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Guardians of Democracy Microcredential Courses

Final Report

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Executive Summary

This report describes the findings from the Guardians of Democracy (GoD) pilot initiative from the fall of 2019 through the spring of 2021. GoD was designed as an effort to expand access to high-quality professional learning about civic education pedagogy beyond the largely in-person training in civics pedagogy which had taken place since the summer of 2016. CIRCLE joined Illinois Civics and the Lou Frey Institute at the University of Central Florida as the evaluation partner to pilot an initiative to develop entirely virtual courses on Current and Controversial Issue Discussion (CCID), Simulation of Democratic Practices (SoDP), and Informed Action through Service Learning (IASL). The major objectives of this pilot evaluation were to assess: 1) whether it is possible to run an entirely virtual professional learning program and sustain educator engagement; 2) whether the enrolled teachers acquire knowledge of the pedagogy they learn about; 3) whether teacher disposition to implement the specific pedagogy, and possibly high-quality civics more generally, can increase as a result of course completion; and 4) whether and how this initiative could scale in a sustainable manner in the future. Our evaluation ran between fall of 2019 to spring of 2021 and our mixed-method evaluation is based on surveys from 196 teachers, teacher comments and artifacts, virtual course observations, and interviews with course designers and facilitators. It was supported by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

Findings strongly suggest that the Bronze (beginner) module of CCID, SoDP and IASL courses had a statistically significant positive impact on educators' knowledge about each pedagogy. On average, on a percentage scale with 100% as the highest score, teachers gained an average of 10 percentage points in their civics pedagogy knowledge between the pre-test and post-test for the course. Among the CCID Bronze participants, the course also improved teachers' disposition toward using various evidence-based civics teaching strategies; and, among the IASL Bronze participants, there was an increase in their comfort using service learning. On the other hand, the SoDP participants did not show a notable growth in disposition toward the use of various civics pedagogies. The lack of change in disposition among SoDP teachers is due at least in part to the fact these teachers already started the course with a high level of confidence.

Quantitative findings about growth through the Silver and Gold modules are more mixed, which is in part related to teachers reaching basic proficiency in pedagogy-related knowledge through the Bronze course, as well as the knowledge-test format in our instrument being limited in measuring growth. However, we found that teacher knowledge gain continued steadily through the Bronze, Silver, and Gold modules for the SoDP teachers, and that IASL teachers continued to gain more confidence in Silver after experiencing growth in the Bronze module.

Qualitative analysis revealed the nature and processes of teacher learning within and between each module. The findings suggest that, beyond the acquiring knowledge about each

pedagogy, teachers learned a lot to deepen and improve their practice through implementation, reflections, and student input. Our analysis also identified key levers of learning and key ingredients of the GoD course success:

1. We find that GoD courses helped teachers gain both knowledge about pedagogy, and knowledge about “self-as-a-teacher.” Teachers’ self-knowledge is an important part of teacher growth because it helps them become more aware of their students and their interactions with students, and helps them develop their identity as a civics teacher. The teachers who engaged in deep self-reflection and peer-teaching tended to choose to advance to the Silver and Gold modules.

2. By emphasizing teacher accountability for building skills and disposition through the assignments, readings, and especially the portfolios of practice, GoD courses broke the mold of typical professional development opportunities in civics which use a “knowledge banking model.” The active learning pedagogy in the course allowed teachers to form a simulated or context-specific idea of how that practice will unfold in reality, which likely helped them build confidence.

3. Carefully designed scaffolding of information, and concrete guidance and examples on how teachers can use each pedagogy, helped to boost teacher disposition. Many teachers indicated that they experienced a paradigm shift in how they conceive a specific pedagogy, such as which students are capable of deep engagement, and what it can do for student learning. Teachers invested tremendous effort and time in developing their plan of action (as part of the Bronze module project) by actively seeking and incorporating feedback from peers and giving inputs to others’ plans over multiple revisions.

4. Qualitative findings indicate that teacher dispositions and knowledge continued to grow through the Silver and Gold courses. However, the learning curves seemed to vary somewhat between courses. For IASL and CCID, the largest gain seems to be in the bronze course, with the Silver and Gold serving as a space for teachers to reflect, implement, and refine their practice with the support of peers and course facilitators. Meanwhile, for SoDP, dips in confidence happened in the Silver course when the teachers have to implement their planned simulation in the classroom and they gain more practical and procedural knowledge.

5. We find that the safe and supportive community of practice that GoD offered to teachers was an essential ingredient for success. Unlike many of the professional learning opportunities currently available in the civics PD market, GoD took lessons from in-person PD institutes and ongoing communities of practice to a virtual environment, which meant that social bonds and peer-teaching remained the mainstay of learning. This strategy was incredibly successful and vital, because the learning environment allowed teachers to remain authentic and often vulnerable about challenges and perceived failures, knowing that other teachers would not judge them—they would support them. As they discussed how they overcame barriers in all the courses, many teachers explicitly cited the support of peers.

Scaling the Initiative – Key Takeaways

In addition to the efficacy of the courses to promote teacher knowledge and disposition, we assessed how the GoD model was working with regards to scalability and sustainability. **We conclude that GoD is ripe for scaling** because of the train-the-trainer model it developed and successfully piloted, and the fact that teachers showed meaningful and significant growth in knowledge and dispositions over multiple courses and modules. We believe that, to maintain its efficacy, some conditions in the GoD should be carefully maintained as it scales. They include:

- **A safe space for learning, teacher autonomy and agency.** As stated earlier, a community of practice was an essential ingredient for success, as was teacher-led, peer-to-peer instruction. This is supported in part by a highly organized and clear course structure that lets teachers focus on learning rather than technology, a heavy use of reflection and peer-interaction activities paired with a culture of high expectations and accountability, and psychological safety that allows teachers to be vulnerable when they experience challenges.
- **Rigorous and developmentally scaffolded content delivery that allows mastery and adaptation.** The pedagogies that GoD modules cover are perceived to be “difficult” because they involve multiple steps, numerous interpersonal and social-emotional processes, and often political and policy-related issues. The module system which allowed teachers to engage with one idea at a time and master one concept at a time, broke down the initial barriers and helped them grow in competency and confidence without getting overly discouraged. Starting with the “why” and evidence base of each pedagogy, rather than jumping in to “how to” right away, also seemed to help teachers from diverse disciplines see the relevance of the pedagogy and facilitated the integration of civics into other disciplines as well as adaptation and variations of the original examples.
- **A well-curated and regularly updated resource bank.** The CAPES, which is a resource bank attached to each pedagogy, was highly regarded by teachers, and those who already completed the course often returned to the CAPES to find more resources as they implemented the pedagogy in their classrooms. Because teaching social studies is often embedded in current events, teachers seemed to appreciate being able to find “just the right” resources when they needed them. Continuing to maintain timely and high-quality resources will be important for future iterations of this initiative.
- **Growing a well-trained and engaged team of instructional coaches to facilitate the GoD courses is key to scaling.** The newly trained course facilitators who had finished all three CCID modules taught in teams in spring of 2021 with positive results (e.g., CCID Bronze teachers gained knowledge and disposition). Expanding the size and repertoire of the facilitator teams is key to scaling success. In the future iterations, considerations such as the composition of facilitators’ backgrounds and familiarity

with various states' standards and contexts should be taken into account so that facilitators are as effective as possible across diverse contexts and places.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The GoD initiative has successfully transferred key lessons from the partners' previous experience with in-person and online professional learning for civics educators by demonstrating a significant impact on teacher knowledge of the pedagogies and disposition to use them, as well as supporting the vast majority of teachers to successfully complete the Bronze module. Similar success achieved by the newly trained facilitators also indicates that this initiative is ripe for scaling. Given this success, we recommend the following for scaling and continuous improvement of the modules:

- 1. Scaled expansion outside of Illinois should be carefully designed and implemented.** While the GoD courses enrolled teachers across the country, a majority were based in Illinois. The state is seen as a national model for civics professional learning implementation by the K-12 civic education community because it has had more success and resources than most other states and because, uniquely, Illinois legally mandates teachers at various grade levels to use the pedagogies in the GoD courses. These unique circumstances mean there was already a culture of learning among civic educators in Illinois. When expanding beyond its current scope and size, carefully consider how to modify support and course design, if needed, based on the existing resources and assets in a given state or subgroups of teachers.
- 2. Maintain and strengthen the community of practice and psychological safety achieved by the pilot courses.** The social aspects of the GoD courses were unique and essential to its success. As the cadre of course facilitators with varied levels of comfort with online teaching and adult learning expand, consider incorporating a synchronous session in the Bronze module so that social bonds can be formed early on in the course. These synchronous sessions are likely to boost social cohesion within a GoD cohort, whether it meets virtually, online, or in a hybrid mode.
- 3. Consider creating a module for new course facilitators so that expectations are clear and foundational knowledge of adult-learning theory is in place.** The course facilitators are well-trained in the specific pedagogy but will have varied levels of expertise with adult learning theory and practice. We believe identifying one or more adult learning frameworks that are evidence-based and consistent with the strategies of the GoD course designers, and explaining key principles behind the instructional approach in advance, may help facilitators feel more grounded in their practice.

4. **Keep the course facilitator onboarding sequence which starts with team-teaching and moves to increasing amounts of autonomy.** Because the team-teaching model was so successful and well-liked by the facilitators, we recommend maintaining this apprenticeship-like model for facilitators and eventually setting some benchmarks for determining when teachers are ready to be fully independent. Another option would be to keep a structure of pair- or team-teaching, in part because facilitators seemed to truly enjoy an opportunity to collaborate with other teachers who are just as passionate about civic education.
5. **As the initiative scales up further, explore incorporating a smart technological solution designed to make program operation more efficient.** Collecting data and improving practice based on data has been part of the Gold badge module, and this could be a practice that can be used by course facilitators so that they can adjust courses and provide more or less support based on the data from each cohort of teachers. A more streamlined participant and data collection management system would reduce the administrative burden on staff members and keep it manageable even after the GoD initiative scales further.
6. **Develop a business model that prioritizes teacher access while balancing equity and financial sustainability.** While the virtual format and train-the-trainer model of scaling is ripe with opportunities to scale, serving more teachers will come with an increase in the operational costs. Various financial revenue options such as grants, and partnerships with unions, professional associations, and local education agencies should continue or be strengthened—especially as the GoD initiative scales to other states. These strategies can help the initiative offer all teachers access to these high-impact professional learning opportunities without paying out of pocket.

