously, we also are aware of and heard directly from Chicago Public Schools central staff's partnership with McCormick to help teachers develop racial literacy, differentiated and

Evening out mentors' capacity and commitment across regions is an ongoing challenge.

- While mentors did provide a strong sense of buy-in and in many cases, concrete support by acting as a conduit for updated information, some mentors struggled to produce effective communication and interactions with teachers and make time to do school visits to provide hands-on coaching and assessment for their mentee teachers. Thus in some regions, the level of investment that went into training mentors (four full days of training plus stipend) perhaps did not pay off in a way the team initially envisioned.
- Mentors were often limited to online interactions through email or social media correspondence and could not really go into schools to observe and help teachers out in their region. Some stakeholders felt that mentors emailing was "hugely ineffective" and teachers needed more in-person and classroom interactions. Others, including most mentors, felt that email was a better way to start a partnership and there were always ways to deepen impact through connections and resources.
- On the other hand, many mentors initially struggled to get teachers to attend PD sessions, and even with training to change their teaching practices in a meaningful way. Many mentors felt that on top of their teaching load and reaching out to other teachers it takes a lot to persuade other teachers and felt "you can bring a horse to the water" but not force them beyond a certain point. One mentor said even though this was a strength of the initiative but a gap of the system that mentors did most of the PD on their own time (weekends; summer break, winter break, etc.) so it would not conflict with their regular teaching schedule and because they could not take any days off in their school districts.
- Some stakeholders felt that training mentors is good for now, but what about follow up and support from now onwards? They also felt that the "self-selection" of teachers for the applications for mentors means they were already taking initiative in their own

culturally responsive instructions, which are being documented more fully by CERG at UC Riverside. Here, we focus on inputs from areas outside of CPS.

practice and schools, but that leaves out many other teachers and schools that will not have the same support for a cultural shift in civics education.

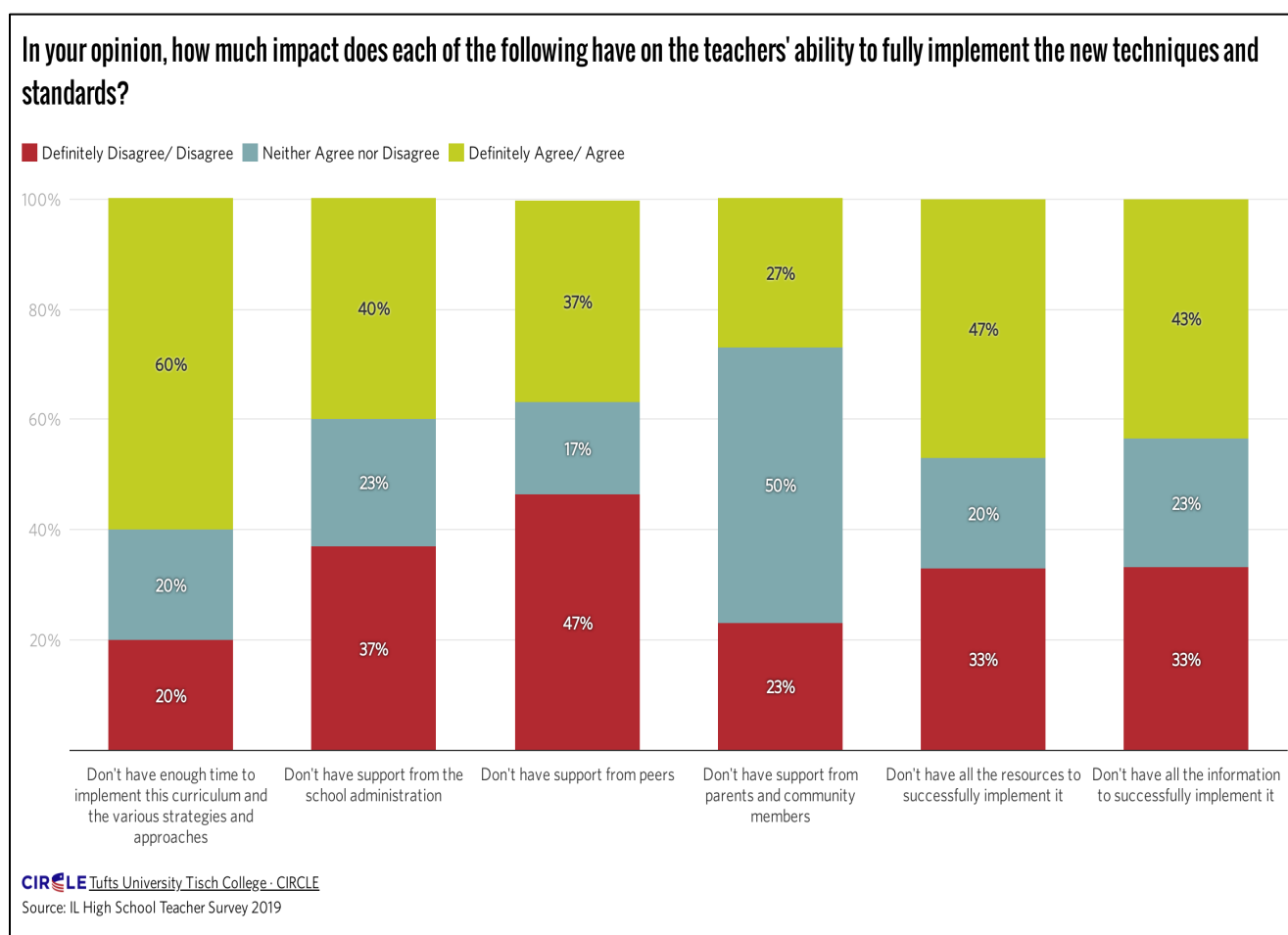
Focus on Grassroots (Teachers) May Have Sacrificed Grass-Top Buy-In

- Some teachers and stakeholders said the Illinois Civics team should have focused on administrators' buy-in earlier on in the process. Many teachers said that they felt swamped with little administrative support and a majority did not receive much support from their ROEs or ISBE apart from sporadic PD coordination.
- Some partners remarked that they would have liked more transparency and communication from McCormick on roles they were envisioning for different stakeholders, PD providers, and institutional partners.
- Many partners and stakeholders are skeptical of how the network of mentors that have been trained and supported will sustain and maintain the momentum and help teachers and districts without funding or logistical support from McCormick.

Barriers teachers faced in implementation

Some of the challenges teachers reported in implementing the new civic requirements included the difficulty of fitting the curriculum into one semester considering there was a lot to cover in a short amount of time, feasibility of using and integrating simulations and embedding service learning practices in their curriculum, keeping students engaged and making the curriculum relevant to the issues they care about, and getting experienced teachers to adapt to the new practices and shift to more skill-driven teaching that content-driven.

Figure 7: Teachers' Perception of Barriers to Implementation



Six-in-ten teachers agree that the time constraint is still one of the most challenging aspects of shifting teaching practice and integrating the best practice instructional strategies and aligning them with the revised standards (Figure 7). Forty-six percent of teachers said that finding the time to plan and implement the instructional strategies is something other teachers in their region also find “extremely” and “very challenging.”

Forty-seven percent of the teachers still say they don't have all the resources to successfully implement the law's requirements and 43 percent say they don't have all the information for implementation still. However, a third of the teachers (33%) don't agree with that and feel they do have the resources and information for successful implementation. One in

five teachers also thought it was challenging for other teachers in their region to find resources (22%).

[Section 5](#) will explore in detail the support networks and allies teachers and partners had in the last three years of implementation. At a first glance, two in five teachers said they don't have support from the school administration (40%) or their peers (37%). About a third of the teachers also said they don't have support from the community or parents for implementation. Fifteen percent of the teachers also said that teachers in their region also find it quite challenging to explain the law and its requirements to parents and the community.

Section 4: Sustainability & Applicability of the Illinois Model

As we review the cumulative findings from our partnership with the #CivicsIsBack team and take a stock at the future of Civics landscape in Illinois, it is important to acknowledge the volatile nature of some key factors that we have not explicitly named, such as political climate and public support for strong civic education, funding availability to support Civics broadly from various sources, and students' motivation and initiative to gain access to strong civic education that they need. Nationwide, all of these things are constantly in play, each affecting civic education in different ways. For instance, in Rhode Island, a group of students from Providence has sued the state for not providing high quality civic preparation for all students. In Florida, activism of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School students against gun violence received an unexpected return of a mandate to have all Civics curriculum reviewed by approved entities. With the upcoming 2020 elections, young people will be a key topic of discussions about electoral engagement. This is all to say that we do not know exactly what the future holds for Illinois' Civics ecosystem. That said, we did focus our attention on core components of sustainable change and offer our analysis below.