Section 1 - Introduction

This report describes the findings from the Guardians of Democracy (GoD) pilot initiative from Fall of 2019 through Spring of 2021. The GoD was designed as an effort to expand access to high-quality professional learning about civic education pedagogy beyond the largely in-person training in civics pedagogy which had taken place since the summer of 2016. As the initial implementation period for Illinois' high school civics law was concluding, the Illinois Civics Team, the Lou Frey Institute at the University of Central Florida, and CIRCLE came together with a plan to develop an entirely virtual program focused on the three pedagogies named in the Illinois civics law. Expanding access was also necessary due to a new middle-school civics mandate in Illinois signed into law in 2019, which meant another, even larger group of teachers needed to learn to use these pedagogies.

The Lou Frey Institute brought years of experience in both in-person and virtual training for civics teachers, as Florida has had a high-stake, end-of-course exam in middle-grade civics since 2012. Among all stakeholders in this work there was also a shared commitment, to enable educators across disciplines and grades to provide high-quality civic learning. The initiative's goal is to bring high-quality civics pedagogy training to educators across the United States in a way that shifts participating teachers' practices and dispositions, so that students are better prepared for civic life.

The major objectives of this pilot evaluation were to assess: 1) whether it is possible to run an entirely virtual program and engage educators; 2) whether the enrolled teachers acquire knowledge of the pedagogy they learn about; 3) whether teacher disposition to implement the specific pedagogy and possibly high-quality civics more generally can increase as a result of course completion; and 4) whether and how this initiative could scale in a sustainable manner in the future.

This report relies on many data sources from 196 educators¹ in three courses: Current and Controversial Issue Discussion (CCID), Simulations of Democratic Processes (SoDP), and Information Action through Service-Learning (IASL). The report includes key points from a previous interim report which was based on the CCID pilot cohorts, as well as new analyses of data collected in the fall and spring of 2020 and 2021. The data were collected as end-of-unit surveys and quizzes, in-module activities such as discussion boards and reflections, and separate pre-post surveys that were designed to address changes in knowledge and disposition over time.

¹ There are teachers who took more than one course in this sample. For the quantitative analysis in this report, we treated each course separately, and did not treat the teachers who had taken another course differently. However, we include analysis of the teachers who take multiple modules (Bronze, Silver, and Gold) to give a sense of how the teachers who return for more modules (and courses) show different qualities than those who do not.

Section 2 - Guardians of Democracy Microcredential Courses: Developing Teachers' Confidence and Expertise to use Best Practice Pedagogies

The Guardians of Democracy courses successfully trained hundreds of educators to date. A vast majority of teachers who start each course were able to successfully complete it despite a high workload (equivalent to 15 continuing education hours). As seen in Table 1, at least 85% of the teachers who started a Bronze module completed it (all assignments submitted) and the Silver completion rates were higher (93% - 100%), followed by similarly high completion rates for the Gold course. As we describe later in the qualitative analysis section, teachers often experienced moments of disengagement and inactivity throughout their enrollment but in almost all cases, they came back to finish the course.

Table 1: Completion Rates in Each of the Pilot Modules

Course	Bronze (completed/started)	Silver (completed/started)	Gold (completed/started)
CCID	35/40	22/22	16/20 (1 still in progress)
SODP	22/26	11/12	9/9
IASL	29/31	25/27	17/19

The rest of this section details how each of the three GoD courses increased teachers' content knowledge, developed teachers' skills and competency for effective implementation, and boosted their efficacy and confidence to use each strategy in their unique context. The next section will delve deeper into how each course helped teachers achieve that and some of the challenges or improvements they shared.

How did the Guardians of Democracy courses develop teachers' knowledge and content expertise?

The quantitative analysis shows that, across the board, **teachers enrolled in the GoD Bronze courses made significant gains in knowledge about *each* pedagogy, and most achieved a high level of pedagogy-specific knowledge.** As we describe below, for the Bronze course, the **quantitative gains were most consistent in both knowledge and disposition**, though qualitative findings suggest that growth may be more nuanced and personalized for Silver and Gold badge participants. Below, we describe specific figures for each course/cohort. To analyze the change between pre- and post-tests, we used a within-subject t-test and a Bayesian repeated measures ANOVA in order to estimate the extent to which each

participant grew in knowledge and disposition regardless of where they started at the beginning of the module. The results show that both novice and experienced teachers likely gained new knowledge.

Cohort-by-Cohort Findings

CCID Bronze Course

- **CCID Spring 2021:** This was the first cohort taught by the trained facilitators who had completed the CCID Bronze, Silver, and Gold modules. We have complete data from 27 educators enrolled in this course. The results show that the average “knowledge score” went from 15.0 to 16.7 between the pre- and post-test, which is statistically significant ($t = 2.69$, $df=26$, $p = .01$). Section 3 of this report looks at this in detail, including how teachers experienced every module of the course. It also provides a snapshot of the pilot CCID course that was the first to be offered and evaluated in 2019.

SoDP Bronze Course

- **SODP Fall 2020:** We have complete data from 22 educators for this cohort. The results show that the average “knowledge score” about simulations went from 16.1 to 17.7 between the pre- and post-test, which is statistically significant ($t = 2.12$, $df=21$, $p < .05$). We use the within-subject t-test and a Bayesian repeated measures ANOVA to test for the extent to which each participant grows, regardless of where they start. The results show that even more advanced and experienced teachers likely gained new knowledge.
- **SODP Spring 2021:** We have data from 20 educators. In the spring cohort, the knowledge about simulations, on average, went from 13.2 at pre-test (lower than the Fall cohort) and increased to 17.2, a difference which was statistically significant ($t = 6.20$, $df=19$, $p < .001$).
- The fall cohort was taught by the course designers while the spring cohort was facilitated by three trained teachers. Both cohorts achieved the same level of competency by the end of the course, though the spring cohort started out with a lower knowledge score than the fall cohort. There was no difference in teacher growth.

IASL Bronze Course

- **IASL Fall 2020:** In this group the pretest mean of 25.9 increased to a post-test knowledge score mean of 30.0 (highest score was 36), which was again statistically significant ($t = 5.30$, $df=28$, $p < .001$).

- **IASL Spring 2021:** A smaller group with a lower survey participation rate (complete data were obtained from 12 out of 20 possible participants), the IASL Spring 2021 cohort still showed a significant gain as a group, with a pre-test mean of 25.1 increasing to a mean post-test knowledge score of 30.4 (highest score was 36), which was again statistically significant ($t = 2.83$, $df=11$, $p < .05$).²
- Due to a lower survey participation rate in Spring, it is difficult to assess whether the Spring cohort (taught by the facilitators) achieved the same level of impact as the original facilitators or not. Based on the data that we do have from survey participants, however, findings suggest that both cohorts reached the same level of competency in service- learning knowledge and teachers and both cohorts gained knowledge through the course.

Table 2: Cohort by Cohort Knowledge Score Change between Pre and Post Bronze Module

Cohort	Sample size	Pre-test mean	Post-test mean	Significant?	Notes
CCID Spring 2021	27	15.0	16.7	Yes	Facilitated by trained coaches
SoDP Fall 2020	22	16.1	17.7	Yes	Taught by course designer
SoDP Spring 2021	20	13.2	17.2	Yes	Taught by trained facilitators. Though the cohort started at a lower level of knowledge, they finished strong
IASL Fall 2020	29	25.9	30.0	Yes	Taught by the course designer. This cohort came in with an expectation to continue at least through the Silver Module
IASL Spring 2021	12	25.1	30.4	Yes	Taught by trained facilitators. Lowest survey participation rate but the growth was similar to the Fall Cohort.

Cross-cohort Pre-Post Knowledge Gain

Because the sample size per course cohort is small (ranging from 12 to 29), our cohort-by-cohort analysis is underpowered in statistical terms, meaning that we likely underestimate the

² It should be noted that the fall IASL cohort was supported via an AmeriCorps grant to take the Bronze, Silver and Gold course in service-learning. Thus, this first group may have come in already with higher levels of expectation and commitment than any other cohort and courses. Though the average score in both cohorts were about 4-5 points, it seems that the fall cohort's gain was more consistent than the spring cohort. Due to small sample sizes, however, we are not able to make an accurate assessment as to whether this background factor mattered very much.

size of the impact. It is, however, **remarkable that each of these cohorts shows statistically significant knowledge gain.**

- Combining data points from five cohorts, we have a sample of 110 educators with complete data to assess **average growth between pre- and post-course**. We standardized the scaling for the knowledge score by setting the highest score in each course as 100% and calculating every participant's knowledge score as a percentage. Using this scale, we found that, **on average, educators gained 11 percentage points in their knowledge score** ($t = 8.02$, $df=109$ $p < .001$). As expected with a larger sample size, the effect is strongest with this combined data.
 - Follow-up analysis shows that the percentage gain is strongest, across cohorts, among teachers who started with a low knowledge level. For instance, the lowest-scoring group at pre-test (lowest third) gained an average of 26 percentage points in the knowledge score, compared to 10 points in the middle group and just 1 point for the highest-scoring group. This does not necessarily mean that advanced teachers did not gain any knowledge in the Bronze course, but they may have hit the upper limit of what our instrument was able to measure (multiple-choice, fact-based questions that are aligned with the course). As the qualitative analysis below shows, there are notable differences between teachers who show deeper levels of engagement and reflection from early on, and they often move on to take the Silver and Gold modules. Importantly, however, most teachers reach a high level of competency by the time they complete the Bronze course.
 - Generally speaking, the teachers made mistakes by endorsing "incorrect" answers on the knowledge items, meaning that they were not able to distinguish between, for instance, characteristics of service learning that were essential from those that were more about personal style or choice.
 - Of the 130 teachers who took the pre-test survey, 20 did not complete the post-test survey. On average, the teachers who did not take the post-survey had a significantly lower pre-test knowledge score (58%) than those who finished the post survey (67%).