Teacher Capacity and Disposition

Illinois' implementation strategies rely heavily on teachers' ability to master the new pedagogies and integrate them into how they teach Civics. That is why much investment went to training and supporting in-service teachers, and steps have been taken to prepare pre-service teachers in a way that aligns well with the new law and standards. The first step in implementation is to create a semester-long course in Civics in each high school and we reviewed findings about course creation above. We also have to understand what happens after the course is created in everyday classrooms. Therefore, another way to measure Illinois model's effectiveness and ascertain its sustainability is to assess how teachers are perceiving the law, the standards, and the pedagogies they are supposed to integrate. This section focuses on the best-practice pedagogies in civic instruction and how confident teachers are in implementing them and what do mentors and partners think about prescribing and concentrating on these in the classroom.

More than 50 percent of the teachers said they have fully incorporated current and controversial issue discussions in their classroom (55%). Most teachers also feel very comfortable forming good questions and conducting such discussions (Figure 8). We do know from previous research that the quality and depth of such discussions widely varies in schools and how teachers perceive it, but even with these self-reported competencies, it is heartening to see teachers be comfortable in facilitating such discussions in the classrooms. Less than one-in-five teachers (18%) reported conducting issue discussions as “very challenging”.

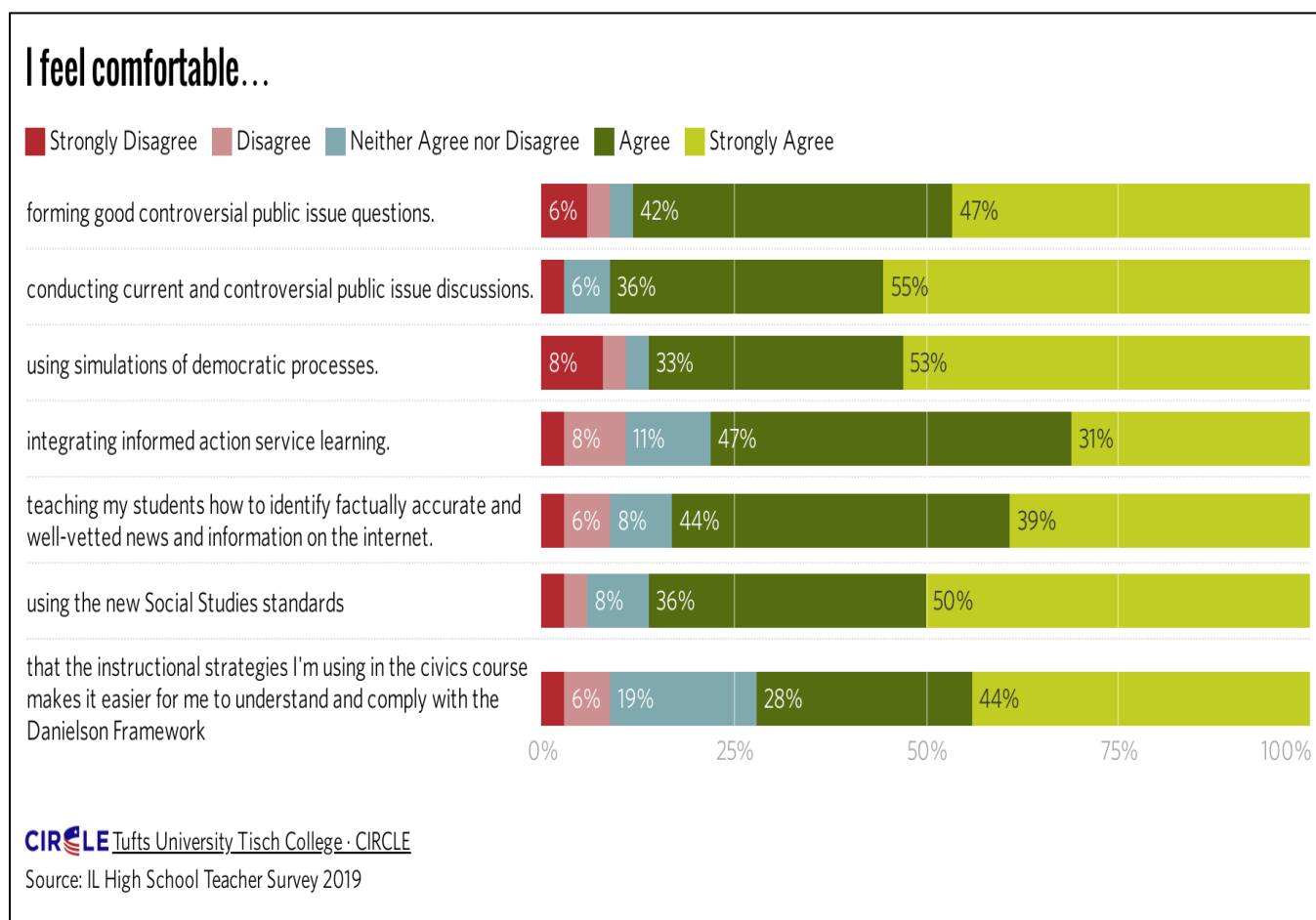
We also asked teachers to rank themselves on competency levels for a best-practice instructional strategy they are most comfortable using in their teaching and a pedagogy they are least comfortable employing for now (Figure 9). Fifty-one percent of the teachers picked conducting current and controversial public issue discussions as an instructional strategy they are most comfortable using. Teachers said that identifying and creating essential and supporting questions to a topic or issue “has become a strength after PD.” Other areas where teachers feel they are competent in conducting such discussions, creating a conducive environment for such discussions and helping students be “very aware of the need to understand different perspective(s)”. One teacher said that the “McCormick PD has given unbelievable support in this area and I am very confident with this area” when talking specifically in how to use different strategies to help students identify multiple perspectives related to a current and controversial issue. Other teachers pointed out that some of these elements of conducting such discussions are still “areas of growth” for them such as “establishing strong norms for class discussion”; “teaching critical thinking skills”; “push students...so they can independently find and choose sources instead of me guiding this search for them”; “reserve time for reflection”; “create opportunity for students to provide feedback to me”; and “encouraging all students to participate.”

Peer mentors also felt “that teachers are doing a pretty good job with current controversial issues” and it would be beneficial to focus more on it precisely because it’s something many teachers feel comfortable about and it could be something to build upon. Other mentors felt that this pedagogy is just not limited to social studies or civics but can be across disciplines where science teachers and English teachers can use it in their practice.

Moreover, mentors also felt that you can use news and media literacy techniques very well with such issue discussions. On the other hand, a few peer mentors shared how as teachers it is difficult to have discussions of controversial topics now than earlier,

"maybe...five years ago...feel like the across the country the political climate has changed and has become very divisive and topics that didn't actually used to seem very controversial, three or four years ago now, it starts to seem like, you know, if I bring this topic up, I'm going to have, you know, maybe a couple kids who are going to have some very strong emotions on one side and a couple kids are going to have very strong emotions on the other side."

Figure 8: Teachers' Comfort Level in Using Active Instructional Strategies (2019)

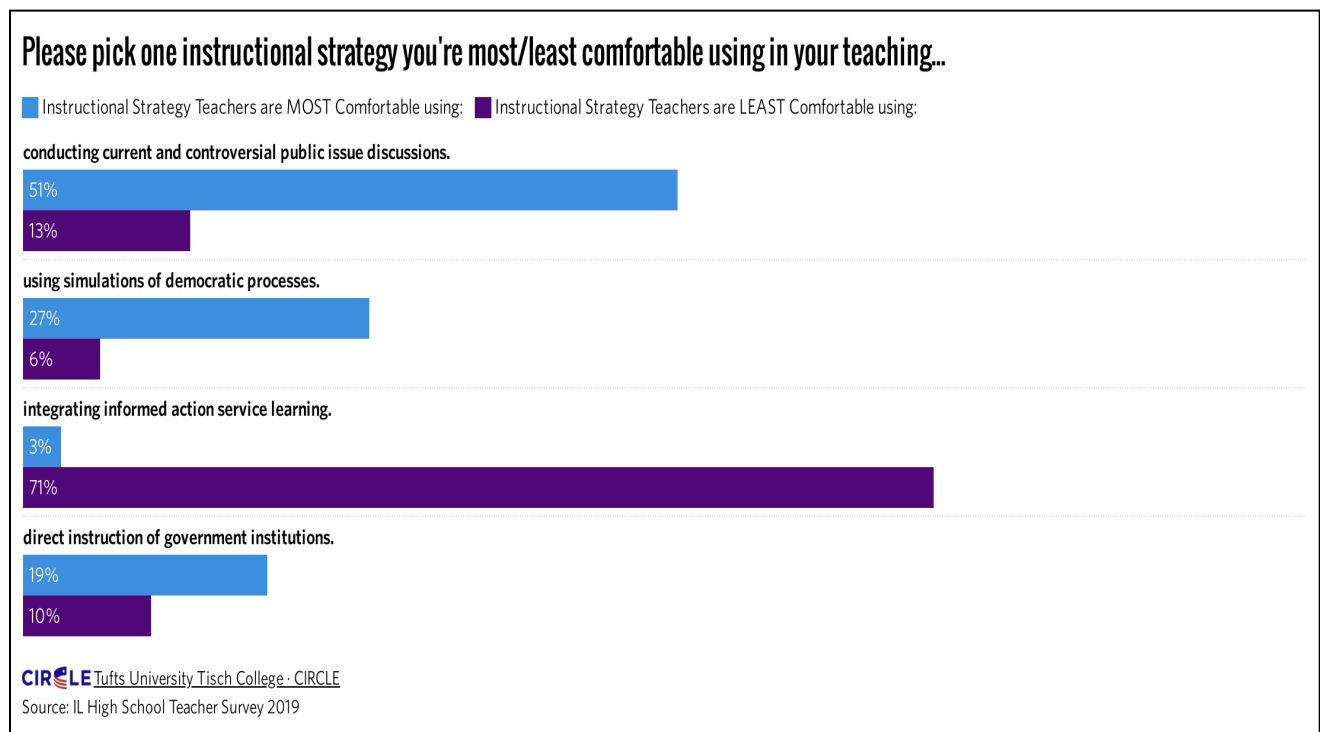


Another mentor shared a similar sentiment that teachers,

"...are very afraid to talk about stuff that's controversial. And so, stick to teaching old, boring stuff. And so, you know, I mean, nothing against the war of 1812. But it's so safe and no one's going to go home and going to get worked up over the war...but that's not what we need to talk about if we're trying to make good civic minded students and members of our democracy. We need to talk about transgender students; we need to talk about gays and lesbians and we need to talk about race and the glass ceiling, and we need to talk about that kind of stuff."

Focusing on simulations of democratic processes, 50 percent of participating high school teachers said they have fully incorporated them in their classrooms. Only seven percent of teachers said they still find it very challenging, but most teachers shared that it was a compelling instructional strategy—"students find simulations really powerful" and "kids love the simulations and it makes them much more comfortable with the idea of participating themselves." Almost a third of the teachers in our survey (27%) also indicated they're very comfortable employing this pedagogy in class and teachers said that they realized "students really do learn by doing, reinforces direct instruction," but teachers are still learning how to help students identify the civic processes inherent in the simulation and practice the required skills than "to focus more on the problem."

Figure 9: Most and Least Comfortable Pedagogy

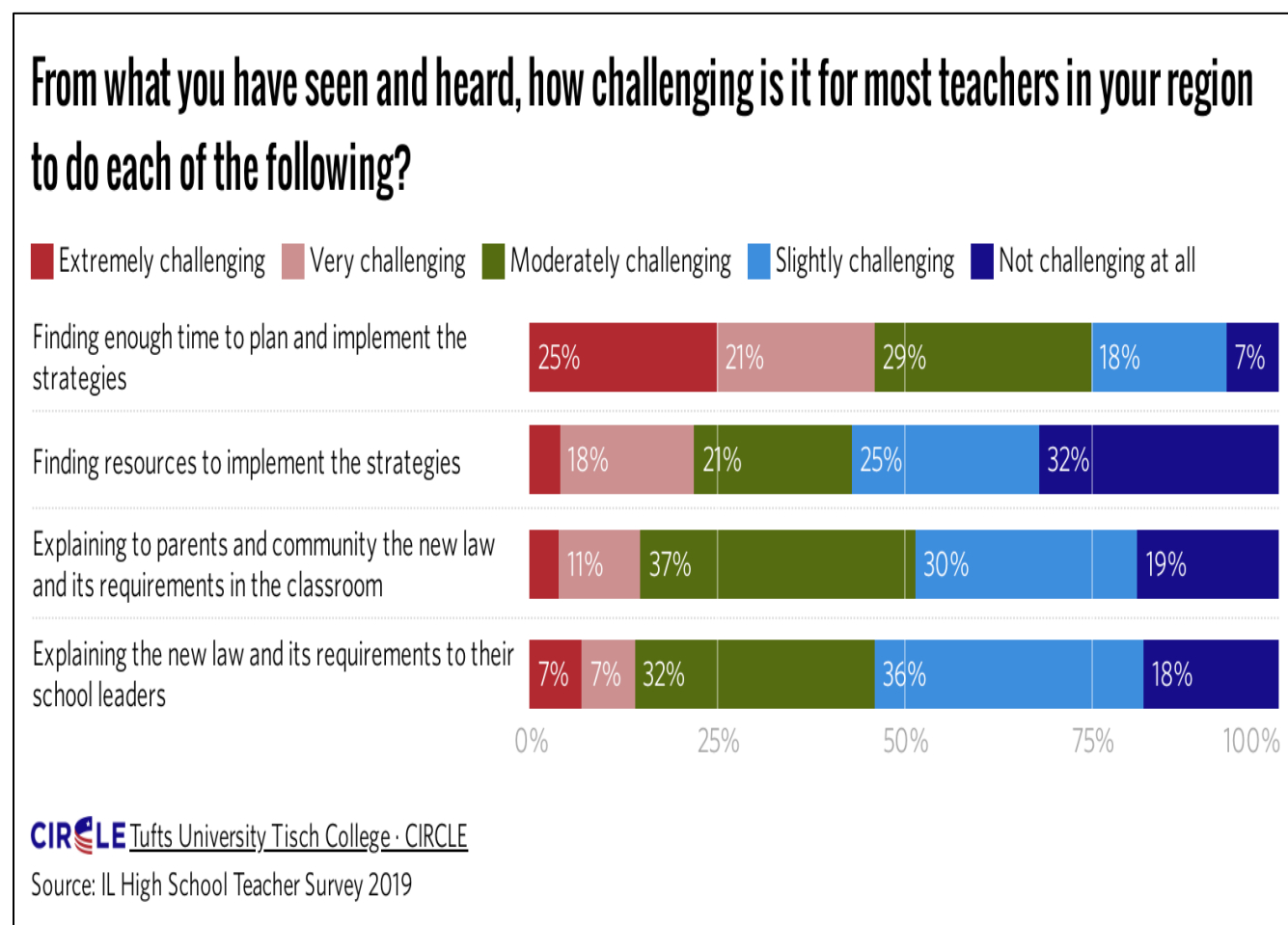


Integrating service learning for informed action is an instructional strategy many teachers have been struggling to understand and adopt since the legislation and standards were drafted. However, it is through the Illinois Civics team's efforts that many teachers now understand what informed action service learning can look like and our survey showed that 43 percent of the high school teachers said they have fully implemented this, and another 45 percent indicated that they have partially implemented it in their teaching practice. Fifty-three percent of teachers still indicated that they find integrating service learning "extremely challenging" and "very challenging". Figure-9 also shows how three-quarters of the teachers (72%) selected service learning for informed action as the pedagogy they are least comfortable employing. Teachers said they "do not do this consistently" or "not sure how to guide the process" and they feel students sometimes lack motivation and "feel hopeless to make a change based on their experiences." However, some teachers who have managed to integrate some elements of service learning reported how even with "emerging, but not fully developed" strategy they see a change in their student engagement. One teacher shared that "my students have improved immensely on understanding how to go about implementing a change and

handling challenges they face with taking action” and another shared how “students are always bringing ideas for ways to improve our school and local community.”