The Silver and Gold level courses for each pedagogy are about practical application and troubleshooting of the foundational concepts and strategies learned in the Bronze course. These levels give teachers more autonomy and a lot of room to reflect on what will work in their classrooms. Section 3 goes over a deeper analysis of these courses, but qualitative analysis showed that there was a steeper learning curve for teachers in IASL and CCID courses at the Bronze level and for SoDP at the Silver level. **Qualitatively, it also shows that teachers have the highest confidence after the Bronze and Gold courses, and quantitative data suggests that teachers achieved a high degree of disposition at the Silver level so it**

did not significantly increase in the Gold level course. Below we describe specific figures for each course:

- Analysis of **IASL course survey data** shows there was no significant growth between Bronze-post and Silver-post, meaning that participants did not continue to grow in their levels of knowledge about IASL. On the other hand, there was a small but significant growth in their confidence in distinguishing key features of high quality IASL ($t = 2.13$, $p < .05$) from Bronze-post to Silver-post. There was not a significant difference between the Silver and Gold recipients in our measure of disposition for the IASL survey, largely because the participants' levels of disposition/confidence with IASL was already very high at the conclusion of the Silver course.
- Quantitative analysis for the **SODP course** was restricted, as the sample size was very small for silver and gold ($n = 8$) and statistical power was too limited. However, we did find that the **SODP knowledge score** for those who finished the Bronze, Silver, and Gold courses grew from 17.4, 18.7, 19.0 and 21.8 (from the pre-test before the Bronze score to the post-test after the Gold course), **suggesting continuous growth in knowledge**. When measuring growth at each time point (pre-post, post-Silver, Silver-Gold) for all available participants ($N = 21$, 10 and 8 respectively), we found that a **significant growth in knowledge was achieved between pre-and post-tests and between the Silver and Gold levels**. However, we found that disposition levels did not grow because they started at a very high level to begin with.

How did the Guardians of Democracy courses develop teachers' self-awareness and skills?

As we saw this in our earlier analysis of the CCID pilot—and is now corroborated by several iterations of this course as well as the two different courses of IASL and SoDP—the courses enhanced teachers' knowledge of teaching practice (i.e., the skills, techniques, and disposition to teach using the best practice pedagogies) and awareness of 'self-as-a-teacher',³ which includes awareness of student-teacher interactions and learning. Qualitative analysis shows that teachers who had some level of knowledge and awareness—particularly of the learners/students and their school context—coming into the courses still significantly benefited from them and were more likely to move up to the Silver and Gold levels. Some elements of the courses that helped develop teachers' and skills are discussed below:

- The richness and diversity of experience of peer teachers is intriguing and motivating to other teachers in the course; the discussion boards of all three courses show how deeply teachers value one another's' perspectives even if they disagree with them. In the CCID 2019 pilot, we saw that it also "ropes in" teachers who are either hesitant or

³ Vanessa Rodriguez and Michele Fitzpatrick (2014). "The Teaching Brain: An Evolutionary Trait at the Heart of Education." The New Press, New York.

non-engaged (particularly as the course picks up speed and intensity) when something another teacher says resonates or helps illustrate the course content in their teaching experience. Teachers who are on the verge of losing motivation or dropping out due to the time commitment do get drawn in by the relevance of the content to their teaching, especially the bite-sized activities that connect the dots, and from learning and “seeing” their peers talk about it practically. In the IASL course, teachers appreciated the different contexts other teachers came from and how they thought about weaving that context into their curricular goals, particularly if there was pushback from parents and administrators. In SoDP, many teachers shared that peer teachers’ examples and templates of facilitating simulations, particularly online simulations, were very helpful.

- The courses are designed to develop a teacher’s concrete pedagogical skills, but particularly their knowledge of teaching high-quality civics effectively. To the extent that teachers already came in with such knowledge at some level (such as knowing why CCID or IASL are useful pedagogies, or having an already established connection/trust with students), this course helped enhance those abilities and motivate teachers to go to the next badge level. From the analysis above, we see that many teachers experience a dispositional shift in addition to increased knowledge and confidence. Teachers who ‘grew’ a lot in the Bronze level but did not immediately move to the next level because they are still taking some time to absorb what they have learned may be likely to do so later when they feel more comfortable at that level.
- Most online and traditional professional development courses are still set up on the banking model: teachers are provided a set of frameworks and theoretical underpinnings of pedagogies without any support for implementation or any peer-to-peer discussion and reflection. The GoD courses are designed by expert teachers who understand that, even more than conceptual and theoretical evidence, teachers need concrete resources, examples, and support on effective and manageable application. Through the assignments, readings, and especially through the portfolios of practice, there is emphasis on high accountability for building skills and disposition. This gives teachers a valuable simulated or context-specific idea of how actual practice will go. Teachers witness the learning from a student perspective while identifying areas of strength and improvement as a teacher.
- The course design and incremental badge levels recognize that teachers need scaffolded support to comprehend the complexity of the pedagogy, develop foundational knowledge, and build some meta-cognition about their own teaching practice to design and implement these instructional strategies. The design of the modules that worked in tandem with the activities in the portfolios of practice, and the quizzes and surveys in Canvas, not only laid out and scaffolded the skills and knowledge teachers needed to start to master a particular pedagogy. They also wove

in self-reflection and self-assessment (such as 3-2-1 reflections, teacher reflection rubrics, etc.).

How did the Guardians of Democracy courses develop teachers' disposition, confidence, and efficacy for implementation?

Quantitative Analysis

Disposition was measured using a common set of items in the SODP and CCID courses, while IASL used another set of items measuring pedagogy-specific confidence and comfort. We created a scale for disposition in each module using relevant items, but it should be noted that "disposition" in SODP and CCID refers to disposition about implementing various evidence-based strategies and teaching about elections. On the other hand, in IASL, we only measured disposition toward being able to distinguish features of service learning, which we call "IASL efficacy." Both types of scales are reliable measures, but this difference should be noted. Item-by-item distribution of disposition-related questions is presented in the Appendix.

Findings from these scales varied from course to course:

- For the CCID Spring 2021 cohort, teacher disposition grew by 0.58 points (out of a 1-5 scale, mean of 3.7 to 4.2) which was a significant gain ($t = 4.8$, $p = .001$).
- On the same scale, however, neither of the SODP cohorts showed a significant increase in this generalized score, with a growth of 0.2 and 0.1 points, in the fall and spring, respectively. The result was still non-significant when we combined the spring and fall data. The SODP participants started out with a very high average disposition score at pre-test (4.3 for both cohorts), which likely led to a lack of significant growth.
- The IASL participants showed a significant gain in the IASL efficacy scale, which, again, was limited to confidence in using and identifying key features of service learning. In the fall, the participants' efficacy rating grew by 0.6 points (3.7 to 4.3, $t = 4.04$, $df = 28$, $p < .001$) and the spring cohort gained 0.7 points (3.6 to 4.4, $t = 5.35$, $df = 11$, $p < .001$) on a scale of 1-5.
- The findings did not differ between the cohorts (Fall pilot vs. Spring), even though all of the Spring cohorts examined in this study were taught by a team of newly trained facilitators. In other words, the trained facilitators successfully taught the course with the same impact.

Qualitative Analysis

Triangulated evidence from portfolios, plans of action, self- and peer-led reflections, and discussion boards shows that teacher confidence increased alongside increases in knowledge

and disposition for each course. The step-by-step guides with academic expert videos and examples of implementation gave teachers a nuanced view of the complexity of each pedagogy, but also an “I can do this” level of confidence. Teacher efficacy on undertaking new or revised ways of implementation also seemed to be tied to the depth of their dispositional shift. Qualitative analysis indicates that some teachers who experienced a profound shift in understanding and disposition had a higher degree of efficacy in learning to implement a pedagogy, regardless of whether they were a relatively new or a more experienced educator. This is particularly evident in their reflection rubrics, the amount of effort in developing their action plans, and how much they engaged with peer teachers on discussions/feedback.

Qualitative findings further indicate that teacher confidence and efficacy does increase with each badge level—but it has dips and high points. At the Bronze level, particularly for IASL and CCID, the “aha moments” generally tended to happen in Module 1 and Module 4 and dips in engagement and confidence happened in module 3. The Bronze level is also steep for teachers who don’t come in with a lot of training and, we suspect, with a lot of autonomy to develop their knowledge and teaching practice. For instance, thinking about “self-as-a-teacher” and how lived experiences, pedagogy, and their students connect is a sense that can only be developed if teachers have a certain level of autonomy. If they have to follow pacing guides and aim to prepare students narrowly for a test, they may not develop knowledge of their teaching practice and pedagogical skills or perceive students as co-creators of their own learning.

As the quantitative analysis above shows, the SoDP cohort did present somewhat differently. Teachers did not seem to have a drastic dispositional shift or understanding, but more of a gradual realization that simulations are much more than they had originally thought. SoDP teachers experienced more dips in confidence in the implementation phases, especially at the Silver level.⁴

Teachers who were most open to learning and unlearning, as well as being vulnerable (but prepared) to try pedagogies out with a different format or technique in the classroom, “grew” the most and may retain the change in teaching practice for longer.

Implications

The GoD Bronze course’s primary objective is to develop educator disposition, or a sense of confidence and competency about a specific pedagogy, in preparation for its actual

⁴ The initial rise in efficacy (e.g., in Module 1), followed by a decline while learners steadily deepen their knowledge about a specific subject matter is a well-known phenomenon called Dunning-Kruger effect, which posits that individuals who are relatively unfamiliar with a subject matter tend to overestimate their knowledge and capacity, which manifests as a high level of confidence paired with low level of knowledge. As the learners gain more knowledge, their confidence often declines significantly because they feel overwhelmed now that they understand how complex the said subject is. After this period, learners often regain efficacy as their knowledge deepens. (see <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/dunning-kruger-effect>). In our case, we seem to be observing a similar pattern, albeit at different times in different modules, among teachers.

implementation. Some will work on implementation through the Silver module, and others will do so on their own. The knowledge score findings indicate that clear knowledge gain is achieved in all three courses, and knowledge about pedagogy certainly adds to a sense of competency. We see that the dispositional growth is apparent in both CCID and IASL, though the questions were framed slightly differently. On the other hand, SODP educators started out with high confidence and did not gain a notable amount of confidence after the course, and this was true for both the fall and spring cohorts.

- The reason for this difference may be related to how “difficult” each pedagogy is perceived to be. We found in the previous study that educators thought of IASL and CCID as sometimes “very challenging to implement” or “too political,” meaning that there were expecting IASL and CCID to be challenging (thus lower disposition). On the other hand, teachers may have expected SODP to be relatively simple and that implementing it well is a matter of gaining concrete know-how and resources like templates.
- Knowledge gain was achieved in all three courses. It may be useful, then, to include some hands-on practice of SODP, perhaps with peers, in the Bronze SoDP course.

Section 3 - Spotlight on Guardians of Democracy Courses

This section takes a deep dive into each of the GoD courses and a closer look at each badge level. It also details what teachers suggested could be added or improved to enhance their learning and areas they were still challenged in.