One PD partner explained that in her perspective part of the issue with integrating service learning for informed action is the number of different names and iterations this has gone in the field itself from “service learning” to “empowered civics” to “authentic action” to “action civics” many more names that can confuse overloaded teachers. She also said that their organization realized a lot of teachers had not taken any action themselves and so don’t know how to guide students or organize it *“...it dawned on me... They [teachers] haven’t engaged; they haven’t organized; they haven’t worked around an issue that they care about and so you’re asking them something that they don’t have prior knowledge on [even when] they could be a government teacher for 30 years but never have done something like this, right?”*

Figure 10: Perception of Other Teachers’ Capacity to Implement HB 4025



Overall, what teachers find most challenging in implementing the best practice pedagogies is finding the time to plan and integrate them thoughtfully in their classroom and explaining the prescribed practices in the law to their school leaders (Figure 10). Some teachers were apprehensive of parental and community backlash, but most teachers wanted some space to think and plan such change in their teaching and have supportive administration. Stakeholders and partners also reflected on the larger picture when asked about the best practice pedagogies and where more resources and investment is needed. Most of them agreed that more than narrow focus on pedagogies it was more about a cultural shift in teaching practice essentially shifting to inquiry-based learning and focus on skills than content. Partners and stakeholders said that more than prioritizing investment in one of the pedagogical techniques it was more about teachers learning “embedded practice” and how to integrate an inquiry arc in their practice, but most of them also indicated that service learning for informed action was the hardest for teachers to embed and employ in practice. One partner had called the best practices a “gateway drug” to high quality civic teaching and learning and another partner described how much scaffolding and time teachers need to learn and build these inquiry-based competences;

“...doing those effective practices in the classroom ...it’s [about] more integrating them. I think it’s integrating them to be more student-driven. It’s hard. I think that the teacher practice of allowing student voice to occur is tough. And I think that takes practice...it does take time...I think the hardest challenge then is to allow the teachers to have time to practice that and reflect upon that over and over and over again, because they’re going to feel better about it over time and they need to get some new ideas, but then extend their thinking about that practice.”

While teachers still do show natural variations in which pedagogy they are comfortable and uncomfortable with, they do have a place to see standards-aligned resources when they need them. The Illinois #CivisIsBack has a dedicated website (supported and maintained by the McCormick Foundation) and more than three-fourths of teachers (77%) have used the

IllinoisCivics.org website. Through the website, teachers have accessed simulations and online games, teacher resources, information on the best practices, and lesson plans.

Embedded Support Systems, Allies, and Champions

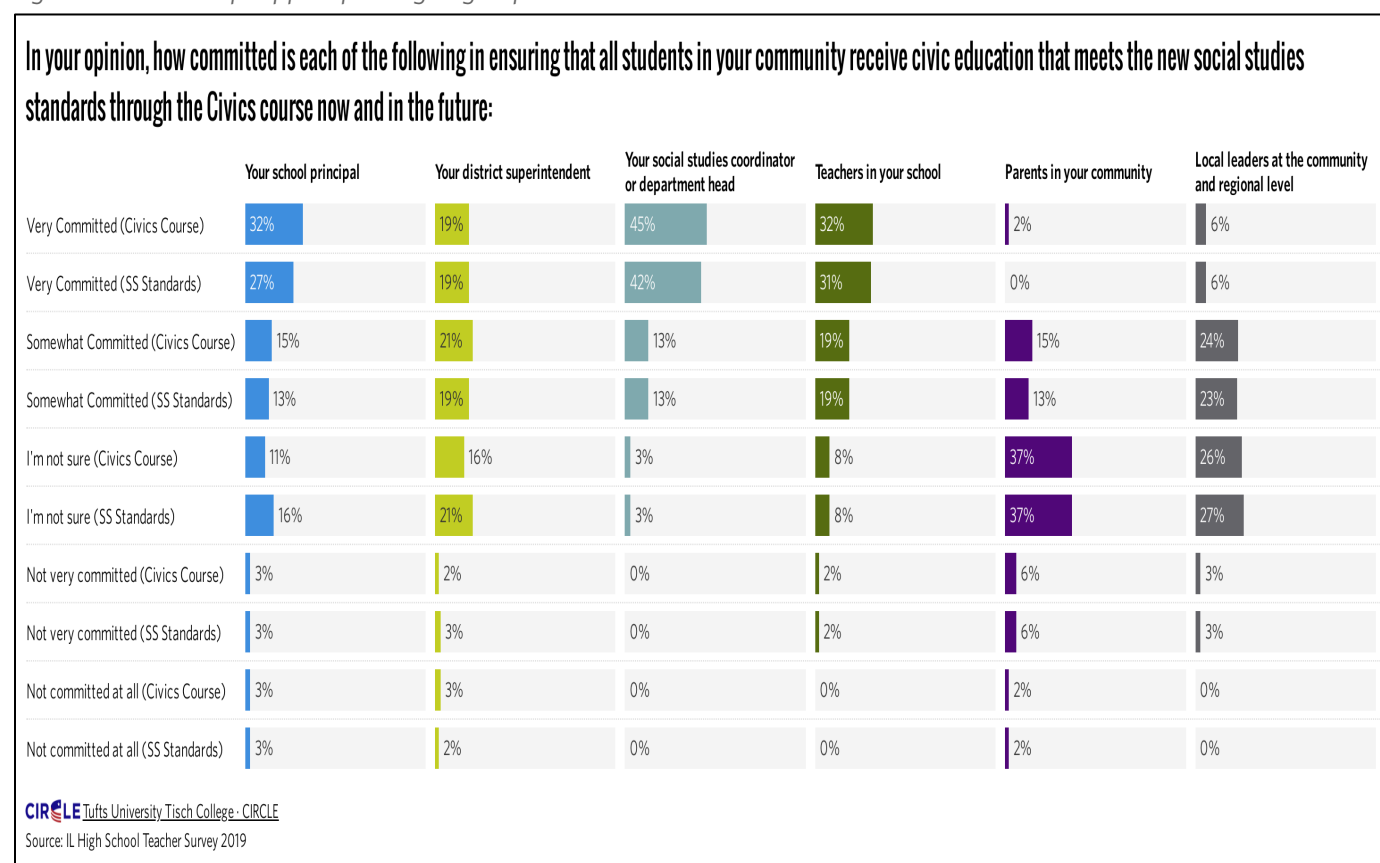
Also serving an essential function in getting the #CivicsIsBack going and then strengthening the initiative is the team at the McCormick Foundation. Mentors, teachers and stakeholders all overwhelmingly pointed to the Illinois Civics Team and McCormick Foundation for directly providing the most support in successful implementation and indirectly spearheading a lot of networks and discussions that led to support systems at every level. Every partner and mentor we talked with mentioned the immense support from Mary Ellen Daneels in implementation and networking; the logistical support from Barb Laimins, and the strategic leadership of Shawn Healy. In the last year of our evaluation partnership, we tried, to the extent we can, measure the level of commitment to improving civic education expressed by partners and other stakeholders that would be key supporters of teachers who, as noted above, are committed to using the strategies prescribed in HB 4025 and understand why these strategies would help students learn. So, we explored whether teachers feel supported and by whom.

For high school teachers, support and commitment to implementation of the civics course and alignment to the new social standards came most strongly from the people they work and rely closely on in their network starting from their social studies coordinator or department head, their school principal, peer teachers in their school to the district superintendent (Figure 11). Most teachers did not receive any direct support from the local or regional institutions or community members including the Regional Offices of Education. While some teachers received emails from ROEs and ISBE about PD opportunities, most teacher respondents said they were not given much information through these avenues and mostly received it from peer mentors, the Illinois Civics Team, or the Democracy School Network. It may be true that ROEs and ISBE did send out regular newsletters about PD opportunities, but given teachers' busy day, *who* shared information and how relevant the information seemed to teachers likely affected how helpful the teachers perceived the utility of the information.

For the most part, ROEs appear to be seen as helpful at times, but not suited as the main body to communicate with teachers, or an essential partner to regional mentors. Some mentors said ROEs were not the “right tool to communicate with teachers even with “phenomenal regional superintendents” and a “great ROE.” Mentors mostly formed their own network of teachers or other mentors to communicate and disseminate information rather than go through the ROE. Other mentors had limited to no interaction and most partners did not really work with ROEs for their work.

That said, some institutional partners such as universities with pre-service teacher programs said that ROEs are a “very strategic site for hosting resources and planning and delivering PD.” Furthermore, some ROEs (and mentors) stood out in their ability to support the initiative. Some mentors developed a good working relationship with the local ROEs, particularly the ones in larger counties of DuPage, Will, and others where mentors said ROEs hosted PD and “took care of everything else” including sending updates and announcements. DuPage County has also stepped up their support for the initiative by actively working with the Civics Team to explore ways to introduce an [online Microcredential course](#) to its teachers.

Figure 11: Sources of Support for Ongoing Implementation



For teacher **mentors** as part of the Illinois Civics initiative, the strongest allies and champions were other mentors in the program and the support network of these teacher mentors and the Illinois Civics team. The small sub-groups, the online social media groups, or general spaces to exchange and learn from each other was the biggest support every mentor mentioned. Mentors said that over the summer trainings and other meet-ups they developed “personal relationships” and “really look forward to seeing each other,” but the most important bit was the “idea sharing” and “welcoming” environment that helped the teacher mentors learn how to be better at teaching civics (sometimes by unlearning old habits). One mentor shared that it was transformative to see people share their lesson plans and ideas so openly and embody what the lead mentor Mary Ellen said, which was not to be “stingy with your awesomeness.” One mentor captured this network of support and allies in her response,

“I mean I would say Barb and Mary Ellen of course top the list because they are there for absolutely anything you need. Mary Ellen came down and did a professional development at a

local school and I kind of helped assist that...I do feel like my school district was really supportive and the fact that my principal is the one that said I should apply [to the mentor program] and you know it's never been an issue of asking for things in order to be able to go participate in this [PD]. They've always supported the idea of being a mentor and presenting it workshops you know they are appreciative of that... just listening to what some of these other mentor teachers have done in their classroom it's always that little extra inspiration of okay like they're doing this and that's awesome and it motivates you to think of creative things to do as well and you know sometimes it's that sense of reassurance ...I'm always just looking for people to bounce ideas off. ...just because the official grant has ended, I don't think that that means that our collaboration has to end."

Since most mentors are practicing teachers, they also pointed to similar support people such as the social studies department chair or the building principal that supported teacher mentors in going to PD and hosting meetings. Mentor teachers said that the department chair or principal would usually arrange for substitute teachers and/or funding to allow the teacher to attend PD and would then subsequently support implementation efforts as well. One teacher mentor shared their story of how the peers she works with supported the implementation of the course, *"...not too long after Illinois passed the legislation, our curriculum administrator in the main office asked me and my department chair to come into her office, and, you know, go through and look at what the law says ...because we actually already had a semester-long class. We weren't just plugging it into U.S. history so we know they wanted to compare what the law says and what we actually do in our course to make sure we were compliant..."*

For **stakeholders**, the allies and support networks depends on the nature of their work and organizational or institutional mission. For most of them, common themes included working with other teachers that supported and endorsed their work and providing feedback (either through a teacher advisor committee or spreading the word and getting more teachers to come to the PD events). Networking and collaborating in their field with other PD providers or institutional partners like local universities also helped expand and support their work throughout the initiative. One partner explained how some of the networks and support

systems that developed were crucial in pushing change particularly at leadership levels that resisted change or implementing more mandates,

"...I think the mandate is what opened the doors because principals had to deal with it. They had to, you know, pass on those emails ... so that's why I'm saying these conversations probably wouldn't be happening. So I would say that's number one. And number two is you build up a core group of teacher leaders that you know and continue to advocate that to-they get other teachers excited and especially when you're seeing these teachers at events."

Some partners wished that apart from the Illinois Civics team there were other strategic people that could provide connections and support such as the superintendents that facilitate collaboration between SEL and civics folks. One institutional partner that also provides PD to teachers described the wide array of supports they receive from different sections of the civic education ecosystem in Illinois, including the

"...number of allies which is fabulous. We have an educator advisory committee that we work with. ... We work closely with social studies department heads and also we've actually found school social workers [and] school psychologists and social emotional learning coordinators are very supportive of what we're doing...We also have a lot of institutional partners that we work with [including] obviously McCormick...We have partnered closely with the Illinois Education Association, the largest of the statewide teachers unions has been very supportive, and we've actually been able to go into districts and towns in Central and Southern Illinois and directly provide PD as well. ...there's definitely been a climate across the local regional education world that this is this is important not just because it's mandated ...but also...there is an understanding that these are the skills, and the knowledge, and the dispositions that students gain through this type of civic education [and] are as essential in terms of life skills as anything else that we're teaching them."

In our view, the peer-to-peer network of existing institutions, nonprofits, funders, and teacher leaders and supportive district leaders is one of the most important infrastructures that the #CivicsIsBack resources and staff helped to build. Because these stakeholders shared a

goal despite any differences they may have with regards to strategy, mission and preferences, they are able to collaborate on the shared goals while also building social capital and trust. With the new Middle School mandate on the horizon, and especially with a much shorter implementation timeline, this network will be invaluable. Collaboration often works best when there are clearly defined goals, sufficient resources to achieve the goals, and opportunities to work together, ideally in person. Strategic investments could be made to preserve as many of these features as plausible moving forward.

Illinois as a Unique Context for HB 4025 Implementation - and Its Applicability to Other States

Policy implementation is not a simple formula that computes in a vacuum. State policies themselves are formed in the context of the local state's history, political climate of the moment, and other education laws and priorities, among other factors (such as champions and funding availability). Illinois is no exception, meaning it had a confluence of factors that likely impacted how this implementation model was designed, and then executed. While we are offering a full analysis of these factors in this evaluation, we sought inputs from the people that were impacted by this law and what they thought were important contextual factors that helped this initiative succeed. We provide some quotes below for color and context, but in summary, our interviewees saw the importance of community coming together, namely, the funding community coming together to provide financial resources,⁵ the McCormick Foundation team's leadership both as a funder and as a strategic leader, embrace of geographical and cultural diversity within the state, and authentic value and respect given to teachers.

Mentors and stakeholders pointed out to the funding and leadership of McCormick Foundation, the willingness of partners to adapt and work towards a common vision, the

⁵ Even though the McCormick Foundation was the marquee funder and chief organizer of the funder community (and in our view it was critical that a major funder organized other local funders) in reality, our interviewees saw the support of the cross-cutting funder community. This impression of community seems to be helpful in this case.

political environment and “civics focus” of the state as well as the diversity of ideology and people of the state that requires working with others to move forward. As one mentor said,

“...the reason this worked was the McCormick Foundation was willing to put up the money to implement it. So many times in Illinois we passed unfunded mandates and we go to the schools and say you have to do this, but we don’t have the follow through or the support to actually carry it out and this time we had a support system and the training in place that allowed this to happen and that’s the reason it succeeded at the level it did.”

So the “commitment that McCormick Foundation and other private foundations gave to this law” is one of the foundational elements that allowed this initiative to succeed in the context of Illinois. They also pointed out that it’s not just the funding or logistical support that McCormick Foundation provided; it’s the thoughtful leadership through which they put together the Illinois Civics team and created a cadre of mentors to support implementation and have research partners provide critical and dynamic feedback.

Mentors also said that putting teachers at the heart of the initiative was a wise choice for Illinois as they are the “school ecosystem” and teachers agree, regardless of ideology, that they need to be teaching foundational knowledge and skills to students on how to “become productive members of society.” Mentors and stakeholders also pointed out the diversity and expansiveness of the state. One mentor said the state of Illinois is a “...weird state like [it has] three different states in one ...our districts are fairly large and our makeup is so different because we have Chicago and then you have the Suburban schools. And then you have Central Illinois [and] down state...Southern Illinois”. One mentor said that “Chicago is a separate country” in the state and the Illinois Civics team realized that and designed regional trainings and recruited local mentors to facilitate implementation that catered to the local context. This also led to cross-collaboration across different regions of the state and “there were a lot of dialogues between teachers across the state... that was a success story.”