Guardians of Democracy Course: Current and Controversial Issue Discussion (CCID)

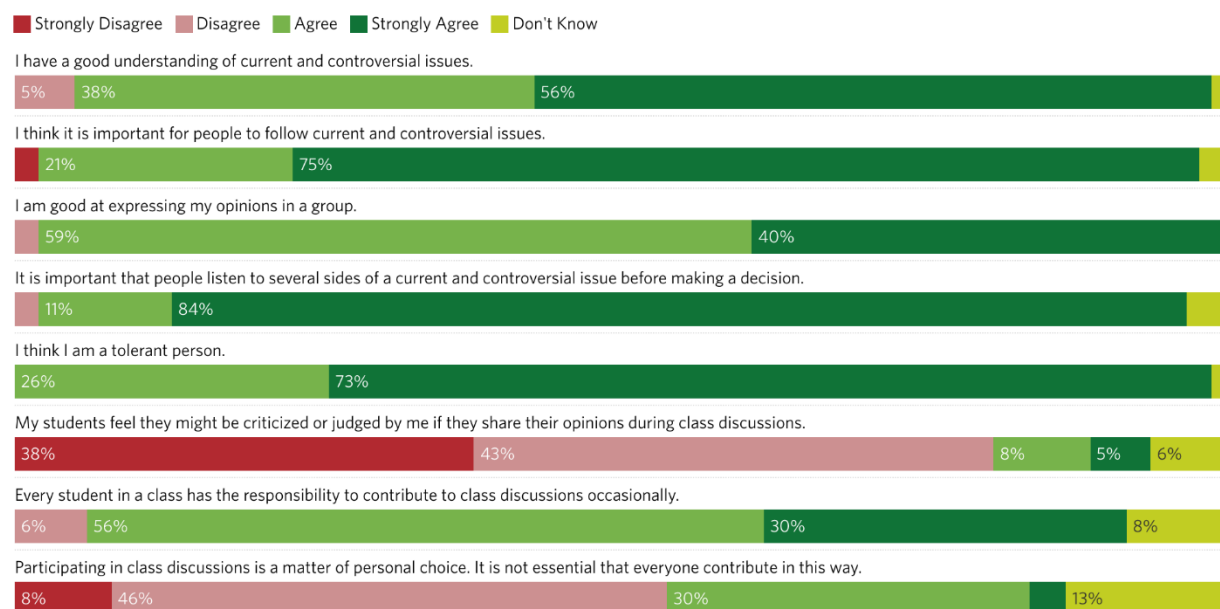
The CCID course was the first course that was designed and piloted in 2019. CIRCLE did an in-depth evaluation of the pilot version, particularly the Bronze level course. Thirty-five teachers and civic education professionals completed that first CCID pilot. Teachers who took that pilot course and gained additional expertise by eventually completing the Gold level course facilitated more recent iterations of the course in 2021. In 2020, four additional cohorts completed the Bronze course in January and June, and currently (2021) there are two additional cohorts. Of the initial 35 participants, 22 teachers completed the Silver level and at least 16 have the Gold level. CCID was also the first course in which trained facilitators co-taught with the course designer. Seven of them (6 from Illinois and 1 from Florida) co-facilitated at least one Bronze CCID cohort in teams starting in the summer of 2020, with more members doing so by May of 2021.

CCID 2019 Pilot Implementation and Evaluation

For the 2019 pilot evaluation, we assessed the depth of engagement and learning in the course and what facilitated that learning. This was a formative evaluation of invite-only participants from Illinois and Florida. While the quantitative data from this pilot cohort has been incorporated into [the cross-cohort analysis of knowledge growth](#), we are not reporting the cohort specific quantitative findings from the initial pilot because that sample was unique and not conducive to generalizing our findings. We assessed how viable it was for participants to take an entirely virtual, asynchronous, but rigorous course—and aimed to relay possible areas for growth based on teacher inputs. In particular, we looked at (i) the Bronze badge portfolios and engagement within the course to make comparisons between those who only did Bronze (or less) and those who went on to the Gold badge, and (ii) the Bronze, Silver, and Gold course engagement and portfolios of the teachers that finished and received Gold badge (or Silver in case of Florida-based teachers).

The Discussion Inventory questions from Dr. Diana Hess’s research are unique to the CCID course. They’re placed purposefully in Module 1 to give the course instructors a snapshot of the perspectives and experiences that teachers “bring to the table” with respect to CCID. It also modeled for the teacher participants how to use data on setting the climate of the class and discussions early on in their course. It showed teachers that instruments like this one can help them understand their classroom and students better and bring their “lived experiences” into the discussion. Figure 1 shows a snapshot of select items from the Discussion Inventory for the CCID Pilot Fall 2019 (Bronze) Cohort and Figure 2 shows the snapshot of the same items from the recent CCID May 2021 (Bronze) Cohort. In both you can see a spectrum of teacher beliefs and perceptions. For instance, a majority of teachers across both cohorts believe they have a good understanding of current and controversial issues, but 56% of the pilot 2019 cohort “strongly agreed” compared to 32% in the 2021 cohort. Teachers in both cohorts were also split on whether it is essential for every student to participate in discussions or if it’s a matter of personal choice: 46% disagreed and 30% agreed in the 2019 cohort; similarly, 46% disagreed and 32% agreed in the 2021 cohort. This gives instructors an idea of how most teachers perceive CCID coming into the course and how they can be supported in their learning.

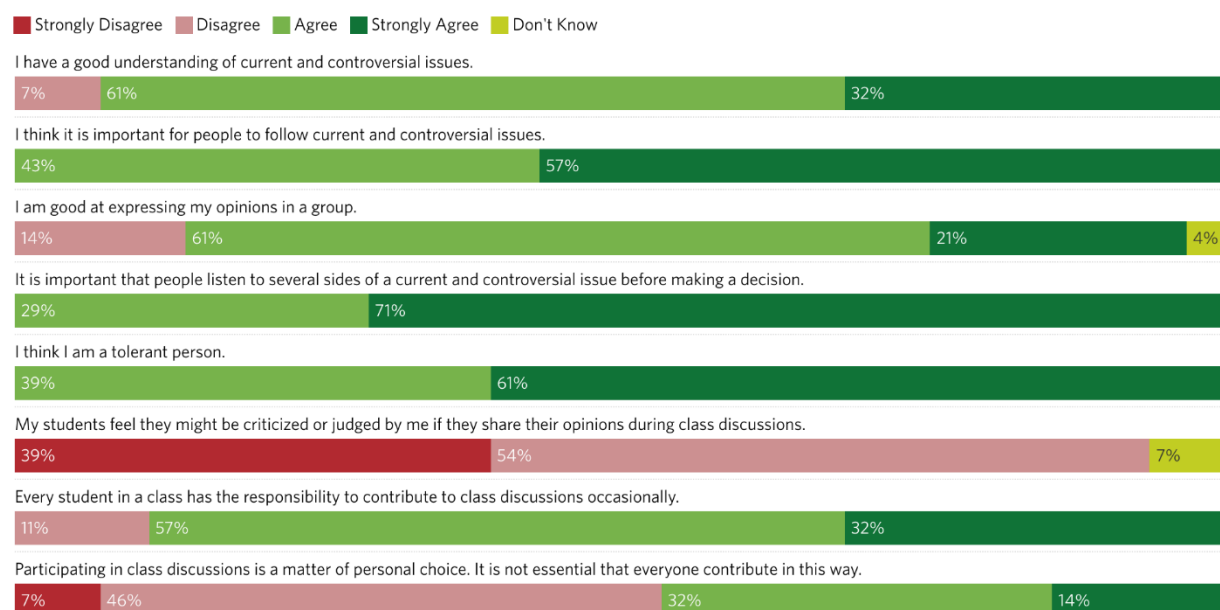
Figure 1: CCID Fall 2019 Cohort – Discussion Inventory Snapshot



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Source: CIRCLE evaluation of Guardians of Democracy microcredential courses

Figure 2: CCID Spring 2021 Cohort – Discussion Inventory Snapshot



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Source: CIRCLE evaluation of Guardians of Democracy microcredential courses

Lastly, our analysis also showed that teachers who progressed to the Silver and Gold levels were already more engaged and reflective on their teaching practice in addition to realizing the nuanced complexity of the pedagogy and its implementation. However, all educators who

persisted through the Bronze level and completed it successfully—albeit despite some inconsistency in engagement and attention which was to be expected, especially, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic—were able to gain knowledge, skills and dispositions reflected in their strong plan of action at the conclusion of the course. Consequently, this supports the hypothesis that having a cohort of diverse teachers (at the start of the course/pre-training level) with mixed competency, dispositions, and teaching experience is mutually beneficial to all teachers through the peer-teaching and discussion components of the course.

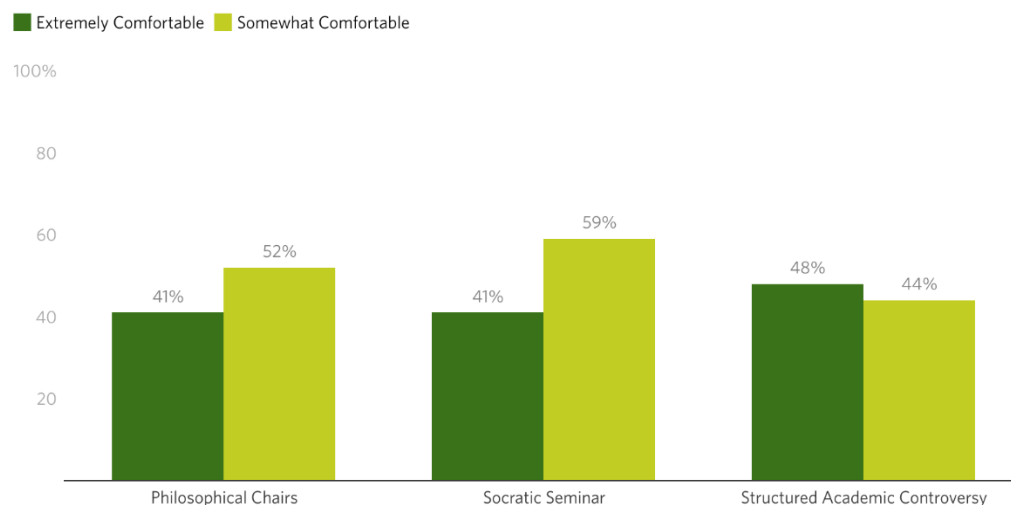
CCID Bronze Spring 2021 Cohort

The last iteration of the course during our study period ran in Spring 2021 and was led by the newly trained course facilitators. In contrast to the pilot course, this course was open to a wide range of teachers and shows the success of the ‘train-the-trainer’ model of scaling the courses by inducting a larger cadre of expert teachers that have taken the course themselves. The Spring 2021 cohort teachers showed a significant gain in CCID knowledge and general disposition toward using evidence-based civics instruction strategies (see Section II). We are providing some module-by-module feedback and learning from teachers so course designers can see how the changes they made were perceived and where teachers still asked for some improvement.