As noted earlier, HB 4025 was somewhat unique in that the law not only mandated that all students take at least one semester of Civics in high school, but that civics be taught using specific instructional strategies. In previous examples, the Civics law often mandated a course,

or a type of assessment (most commonly the USCIS Citizenship Test). But because the goal of having HB 4025 also included changing the perception and culture around teaching of civic education, the bill incorporated pedagogy. This is an excellent example of a thoughtful policy design based on deep local knowledge. The bill designers, who represented diverse sectors, partisanship and locations within the state collectively had the intelligence and knowledge that non-local experts could not provide, and because the bill was designed with intentionality, the implementation team could anticipate that changing practices would be challenging to many high school teachers, why that might be, and how to support them through the change, particularly by placing local teachers mentors across the state. Stakeholder and partners also pointed out that,

“the law...was a driving force. Once you put something in law; whether you want to do it or not, you have to. So people didn't have any accountability linked to it. So, yeah, I think because it was law, I think the administrator(s) said you've got to go because these changes are coming....”

Many partners said that because there was no external accountability for teachers like student test scores the law was the driving force for both teachers and school leadership to implement changes and that was conducive to a state like Illinois that may not have preferred a top-down, strict accountability measures on civics education. Even then some partners were skeptical that the state is “...like 47th in the nation to adopt a civic ed mandate... that makes me sick. So I think in some ways like the timing is fortuitous [in] Illinois... [for] some kind of civic mandate.”

Section 5: Looking Back, Looking Forward & Recommendations

Contributing Factors to Illinois' Success

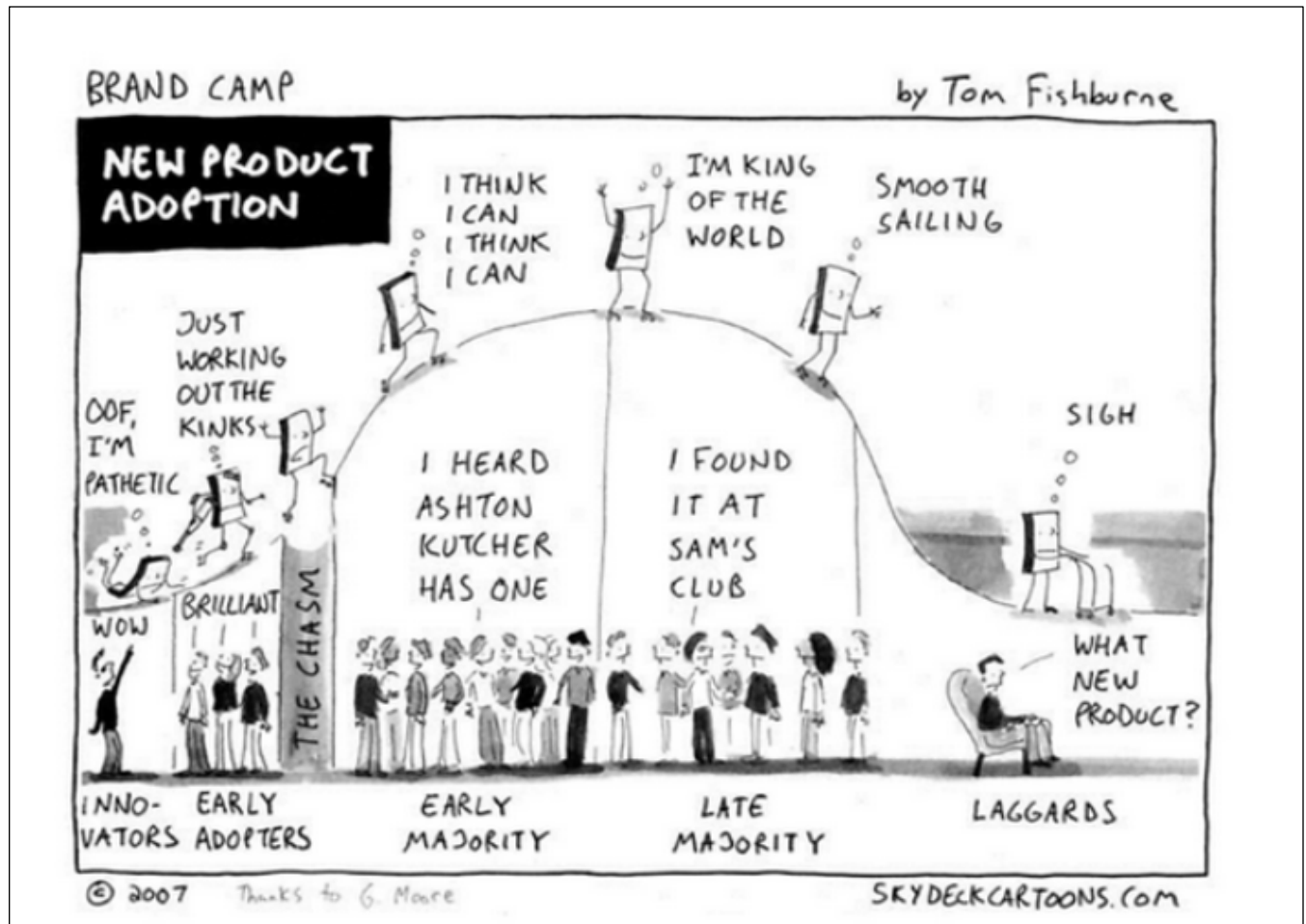
Over the past four years, we observed a transformation of a state's civic learning landscape, encompassing changes in teacher capacity, pipelines of social studies teachers, the "market economy" of Civics curriculum and instruction training for in-service teachers, and importantly, how education leaders view Civics as a staple of high school education. Looking back at the progress made and challenges faced, we saw some of salient ingredients of success of the Illinois #CivicsIsBack in the first three years. While some features may be unique to Illinois, many are important lessons that we believe would help other states succeed as local stakeholders design laws and develop implementation plans based on their knowledge of local assets as well as challenges. Below are five major factors that likely helped Illinois #CivicsIsBack excel. We also believe that in principle, these factors can also transfer well in other states, with appropriate adaptations based on the local context and the nature of the law.

1) Comprehensive approach to Civics teaching capacity-building

The #CivicsIsBack initiative addressed a key challenge in building an equitable civic learning ecosystem by building layers of support to help classroom teachers access resources and training to enhance their Civics teaching skills so that they are aligned with HB 4025 and the Social Science standards. This was done by building a regional mentor network in all corners of the state, working with ROEs to host training sessions, delivering in-person professional development sessions to local districts, and building a website and newsletter mailing list for ongoing communications. A conventional approach might be to hold a one-time conference or develop a few new curricular resources. This approach will likely get to teachers that are looking to improve their practices all the time and can afford to do so, a type of teachers we might call *innovators* and *early adopters* in a Figure-12 below. In order to get beyond those "best" teachers, the Illinois team worked to make opportunities to learn and adopt the new pedagogy almost inevitable. They addressed the cost issue by making all PD free and overcame logistical challenges that many teachers mention by managing an updated website with a calendar of events and bringing intense institute-style PDs all over the state. Thus, our estimation is that

the implementation reached at least to the “early majority” group and is now getting to the “late majority.”

Figure 12: The Spread of New Practice Curve



2) Growing Capacity and Disposition through Empathy and Encouragement

The Illinois Civics Team is led by current and former teachers. This is an important factor because their natural empathy toward teachers' everyday experiences and respect for what they know and can do manifested in multiple ways throughout the initiative. The team gathered teachers' inputs consistently and took them seriously by iterating their approach to training on small and large scales. One of the key observations that the team used from early on, is that **teacher disposition** (i.e., how comfortable they feel in trying a new strategy or a topic that might incite disagreements or cause them to lose control of the classroom) was a key lever of behavioral change, and subsequently, a shift in teachers' own perception of their capacity

as educators. They recognized the need to show empathy for the struggles teachers experience as they shift to a new set of practices and demonstrated, not told, how they can adapt aspects of the pedagogy to make it more suitable to their school, or how to start with “small bites” so as not to overwhelm teachers with a whole new approach to teaching at once. The lead teacher mentor, Mary Ellen Daneels, constantly communicated optimism while recognizing that what she was teaching was, in fact, hard. Interviews with teachers and mentors clearly show that they felt supported by the team, and that they could take ownership of this initiative because they felt understood.

3) Keeping an Eye on Systems Change

While a state-level mandate passes with a timeline for implementation, a natural instinct would be to meet the mandate as soon as possible. The #CivicsIsBack certainly allocated considerable resources to meet the mandate by increasing teacher capacity one region at a time and is well-known for this accomplishment. But a notable feature of the effort is also the fact that the leaders took thoughtful steps to continue making systems change as a follow-up to HB 4025. One such example is their work with the teacher pipeline. They worked with the state Teacher Pipeline Taskforce, multiple colleges and universities that educate future teachers, and the state licensing board in order to increase awareness and buy-in among the pre-service stakeholders. In the coming years, the Illinois Political Science teacher licensing exam will include questions on the Civics pedagogies written into HB 4025, meaning that all new teachers will have to learn about those pedagogies during their training. Mary Ellen Daneels also worked with the American Institute of Research and other leading Civics teachers in the neighboring states to convene a working group developing a teacher-led, instruction-embedded assessments.

While bringing the high school Civics law to its full implementation, #CivicsIsBack team also knew that civic education should start earlier than high school based on research and direct experience as teachers. As a result, they were working on a middle school version of the Civics bill (HB 2265) which was signed into the law in August of 2019 by Governor J.B. Pritzker. This bill passed more quickly, likely for a number of reasons. However, one factor may be that the ISBE Social Studies Standards had already created a market for elementary and middle-school

teacher capacity to integrate Civics content starting in 2017. In fact, the PD team had been receiving requests to develop and deliver training to middle and elementary schools prior to HB 2265, now with a new hashtag #CivicsInTheMiddle,

Finally, the Illinois Civics team is making another type of investment to solidify the foundation they helped to build by forming a partnership with the Lou Frey Institute at the University of Central Florida, led by Dr. Steven Masyada. His team and the former director Dr. L. Doug Dobson led implementation of the Sandra Day O'Connor Act (2011) in Florida, which is a comprehensive Civics law anchored by a middle school course and an end-of-course test. The McCormick team knew the Florida team for years and CIRCLE had served as the evaluation partner in Florida's initial implementation efforts. Through this new partnership, funded by the McCormick Foundation, this joint team is developing an online course sequence on controversial issue discussions, informed action, simulations of democratic practices, and instruction-embedded assessment of civic learning. This initiative was in pilot in 2019 and will be available to Illinois and Florida teachers starting in 2020. Based on the lessons learned through thousands of hours of professional development hours this joint team accumulated over time, they created an interactive course that challenges teachers while increasing their dispositions. While we are still in the early stage of our evaluation of this new initiative, initial inputs from teachers have been extremely positive. Having high-quality online course that is relevant to HB 4025 (as well as Civics teachers more broadly) is an important step for Illinois to ensure the longevity of the impact particularly when fewer resources become available for direct, in-person professional development.

4) Selecting the Right Leadership for the Context

From the beginning, HB 4025 was about trusting teachers' collective ability to shift the landscape of Illinois civic learning. It garnered bipartisan support from diverse stakeholders including the advocacy community, corporations, media, and institutional funders, and the passage of the bill was celebrated as a success for the community. With this grassroots support as a backdrop, the #CivicsIsBack needed to choose the right leadership to lead its implementation phase. It did so by placing dozens of teachers in key leadership role, managed

by a practicing teacher Mary Ellen Daneels, whose title was, and still is, the “Lead Teacher Mentor,” communicating that she is one of the teachers. Throughout our work with the Illinois team and in the data we collected, it was clear that the #CivicsIsBack genuinely relied on the hard work and talent of teachers across the state, while also giving a lot of support. Because the leaders were “one of them,” teachers were able to both trust the leaders and give candid inputs when they were asked. In the first year of implementation, CIRCLE surveyed teachers before every regional PD session to assess needs and challenges and after every session to convey feedback. The regional mentorship model itself was an expression of a belief in everyday teachers, instead of “experts” from outside. Mentors brought expertise in the local educational and cultural ecosystems and though they did not always feel successful, were likely one of the very best choices for an initiative that covered such a wide range of geography and types of teachers.

Another major advantage of having practicing teachers in the lead role is their understanding of the current realities facing teachers in the state. As mentioned in the report, the social studies standards, the legislation, and the existing teacher evaluation framework formed an intentional trifecta of accountability that was not written as part of HB 4025. As a teacher herself, Mary Ellen Daneels knew that teachers needed to see a connection between HB 4025 mandated practices and other things teachers already had to do without HB 4025. The Social Science Standards and the Danielson Framework were two key mechanisms. In training about the pedagogy or the standards, trainers made consistent and explicit connections between the new practices and the other two mechanisms in a way teachers could see why, for instance using service learning in their class, could actually simplify their planning for the inquiry-based learning ending with an “informed action” component. We believe that this kind of cultural accountability that actually feels relevant and important by teachers can only be developed by teachers.

5) Early and Strong Commitment to Pockets of Excellence

Though we focus on the statewide efforts to improve practice of Civics teaching and learning in our evaluation occurring largely outside of the Chicago Public Schools, we believe

that large investment in this largest, most diverse district in the state pays dividends, now and later. Efforts in CPS are being carefully documented by our colleagues at the Civic Engagement Research Group (CERG), but for the purpose of our work statewide, having an example of how a whole district systems can move toward growing informed, critical, and passionate civic participants despite the financial and other challenges that district and its students face can serve as an inspiration within the state, and nationwide. But more importantly, our interviews with CPS Civic Engagement Department staff suggested that CPS teachers have had transformative learning experiences together, by coming to a shared understanding of equitable civic education and what it means in an environment like CPS. Though CPS is unique in its size and diversity in Illinois, there are many more teachers that teach in a classroom where minority students are the predominant population or where students of all backgrounds bring in challenges related to poverty every day. We hope that key lessons learned from CPS will be shared across the state for further learning and improvement.

CPS was not the only focus of long-term investment. The Illinois Democracy Schools Initiative is an ongoing program at the McCormick Foundation that now has 74 high schools that demonstrate strong, school-wide commitment to civic learning and democratic engagement. The Democracy School designation requires far more than excellent Civics class, we believe having the Democracy Schools program in place and producing bright and diverse examples of how civic learning can be achieved in different communities helped to increase buy-in from diverse stakeholders. Recently, there appears to be a virtuous cycle between the teacher mentor program and the Democracy Schools program where some mentors are now ready to mobilize their own school to become a Democracy School, expanding their role from being a Civics mentor to that of a leader in democratic engagement.

Remaining Challenges and Recommendations

Although we consider the Illinois High School Civics initiative to be exceptionally successful especially this early, especially in bringing equality in access to Civics, it still has challenges. Student surveys showed that students of color are showing lower levels of civic dispositions and behavioral intent, and fifty percent of high schools were still struggling to

provide adequate PD to their teachers. Because of the systems the team put in place and the cultural momentum built around civic engagement, including the energy coming from young people themselves, civic learning in Illinois has a great many things going for its success already. That said, we present a list of recommendations based largely on the inputs from our interviews in 2019 where teachers, mentors and stakeholders shared their candid views with our team. While we added our recommendations, we believe inputs from these interviewees are invaluable as the team consider how to sustain the momentum of this successful #CivicsIsBack initiative.

(i) Continue to Support Teachers through Scaffolded PD and Cross-disciplinary Civics

Going forward teachers want to continue to learn and grow as they shift their practice to inquiry based learning and teaching. However, since this is not how they were trained as pre-service teachers or taught for the majority of their careers they still need a lot of support. Teachers wrote that they would like more exposure to service learning projects and simulations, continuing professional development opportunities, and more community support with one teacher suggesting implementing a community liaison for each school. As one partner said,

"It's going to stop where it is at if there is no steam behind it. I'd like to think that we have forced people to reflect and evaluate and possibly change some of the things they do ... in their classroom with students. But if you don't continue to stoke the fires, you aren't going any further. The mandate helped place an emphasis on social studies education where because of STEM and testing and other priorities it had been somewhat marginalized..."