After completing **Module 1**, all teachers said they had an understanding of the course expectations and were “excited to keep learning” and “really loving this course so far!” Teachers said the “syllabus was incredibly clear and easy to follow” and “loved the ‘Portfolio of Practice’ idea”. After several iterations since the pilot discussed above, this course is now more streamlined to provide clarity of expectations, instructions, and deliverables. By **Module 2**, 86% of the teachers said that their knowledge about current and controversial issue discussion strategies increased after watching the videos from academic experts and readings (14% said it stayed the same). However, since it’s still early in the course, 71% teachers still felt only “somewhat comfortable” on implementing CCID strategies, while 14% felt “extremely comfortable”. Almost all teachers found the strategy guides and the video walkthrough of each discussion strategy to be very useful. As Figure 3 shows, about 2 in 5 teachers (or more) felt “extremely comfortable” implementing each of the three strategies taught at this point, but the majority of the teachers were not yet too comfortable employing them, particularly Socratic Seminar and Philosophical Chairs. This illustrates how, at this point, teacher knowledge has definitely increased but there is a dip in self-confidence because they haven’t tried implementing it yet. One teacher said the “comfort level is just based on doing it and having some more experience in the field using the strategies.” Another teacher echoed that sentiment in responding to what it would take to further increased confidence:

“Honestly? Just some practice in a classroom. You’ve provided enough for me to feel comfortable to try all three strategies.”

Figure 3: CCID Module 2 – How comfortable are you with implementing:



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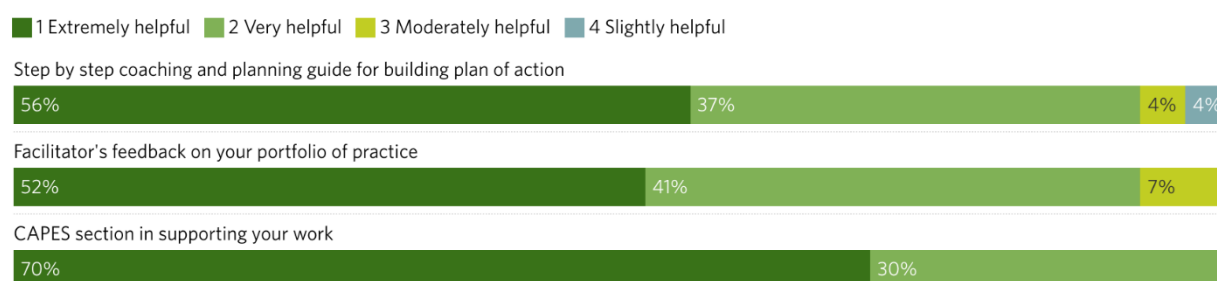
Source: CIRCLE evaluation of Guardians of Democracy microcredential courses

By **Module 4**, teachers are still somewhat hesitant about their confidence in implementing the three strategies: more than two-thirds (70%) said they’re “somewhat comfortable” implementing them, but a quarter (26%) teachers were “extremely comfortable”. This may indicate that, while teachers grow in knowledge and experience a ‘dispositional shift’ (as discussed in Section 2) on how and why to implement these strategies, the confidence and efficacy to do so comes from actual implementation in the class. The psychological research on a phenomenon called the Dunning-Kruger effect⁵ indicates that content-specific knowledge and confidence do not grow at the same time. In fact, novice learners often overestimate their own proficiency in a subject matter which also boosts their confidence, only to lose it when they learn about the subject matter and have a more accurate assessment of their proficiency level. Research about multiple domains of knowledge development indicates that this phenomenon occurs even among highly intelligent individuals. The apparent pause and potential decline in teachers’ confidence to use the three CCID strategies in Module 4 may be a reflection of this phenomenon. Teachers understand, by Module 4, CCID is far more than starting a discussion about an interesting current topic—they must make multiple decisions about the topic, strategy, and framing, all while conveying rigorous content and concepts and maintaining a supportive learning community in which all students are heard.

⁵ Schlösser, T., Dunning, D., Johnson, K.L. & Kruger, J. (2013). How unaware are the unskilled? Empirical tests of the “signal extraction” counter explanation for the Dunning-Kruger effect in self-evaluation of performance. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 39, 85-100. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/dunning-kruger-effect>

Teachers did find the content of this module really valuable in their practice. One shared: “Very helpful—loved the fact that I could identify my area of weakness/concern and choose my path based upon that instead of having a one-size-fits-all approach.” Almost all (92%) of the teachers found the “Addressing Challenges videos” very helpful, and 85% of teachers said they found the strategies in Module 4 applicable to use with their students. Another teacher said: “Glad we got to cover the topic of disclosure.” However, teacher confidence in navigating the issue of teacher disclosure with respect to classroom discussions was still lower after reading and completing the deliberation discussion: 63% teachers were “somewhat confident” while 33% teachers felt “really confident.”

Figure 4: CCID Module 5 – How helpful did you find:



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Source: CIRCLE evaluation of Guardians of Democracy microcredential courses

Just as the teachers in the initial pilot did, the Spring 2021 cohort teachers found the (newer) course facilitators’ feedback on their portfolios really useful. This course also showed that the CAPES section, as well as all the coaching and planning guides, are valuable resources for teachers. As one teacher shared at the end of Module 5: “I think the application of these ideas into the actual classroom practice would be the only next step missing. At the same time, I know that there are Silver and Gold tiers that focus on that. For that reason, this course did a great job of presenting several high-quality strategies and providing support to consider how it might be integrated into a learning segment in the future.” Another teacher related that the feedback from instructors and discussions with peers were very helpful: “I appreciated all the opportunities for feedback. The discussion boards were quite helpful.”

CCID Course Challenges and Areas for Improvement Identified by Teachers

- A number of teachers requested strategies and guidance on how to approach and navigate pushback from parents, community members, and even administrators in the district on teaching through CCID:
 - “I think tips on handling admin and parent complaints when controversy is too much for them to handle would be useful for teachers.”

- “Sample engagements with parents/community members when things get difficult or there is pushback about topics, etc.”
- Some teachers also wanted resources and strategies for assessment:
 - “Overall I thought it was great. I know many teachers have asked me, “how do I assess?” I think a module on assessment might actually be helpful. Something besides just the resource page.”
- While giving feedback to their action plans in the initial pilot course, Mary Ellen Daneels realized some teachers were confused about the distinction between open and closed topics. She added a lesson and concrete examples of open and closed issues to provide more guidance on what topics are appropriate and “open” to CCID strategies. It has helped teachers through designing and planning, but teachers still expressed a need for more guidance on this distinction. They wanted:
 - “Specific framework examples to determine the validity of a controversial issue for students to debate.”
 - “A discussion around helping people to determine which issues are open or closed for debate/deliberation. Is there a difference between discussing an issue and taking sides on an issue? Closed topics should be discussed, but I'm not sure that framing closed topics as having two sides makes sense?”
- Teachers also felt that the resources in the CAPES section were incredibly helpful but that they need more support in intentionally weaving them through the course:
 - “I think the CAPES tools should be utilized more throughout the course. One example would be to require using CAPES in each of the discussion assignments. I felt like CAPES was introduced and then used at the end in my plan but not throughout the course.”
- Some teachers did express the desire to have some real-time discussions with peers and instructors. Other teachers wanted to have some more room to self-pace the course:
 - “A synchronous discussion with peers would be great. The discussion posts are okay but we could take it to the next level.”
 - “I would love to be able to complete this course at our own pace. We never know when we'll have free time so working ahead or whenever we get the chance would be helpful.”
- Some instructions were still unclear to teachers, but they did receive support from instructors on how to navigate it:
 - “The initial discussion board posting is a bit confusing. I had to ask Tracy how to access the discussion board and she described her confusion when she initially accessed the discussion board and it was exactly like mine.”
 - “At first I was unclear if the ‘looks like/sounds like’ activity was about our classroom this year or an ideal classroom. I had to go back between the Canvas and the portfolio a few times to clarify after I started filling it out. But it could have been me not being attentive enough!”

- A number of teachers said they needed more examples of teachers facilitating CCID in different settings:
 - “I need to see examples of teachers facilitating controversial dialogues with students.”
 - “It would be helpful to see this in the context of a science classroom but really I just need to try this to find out how best to do it”
- Some additional feedback on course items and organization included:
 - “I felt like some of the questions on the discussion inventory did not have any answer options that represented my perspective. In the future, I think it could be beneficial to have an ‘other’”
 - “I wish the Discussion Board was its own tab along the left side of the course site. Would make it a LOT easier to access as opposed to going into the Module and scrolling to that part of my assignments.”

Guardians of Democracy Course: Informed Action through Service Learning (IASL)

The IASL pedagogy is one that we know many teachers can be hesitant about. In CIRCLE’s previous research about Illinois’s large-scale teacher professional learning (Hayat & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2020), we saw that teachers were very apprehensive about approaching this pedagogy or felt that it required a massive project at the end of the semester for which they may not have the time or resources. Teachers in the IASL Bronze courses started with similar perceptions and, as their pedagogy-specific knowledge and self-awareness increased, they also experienced the dispositional shift and confidence growth to feel competent about the pedagogy. As one instructional coach shared: “it was a powerful aha for me.”

Many teachers through the IASL course realized that they had a mental vision of a grand project at the end of the semester/year but came to understand that they could weave it throughout the semester and that it could be done with limited resources and still allow students to make informed choices. As one teacher who is relatively new (<5 years’ experience), taught in a rural district and went on to earn the IASL Gold badge shared, “I used to think it was incredibly unattainable with limited resources, but now I think that it doesn’t have to be a world-changing project. It can be a limited response and small thing as long as students are making informed choices about the discussion.” Similarly, a teacher of color from Florida echoed that: “I used to think of big momentous activities, but now I think of small activities that inspire or inform others to be better citizens for our democracy.”

Another high school teacher and a former middle school teacher that completed the IASL Silver level said: “I used to think that it was merely an ‘activity’ at the end of a lesson/unit to

get students to reach out to an authentic audience, but now I think that informed action through service learning is a much more cohesive, well-planned 'end' goal for a unit/lesson." Similarly, a teacher who is new to teaching civics and teaches in a racially diverse school said: "I used to think that all informed action had to be done out of the classroom and in the community through elaborate volunteer activities but now I think that service learning can be that, but it is so much more."