Based on the inputs and the survey findings, we recommend that some efforts continue to focus on a few concrete things such as continuing to provide support for high-quality PD even if it's not completely free, but can be organized and coordinated or some funds allocated to go to external PD opportunities for teachers in underserved counties. One partner suggested that efforts be used to spur a cultural shift on how school districts perceive PD opportunity as "fixed costs, not variable costs." There could be a focus on the cross-disciplinary nature of civics beyond social studies and into English and STEM although a partner admitted that there is "not

a lot of traction" for it.⁶ McCormick can also keep updating resources on the website and stay connected to teachers through their blog posts and newsletters. Illinoiscivics.org is the go-to place for many teachers and up-to-date resources will help teachers use the best strategies in the classrooms. The recent passage of a similar middle school mandate and the selection of Civic Instructional Coaches (some of whom were peer mentors) can ensure some continuity in these efforts.

In terms of support to continue learning, teachers overwhelmingly asked for "continue PD opportunities locally for teachers" and continue with the "newsletters which share other teachers' experiences and new lessons, and which provide links to supporting materials..."

(ii) Value and Nurture the Mentor Community

The teacher mentors mostly mentioned that they plan to maintain their current relationships and spread any information on resources and PD opportunities. The mentors also need some base level of support to sustain the work forward as they are teachers with the usual overload of teaching and other duties, and even though McCormick does not need to provide the extent of funding and resources it did in the last three years it may need to provide some incentives to help the mentor networks developed to thrive and grow. Every mentor we talked to mentioned that the convening of mentors, training, and exchange of ideas was the most powerful experience in supporting and transforming their teaching. Mentors said they valued the "opinion andinsight into things" of other teacher mentors and definitely reached out to them. As one mentor explained,

"I think one of the most beneficial things that McCormick has done is when they have once or twice a year pulled mentors together. If we can keep our base together, collaborate and talk.

⁶ One of the authors (Kawashima-Ginsberg) believes it is often because the STEM disciplines sees Civics as an external object that does not improve STEM learning. Some exceptions are observed in research that shows that women and students of color often thrive and perform better when given an opportunity for curriculum-embedded civic engagement in college engineering programs. One way to frame introducing civic knowledge and engagement is expanding pipelines into STEM careers and increasing engagement in early STEM classes by integrating the public purpose of science careers early on, and increasing awareness about why knowledge and interest in social and public issues helps scientists become better scientists.

And I think that the trickle down to reaching our teachers and of course, you know, as you continue on here, some of these better teachers might leave or they might end up switching what they teach."

Other avenues and pathways that mentors shared to carry the work forward included encouraging other mentors to "continue to share beyond just the network that we already have" and be lead mentors in their schools and networks as experts that can lead "their own curriculum team at their own school and some of these ideas and teaching strategies and best practices that we're sharing." Another pathway that expert mentors are exploring is to work with pre-service and new teachers in their region through support from their school districts. One mentor said that that's where they're concentrating efforts next year, *"...as far as what I'm envisioning is the seeds have been planted and now hopefully the teachers that have benefited these last three years--including myself--we can just continue to share within our own schools and our own districts with our new teachers that are coming in our own social studies departments."*

In a nutshell, most mentors were looking to continue the work forward by diligently improving their own teaching practice and helping other teachers as they go along. They did request some support particularly in PD opportunities and a convening that brought educators and partners together to keep sharing and supporting each other. As one mentor said that it would be *"...great if we could continue to offer some forms maybe not as extensive, but some more training. There's so many partnerships with other Civic educational agencies that we've been introduced to through those trainings and those meetings that hopefully we can continue that relationship and you know, just maybe continue through our networking."*

Mentors were also asked what advice would they share with teachers or other instructional coaches starting in this field. Many mentors said they realize for pre-service or new teachers the mandate and standards can be overwhelming and advised teachers to "take small bites" and focus on incorporating one best practice pedagogy at a time. They also recommended to new teachers that students are more flexible and understanding and "will often run with whatever you teach" so you don't have to plan out everything. They suggested that teachers make full use of the other teachers and use the network to get new ideas. For

mentors or coaches, their advice was to be persistent and not get discouraged by any lack of response from teachers or district level partners; many mentors said that email was a good mode of communication even when it did not get many responses because those who wanted to utilize resources did reach out. They also said that reaching out to teachers and organizing events helped them understand local needs better and teachers reciprocated better in such gatherings.

(iii) Rely on (and Support, if possible) Talented Partners to Carry the Torch

One of the outcomes of the initiative that we did not foresee was the invigoration in the PD provider community that seems not only excited by the challenge of serving more diverse schools as clients, but also by the collective learning experience they have had through the initiative, to think more deeply from teachers' perspectives, and ways to teach pedagogy through the lens of standards and mandates. Subsequently, partners and stakeholders have an incentive for carrying the momentum and work forward as it also expands the scope of their work and with teacher interest and demand they can work deeply and effectively in their areas of expertise. Most partners expressed the biggest benefit of the legislation and this initiative was the focus on civics and what good quality civic education can look like. Now a lot of the partners have different ideas on how to support teachers and school districts in achieving that and sustaining it.

Partners that work with teachers want to continue to support teachers in a meaningful way because changing teaching practice takes time and "conditioning". They know that in-person PD is not always practical in such a large state like Illinois, so many are leaning towards online PD opportunities and credit as well as micro-credentialing. Many stakeholders saw the advantage of working towards a larger picture and collaborating with other partners and want to continue that through such initiatives but it would still require leadership and stewardship that McCormick's Illinois Civics Team provided in the last three years. Many partners really valued working with the corps of teacher mentors and want to support that network so they can continue to grow and help other teachers. Some partners are looking to adapt such a "Cohort

model" of working deeply with a few teachers for a few years. One institutional partner framed this in a direct way,

"...we all know that with professional development that it needs long-term support and that teacher practice change doesn't happen in a year, and it doesn't actually happen in three years. In some cases, if we're talking about reaching the ground zero of teachers...still trying to find a way to best integrate these practices...I think we're just now coming around and unfortunately, I think it just takes time and education. I don't know why, but it does and so I believe that when he [Shawn Healy] came to us and said, hey, do you want to be a partner in this? It was more like as long as you're involved and you're working with the teaching community, could you help support us and so I'm always thinking about ways of how we can continue that work and continue some of those best practices. Maybe look at innovative ways to support our mentors that are very active..."

Other partners are looking to connect teachers directly with people and institutions that frame curriculum and instruction and school district policies so that it's "...more of a partnership and less of an imposition" on teachers. More partners feel that they need to meet teachers "in places where they are to both raise awareness, but also to define them." For some local partners, this also includes a focus on getting local elected officials and increasing "their visibility and partnership with schools" so that teachers can develop partnerships to involve their students in local civic life and "students know who their elected officials are and can engage with them."

At the school district level, many partners feel that the onus of sustaining support for teachers in civics "falls upon the leadership within the [school] buildings." So many of them are looking for ways to approach school principals and superintendents and engage them more. For instance, one ROE we spoke to said that they provide and organize PD, but it's not compulsory for districts to come to a session so they feel they're in a "unique position" where it's a "nice balance of how can we help but not...pushing to the point where it's something that we're telling people they have to do..." Other district level partners said the middle school legislation actually helps provide them with a "multi-tiered approach" to work with middle school and high school

teachers to build on best practices in civics instruction. Partners that work with teachers closely also said that to continue the work they have to know “what is being elevated by [the] district level” as that is the “language” teachers pay attention to and concentrate on for students. For instance, one partner said they know the districts’ primary focus is SEL so that’s what is highlighted to teachers and for sustainability they will make connections to this “new strategic plan” of the district and infuse civics in that way.

As explored in other sections, equity of student outcomes was not the prime lens in how this initiative was initially envisioned. Many district level partners that are working in large and diverse districts or in small and underserved districts are looking to orient further opportunities with an explicit focus on equity and culturally-responsive teaching and learning. One partner said that the major hurdle in that is the siloed way PD and resources are planned and provided in the field, “...selfishly I would hope that you know, there’s not a concentration on who’s delivering and where the money is coming from...because I think it is often times that competition whether it’s your institution or mine or McCormick...I would hope that...we can have a thoughtful intelligent approach to this so that we get the right information into the hands of the kids without all without all the other stuff...”. Many PD providers also shared that they see so much more potential for cross-disciplinary work in civics and focus on “thoughtful practice” and helping teachers see the classroom as a community that is not just subject-driven or test-driven.

Building for Better Democracy

CIRCLE (The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) is a nonpartisan, independent, academic research center that studies young people in politics and presents detailed data on young voters in all 50 states. CIRCLE is part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University.

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