Another high school teacher that teaches a mix of rural and suburban students and is credentialed in multiple disciplines, including law, political philosophy, and museum studies, said that she "used to think that it sounds like chaos, but now I think with some planning it can be highly organized." Even for experienced, veteran educators, there is a learning curve to giving control and choice to students, especially with something that can be taken "out of the classroom." The course helped them see how it can be both powerful for students and manageable for teachers. A pre-service professor in Illinois who is deeply reflective on how to connect this work to community and the ecosystem of education outside of classroom said: "I used to think it was too hard to let it spring from student actions and ideas, but now I think that if I structure curriculum in the right ways, it will come out more organically from students and also be aligned with our overall learning aims."

The other hesitance teachers often have with IASL is whether it is developmentally appropriate for elementary students and whether elementary grade teachers can use the course material to teach. The course is definitely useful for elementary teachers; one 5th grade teacher who finished the IASL Silver badge shared: "I used to think I don't have enough knowledge or tools to do right by my students, but now I think it's better to start walking and see where the road takes you."

IASL Bronze: A Closer Look

Module 1 looks at best practices for discussions and discussion boards, and asks teachers if they'd incorporate similar strategies in their classroom. In the Fall iteration of the course, 61% of teachers said they learned "a great deal" or "much" about best practices for participating in a discussion board, and 71% said they "very likely" or "definitely" would apply this to future discussion boards they facilitate. In the Spring 2021 cohort, 79% of teachers said they're likely to apply the discussion board participation strategies they learned about to future discussions they facilitate. Teachers were more split on the Think-Puzzle-Explore activity, with 48% finding it extremely helpful in the Fall cohort (compared to 48% that found it "somewhat helpful") and 36% of teachers finding it extremely helpful in the Spring cohort (compared to 57% that found it "somewhat helpful"). One teacher shared detailed thoughts on this:

1) I really like the think puzzle questions. It allowed me to reflect on my work and to think deeply, beyond logistics. 2) I also really liked looking at a resource to inform one of my questions. I would ask the more evaluative question like, 'what's missing from this resource?' 3) I think it would be interesting to ask participants

to share (on the discussion board) their puzzle questions and then to also share the resource they looked at.

Almost all the teachers in both cohorts said they would use these strategies for building a classroom community (either online or in-person). As one teacher shared: "I'm really looking forward to doing this class and seeing the positive changes in my classroom environment."

In Module 2, 90% of the Fall cohort teachers and 87% of Spring cohort teachers said their knowledge increased after the academic expert videos and reading the text. However, 64% of teachers in the Fall felt competent incorporating the L.E.A.D. components, compared to 46% in the Spring cohort. Teachers who struggled with it said that "I think it would increase my level of competency if I explored a resource in all 4 of the L.E.A.D. categories instead of just one" and that a "lesson plan or a scope and sequence of a plan book throughout the year would be helpful." The CAPES section was universally very helpful to teachers across cohorts.

A majority of the teachers said more kinds of examples and artifacts on informed action would increase their comfort level with implementation: "I would like to see some examples of service learning projects being conducted. I am more of a visual learner so a video or tutorial on plausible service learning ideas would be fantastic." Another teacher shared: "I would love to see examples of projects, assignments, or research done by students. Also, I would appreciate seeing a survey or group of surveys that helped students focus their interests and passions."

Module 3 videos do share more examples that teachers found helpful: "The video examples are so powerful," one participant said. Teachers were surprised by and learned a lot from the elementary level videos, one saying: "I thought watching the elementary levels would not be very helpful but they actually were very helpful." And another teacher remarked: "The Kindergarten video was the best example at explicitly capturing the components for me."

By Module 4, a majority of teachers in both the Spring and Fall cohorts felt competent in foundational concepts of IASL (Figure 6 on the following page).

Figure 6: IASL Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 Cohorts – How competent do you feel:

Note: Percentages are the sum of those who said they were "comfortable" and "extremely comfortable"

■ IASL Fall 2020 ■ IASL Spring 2021

Creating essential questions that frame your informed action



Identifying root causes to support students in the explore and engage step of L.E.A.D.?



Identifying possible authentic actions for your students to engage in when participating in informed action through service learning



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Source: CIRCLE evaluation of Guardians of Democracy microcredential courses

By the end of the course, teachers do feel they have their concerns addressed and have learned what IASL entails. As one teacher said: "I watched all of the chapters that were included in the video and I felt they went over a lot of the areas I felt concerned about." Another shared: "I truly feel that the I have been thoroughly educated or informed on the intricacies of service learning." Across both cohorts, teachers overwhelmingly agreed that resources for IASL, including the step-by-step planning guides, the teacher reflection rubric, the CAPES section, and most of all the facilitators' feedback on portfolios was very useful. A large majority (90%) of IASL teachers in Fall and the Spring cohort (83%) said facilitators' feedback was "very useful." A teacher captured this, saying: "I really appreciated the examples, feedback, and resources for growth that I experienced. I cannot think of things that I needed that I didn't think that I had ... I felt like the pace, instructor feedback, and coursework was really in sync."

IASL Silver and Gold

The Silver badge level for IASL has a steeper learning curve for teachers, as they have to think more about application in the classroom and how it can be practically woven throughout their curricular goals. Further, unlike CCID and SoDP which have "standards of practice" and specific formats like Socratic Seminar and Moot Courts that teachers can follow if they so choose, IASL is built on a set of competencies (LEAD, which stands for "Learn," "Engage and Explore," "Authentic Action," and "Digest and Demonstrate") which will look different each time teachers use IASL because the process should be guided by student voice. Thus, IASL can be more complex because there is not a "go-to IASL project" that teachers can use time and time again. One experienced teacher who has also taken the other Guardians of Democracy courses and completed IASL Gold said: "I found this the most challenging course but enjoyed it."

Teachers in the Silver and Gold courses were asked how they incorporated student and teacher reflections during the service learning process and what impact they think it had. Many teachers said that they used reflection because they learned and saw how critical it was in the IASL course. One teacher said: "This was something that I had to be very deliberate about, as I do not find it inherently natural. Students reflected in the whole class at individual points throughout the process." Another shared: "I did a 'Big Paper' silent reflection. ... In the past, I would skip the reflection stage because of time constraints. Now I see it as the most important step to really drive home what the students learned. The students have a better memory of what occurred after reflection. It just ties everything together." One teacher in the Gold level course echoed this, saying:

I deliberately had to focus on student reflection. Daily, small, and varied formats to incorporate. I was not a "reflector" formally and this course forced that. The impact was a significant increase in "ownership" of the students in the process. It does increase their "buy-in" and increases their awareness of what they are learning!

Teachers used a combination of techniques they learned in the classroom and what they think worked for their students. One teacher said: "Most of the reflections throughout were both verbal and short 'exit-ticket'-style forms. Reflection, like other forms of critically thinking, invite pause and see what we have learned." Teachers also varied in frequency of reflections; many said they did before, during and after the project and some teachers did it regularly.

The students reflected almost every day. ... We used 3-2-1 and the QFT as our main reflection practices. As a teacher I reflected every day as I planned and altered those plans moving forward. I argue that the reflection is when a lot of the true learning takes place.

In addition, IASL Gold course teachers were asked to share how they promoted student voice throughout their action plan. They did so by "allowing them to create the questions for the survey" and involving them in "creation of rubrics and discussion of how to be assessed." One teacher shared how she supported it at the school level: "I promoted student voice through classroom discussions, developing interview questions & interviewing assistant principals, school board members, & the school superintendent!"

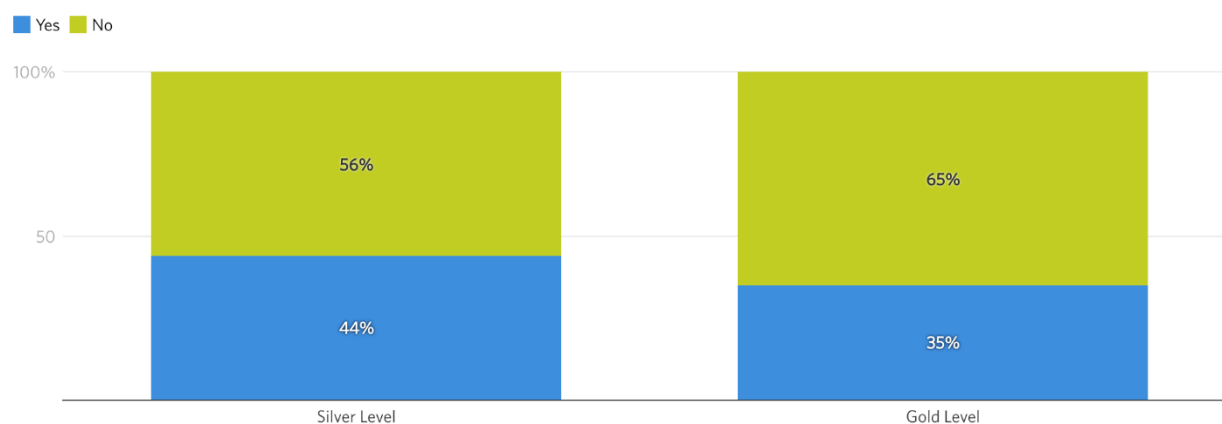
A few teachers shared that they drafted a student contract and that helped classroom culture:

For the first time ever I had all of my classes create a student contract. That is something I will continue to do moving forward in my educational career. I also had my class participating in the plan of action create multiple rubrics and data collection methods. I also let them choose how they best felt they could share out that data to stakeholders.

Lastly, they learned from other teachers in the course and the resources they shared. One teacher “borrowed a brainstorming Google Slide template from a Guardians of Democracy classmate” for incorporating student voice.

Silver and Gold level teachers could collaborate with another course participant for their plans of action. Figure 7 shows most teachers chose not to collaborate, particularly at the Gold level. Those who did collaborate said it was useful to do so as a “sound board for bouncing ideas” and “having a different viewpoint to look at a topic from & ideas to bring to the table!” Teachers also said it was useful for “co-planning and dividing responsibilities for implementation” and “having someone to talk with about IASL who is already familiar with the content”. Most of all, it gave teachers “diverse ideas” and “it was a safe environment where I did not feel like I would be judged.”

Figure 7: IASL Silver and Gold – Did you collaborate with another course participant for your plan of action?



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Source: CIRCLE evaluation of Guardians of Democracy microcredential courses

IASL Course Challenges and Areas for Improvement Identified by Teachers

- Similar to CCID, teachers also requested templates and resources to explain to the school and community what IASL entails. One called for “informational resources to give to administrators and parents so that they could understand the idea of service learning. These two groups will provide the pushback that I see occurring. Having this resource would help put everyone at ease with the process.” Teachers also wanted some guidance on how to develop community relationships, “The issue I struggle with is building those relationships with community members and other leaders since I do not live in the county I work in.”

- A teacher shared a similar request, but related to navigating peer teachers and colleagues: “The only aspect I would have liked to see is a place and example where the opposition to informed action through service learning came from colleagues concerned that you weren’t ‘teaching the same curriculum.’ This opposition takes a lot of emotional energy and time, especially if they have the ear of an administrator. This seems like it would fit in Module 4.”
 - Another teacher shared that she struggled with student bias: “I am in a very rural community, so when I try to discuss controversial issues that surround areas of race or immigration, it is hard to break through their current mindset when they are close minded to the topics presented. When presenting information from both sides, students have a tendency to dismiss the opposing side without taking into consideration the struggles of those speaking out against the injustice/oppression.”
- Teachers mentioned some specific struggles in Module 3 (Bronze). It’s particularly important to understand these concerns, as the middle of the course is when engagement and attention tends to dip for teachers:
 - “I struggled a lot with this module in terms of understanding what was being asked of me as a student of this course in the charts. The language wasn’t clear and the chart was not helping me. The first column is labeled ‘student’ and under that is ‘identify the essential and supporting questions related to the informed action.’ I wasn’t clear if I should read it as ‘how do we know students were able to identify the essential and supporting questions?’ and then use the examples in the article as evidence that this occurred and cite them in the middle column?”
 - “I really struggled with trying to connect the articles to the examples and my own pedagogy; I think modeling from maybe the video and having us search through using the article from Mary Ellen would help. Or something along those lines. I really struggled with this module.”
- At the close of the course, many teachers said that Module 5 needed more time and space to reflect, learn, and digest the material as well as some reflection on challenges they could face in implementation. Some teachers who went on to get the Silver and Gold badge felt there was redundancy for them, but it may have helped refresh and scaffold the content for other teachers:
 - One teacher said: “perhaps break module 5 into 2 groups.” Another teacher shared: “I think timing-wise you might want to give 2 weeks for module 5 and possibly 4 due to the amount of work.”
 - “I think a useful part of this course would be an anticipated challenge part. What challenges might you run into when choosing a plan of action? Or more videos on action plans that didn’t go as planned. Can the experts comment on action plans that sounded good to the teacher but upon reflection didn’t work or was really service learning?”

- “I would be interested in seeing if a POC expert had a different perspective or thoughts we haven’t considered.”
- “My only thought would be on the transition between the Silver and Gold Badge. I approached the Gold Badge as a continuation of the Silver portfolio in order to improve upon the indicators that were lacking in the Silver. As such, I felt Module 3 and 4 in the Gold were mostly redundant to the Silver.”

Guardians of Democracy Course: Simulations of Democratic Practice (SoDP)

Similar to IASL, teachers tend to come into the SoDP course thinking that you need something big and bold at the end of a civics course, or that it was an appended activity that would be either chaotic or not add much value. However, they quickly realized that it was a great pedagogy to support students’ deeper learning. One middle school teacher from Florida that is currently in the SoDP Gold course shared: “I used to think it was just an extra activity that there was no time for, but now I think it is an engaging way to give students content while also doing an activity (it’s not extra!)” Another middle school teacher in Florida who previously taught in Illinois echoed that: “I used to think [it was a] supplementary activity to strengthen the content that we have learned, but now I think use the simulation as a way to teach the content.”

Also like with IASL, teachers likewise realized that SoDP could be done with smaller and simpler steps, and without a lot of resources at hand. A middle school teacher serving a rural area in Illinois said that he “used to think that it was an incredible amount of work for something that may not benefit all students, but now I think the process is an incredibly rewarding and insightful experience that will allow students of all levels to contribute and learn.” Another experienced teacher from Illinois who completed the SoDP Gold course shared also that he “used to think simulations had to be long, elaborate activities, but now I think I can work with some shorter simulations and still accomplish the learning goals I have for my students.”

Teachers learned that this pedagogy can help them try new ways of helping students engage with the content and learn; one educator shared that “trying these different activities certainly helped get me out of that rut from time to time.” It is also easy to use the strategies taught in the course at the elementary level. As an elementary educator shared, “I think I can scale them for age and time constraints.”

SoDP Bronze: A Closer Look

Even though some teachers thought they conceptually understood SoDP, many shared in **Module 1** (Bronze) that they were now apprehensive about implementation, as they hadn’t

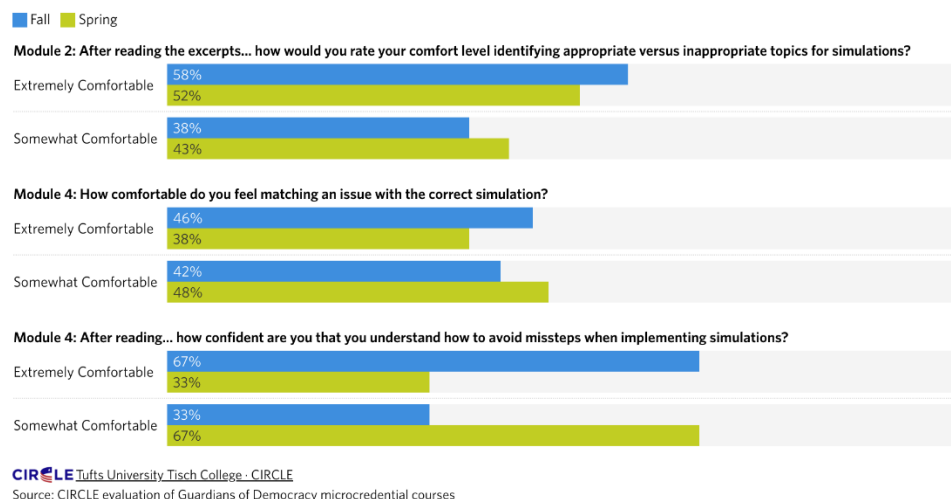
previously realized many aspects of it. A teacher from Florida who went on to complete SoDP Gold said: “Even after watching the videos I still feel apprehensive conducting any of these simulations in my classroom.” Another experienced teacher from Florida said, after Module 1: “I feel anxious because I’m worried about it going off the rails.” But teachers found the techniques and strategies in Module 1 to be helpful. In the fall 2020 cohort, two-thirds (68%) found the Compass Point Reflection and discussion board community building online to be “extremely helpful,” though only 2 in 5 (39%) said so in the Spring 2021 cohort. This may suggest that some teachers need more time with the course and that other types of strategies (which they are trained on in the rest of the course) are more helpful to them. Even so, an overwhelming majority of teachers said they would use the strategies in Module 1 to build a classroom community either online or in person (92% in the fall cohort and 83% in the spring cohort). This was really important to teachers in the beginning of the course because many were unsure how a community could be built (especially online) to facilitate simulations.

By **Module 2**, teachers’ self-reported knowledge of simulations increased substantially after watching the academic expert videos and engaging with the readings (96% for the fall cohort and 70% for the spring cohort). Large majorities of teachers in the fall (92%) and in the spring cohorts (91%) said that they believe the strategies taught up to that point are applicable to use with their students. That said, as mentioned earlier, increases in knowledge do not immediately lead to increases in confidence. By the end of module 2, 13% of teachers in the fall cohort and 26% teachers in the spring cohort said they’re “extremely” comfortable implementing simulations (71% and 48%, respectively, said “somewhat comfortable”).

In **Module 3**, teachers found the strategy guides and video walkthroughs of each simulation very useful. As the course progressed, teachers grew in confidence and competency. As one relatively new teacher who has been teaching for two years said: “I think that with the right amount of grounding and work, students and teachers are able to have strong simulations without stress or negative consequences.” The **Module 4** video with tips and advice for successful implementation was really helpful to most teachers (88% in the fall cohort and 71% in the spring cohort). By the end of Module 4, virtually all teachers across the cohorts said the strategies shown were applicable to use with their students (96% in the fall and 91% in the spring).

Figures 8 and 9 show how teacher confidence increased over time as they learned strategies to identify appropriate topics for simulations, match the correct simulation to an issue, and avoid missteps in implementation. More than half the teachers in both cohorts felt “extremely confident” by the end of Module 2 in identifying appropriate topics (58% in fall; 52% in spring). Almost 2 in 5 teachers across both cohorts felt “extremely comfortable” identifying the correct form of simulation for an issue. On avoiding missteps, Module 4 strategies gave two-thirds of the teachers in the fall cohort, though only one-third of teachers in the spring cohort, a lot of confidence to implement simulations.

Figure 8: Teacher Confidence in Identifying the Correct Simulations and Avoiding Missteps after Module 2 and Module 4



Elementary educators and those teaching underserved students were also initially hesitant about employing SoDP in their classroom. A 5th grade teacher in Illinois said he was worried that “access to content may be slightly out of their reach,” but by the end of Module 5 he reported believing the simulations could be scaled down for his students. A teacher from Florida said she wanted to be sure that SoDP isn’t just engaging “but manageable... I want them to be out-of-their comfort zone but not so difficult that it causes them to not participate.” By the end of the course, she also said she believed that it could be done in simpler steps for students and still be really useful in learning.

Teachers shared in detail how they overcame the barriers they identified at the beginning of the course and how the course, particularly the resources and support from peers and instructors, helped them develop the confidence and skills to do simulations. One teacher’s feedback was echoed by many others: “In general have a better understanding of classroom management than I did previously... and I have a lot MORE resources to successfully implement these strategies using things from the CAPES Section.” In addition to this, having evidence- and research-backed reasons for using simulations helped teachers establish a basis for using them in the classroom: “I believe the CAPES section helped specifically with establishing a classroom of respect in order to avoid losing control. Having the data to back up the importance of these simulations provides a response to parents/administration and any pushback.”

Besides the resources and course content, peer-to-peer interactions and discussions really boosted teachers’ confidence to do these even in online settings. One teacher credited “discussions with peers (albeit sometimes delayed); hearing the reassurance from others that they too are hesitant in the virtual teaching world; and are having success. Being more knowledgeable and forceful with administration has helped me overcome some hesitation.”

In summary, teachers said that the course enhanced their knowledge, skills, and confidence to use simulations, and that the course structure and instructors were critical elements of that learning process. One teacher said that all of her doubts or questions were addressed in the course: “Modules in this course addressed each of these concerns, provided space and opportunity for learning and reflecting on each concern. The sequence of learning, how the modules were designed, thoughtfully built on the new knowledge from week to week”. The example videos really helped teachers visualize this in various classrooms as well, with one teacher saying: “the course provided clarification about the processes and easy step-by-step instructions on how to conduct them in your classroom. You provided examples of some simulations done remotely showing it is very possible to do.”

Although the SoDP Bronze educators did not show a significant change in their disposition/efficacy regarding using various civics instructional strategies, the SoDP teachers did show a significant ($p < .05$) increase in perception of their school district’s support for developing foundational knowledge, development of intellectual skills to make informed decisions, and of students becoming active community members in a democratic society. Detailed results are presented in Appendix.

SoDP Silver and Gold

In the Silver SoDP course, 64% teachers found the step-by-step coaching and planning guide “extremely helpful” and 90% of teachers found the reflection rubric really useful. In addition, all teachers said the facilitator’s feedback was at least “very” useful (82% said it was “extremely useful”). It’s apparent that even though the SoDP Bronze course increased teacher knowledge substantially, most teachers felt more confident once they had implemented simulations practically. As one teacher shared: “Honestly, it wasn’t until my students completed the simulation that I finally felt more comfortable about it and fully had my ‘aha’ moment; again, because I am more visual and hands on as well.” In teachers’ own words, it was a “solid course” and they “loved reading the examples of my peers to see how they did the simulations”. Teachers said that a place for “a discussion to happen between teachers using similar simulations” would be helpful at the Silver level. And one teacher summed up the practical application of SoDP well: “I find not rushing into these activities a challenging part of each of the skills we practice, so this is quite valuable. It cautioned me to slow down and value every step in the process.”

Figure 9 illustrates the levels of confidence and competency teachers feel after acquiring expertise in various types of simulations. Teachers said it really helped prepare their students to “be active and engaged in civic life,” learn “life skills on how to be an effective citizen in their community,” and gain “21st century skills needed in today’s workforce.” Teachers also realized that SoDP gave another way to engage students in class, “...course helped me see that there were ways to still engage my students even if they were not totally comfortable discussing their views in front of the class. The models and handouts provided in the course make conducting the simulations much easier.” One teacher shared:

Democratic Simulations have allowed more students to become engaged in my classroom than ever before. These simulations give them a chance to voice their opinions and thoughts about real-life topics and get hands on experience with so many important skills, while also learning their content.

Figure 9: SODP Gold – How comfortable are you in facilitating simulations of democratic processes?



CIRCLE Tufts University Tisch College · CIRCLE

Source: CIRCLE evaluation of Guardians of Democracy microcredential courses

SODP Course Challenges and Areas for Improvement Identified by Teachers

- As with CCID implementation, some teachers were still struggling with strategies for assessment of simulations and ensuring equity of participation and roles in SoDP:
 - A high school teacher who completed the SoDP Bronze course shared: “Something that I find worrisome with engaging students in simulations of democratic processes is how to ensure equity of opportunity for participation and authentic assessment of students’ understanding (not just ‘participation points’)”.
- Teachers wanted more examples and strategies for using SoDP online and virtually—as discussed earlier, the ones that were shared were very useful to teachers. It may help to have peer-to-peer practice of a simulation in a synchronized session for the Bronze course.
 - A veteran teacher said: “I feel that I NEED to know more about how to use these processes in a virtual learning environment. If we return in a hybrid manner how to successfully integrate when I have had less time to develop connections with my students.”
- Not surprisingly, the lack of support from school administrators, parents, and the community is still a huge challenge for many teachers:
 - “Engaging in democratic simulations will create too much controversy in my school or district.”
- Module 5 seemed overwhelming in this course as well (similar to IASL) and teachers commented that it may help to parse it out in smaller chunks:
 - “Maybe break down module 5 into 2 parts and weeks. The CAPES section was very helpful, but almost overwhelming due to the number of resources

available. If the planning of the simulation was done in two parts, I feel like I could have explored all of the resources more in depth.”

- A number of teachers said that this course as well would have benefited from a synchronous session with peer teachers:
 - o “I wish it included actual meetings or discussions; the discussion board was great feedback but often delayed. The 2 facilitators were prompt and complete but the peer-to-peer (probably because we are all working) seemed a bit more disjointed. A ‘kick off’ and midterm? Meeting optional, perhaps, just how I personally learn better. Overall great course, especially love the video examples and facilitator feedback.”

Section 4 - Takeaways

From the outset, the GoD initiative has been an effort to increase access to high-quality professional learning about civic education pedagogy. For both financial and logistical reasons, it was important to develop a new model of civic education professional learning that does not rely solely on in-person, institute-style training, so that valuable resources are utilized in the most efficient manner while maintaining the quality and impact of training we observed in the first three years of the high-school civic education law implementation period (Hayat & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2020). Therefore, assessing scalability and sustainability of this new effort was one of the key goals of this evaluation. Below we describe some key observations and synthesize findings that speak to scalability and sustainability:

Finding 1: The courses are highly engaging and effective, which will itself serve as an “advertisement” for further enrollment—and thus scale.

Quantitative and qualitative findings strongly suggest that almost all of the teachers who enrolled finished Bronze-level courses, despite the high workload, the changing circumstances of the pandemic, and the sustained period of engagement required. Importantly, they gained a positive disposition, meaning that they had a strong sense of how to think about and apply the best practices in civics that they had learned. The GoD courses are certainly not a good fit if teachers only want to get credit by absent-mindedly listening to a recorded webinar. The courses require teachers to actively engage in their own learning and critical reflection, as well as contribute to the community of practice by giving thoughtful comments to their peers and responding to the coach’s suggestions. Our analysts observed that teachers were genuinely engaged, not merely concerned about the bare minimum they needed to do to “pass” the course. Based on teacher comments in module surveys and focus groups, as well as our own observation, we believe that there are some key ingredients to the

course's success which will be important to maintain with high fidelity in future iterations of this program. These ingredients are:

- 1) **A safe space (community of practice) for all teachers to take charge of their own learning and growth.** All the courses intentionally created and nurtured a space for teachers to ask questions and receive feedback—most often by their peers. There are some concrete elements that ensured this was the case:
 - a) A highly organized and clearly communicated course structure. The orientation and the structure of the course (and the syllabus) helped teachers know where they were going to go and, even in a fully online session, find a lot of community and support. Having a clear sense of what's next and where they are going is the first step in creating a safe space for learning.
 - b) Course activities like reflection and peer-to-peer feedback de-center the course instructor as the central node of course's engagement and put that responsibility and power in teachers' hands. This intentional shift by the course designers empowered the teachers to "own" their learning space so they are not only learning about pedagogy but also helping others improve. Use of peer-teaching is an evidence-based strategy for Deeper Learning⁶ because helping peers learn promotes understanding of how people learn ("learning about learning") and in turn promotes self-reflection about teachers' own learning style and how they can teach differently to support different types of learners. An additional benefit of this student-centered style of instruction is modeling. Course instructors intentionally waited before they intervened when teachers were disengaged or otherwise struggling and let peer teachers step in first (which happened often, for instance, in the discussion board). Instructors demonstrated their belief in these teachers' capacity to manage their own learning space, a practice that teachers can transfer to their own classroom.
 - c) Vulnerability was an important part of the teacher learning process; teachers felt safe enough to be vulnerable in the GoD community of practice. In the context of political polarization in many communities and general politicization of instructional choices, the climate and course structure that encouraged vulnerability was critical, because we often saw deep self-reflection followed by a notable growth from those moments (which were usually followed by an outpouring of support and concrete help from peers). The emphasis on peer-led interaction also likely contributed, as teachers were talking about their trials and tribulations with other teachers who shared the same challenges. If the course were more instructor-centered, the teachers may not have felt as relaxed about sharing their challenges so honestly.

⁶ Darling-Hammond, L., Oakes, J., Wojcikiewicz, S., Hyler, M. E., Guha, R., Podolsky, A., Kini, T., Cook-Harvey, C., Mercer, C., & Harrell A. (2019). *Preparing Teachers for Deeper Learning* (research brief). Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

- 2) **Rigorous and developmental content in the Bronze module promoted success for all and promoted a paradigm shift for teachers—enabling them to believe in their capacity.** Our data revealed that a lot of learning occurs at the Bronze level, which has multiple implications for scalability. First, Bronze is often enough to get teachers to implement evidence-based strategies in the classroom because it addresses all of the key elements of a given pedagogy. Second, and importantly, GoD courses teach pedagogies that are perceived to be “difficult” by many teachers, and the design and content of the course prime teachers to believe that “this (a specific pedagogy) can be done and I know how to do this.” The mindset shift and increase in confidence are an important start to a teachers’ journey to learn more and get better. In fact, many teachers choose to go to the Silver and Gold levels even though these courses do not introduce entirely new concepts. The teachers come back because they simply want to get better at it and achieve a deeper level of mastery. This continuous improvement mindset will not only help these teachers in the specific pedagogy the course is about, but in becoming excellent teachers throughout their careers.
- a) We found that **the course is appropriate for everyone.** The Bronze course enrolled less experienced teachers and educators, and they were able to complete Bronze, Silver, and Gold modules for different pedagogies. We credit this success to the amount of feedback and developmental scaffolding that instructional coaches provided, so that learning was personalized and developmentally appropriate for each teacher. The clarity of instructions for each assignment and the “one thing at a time” style of course design made it manageable for novice teachers to fully understand the content.
 - b) **The course was relevant and personalized for a wide range of teachers** who came from K-12 grades and multiple disciplines—including dance! It was clear that these teachers were instructed and supported to make what they learned in each course “their own” based on a deep understanding of *why* as well as *how* to implement each pedagogy inclusively and well. This is evidenced by the fact teachers often adjusted and refined their strategies to find their own style of delivering CCID, SODP, and ISAL. They were able to do this because they learned the evidence base for each pedagogy and why it was important to use the particular pedagogy, and engaged in reflection often to understand their own teaching style and philosophy. They were then able to combine the new knowledge with their subject matter expertise (e.g., social studies, science, etc.) applicable to K-12 courses to incorporate these pedagogies successfully into the academic content.

Finding 2: Strong organization, structure, and a resource bank helped teachers complete the course and continue with more modules.

Multiple comments revealed that the course was well-organized and teachers knew what to do and where to go. This strong organization removes barriers to participation because teachers could use their limited time to engage with the course, without having to take additional time to figure out what they were doing next. Putting the course on Canvas likely helped to maintain this strong level of organization. Furthermore, once they began, teachers quickly learned the “flow” of the course because generally the structure of five modules and objectives is similar, perhaps making it easier to stay engaged without having to orient themselves to a new course map. That consistency in the structure seemed to also help instructors monitor teacher engagement and allow for some variations in engagement levels over time, while making sure that they finished strong.

We could perhaps describe the CAPES section and other resources as “legendary,” based on how often teachers mentioned how helpful these curated resources were. The resources are relevant, diverse, and abundant (but not overwhelming) and they continue to improve with teacher feedback and frequency of use. Teachers see them as one of the biggest assets of the course; in fact, one of the analysts saw in the CCID analysis that some teachers kept logging into the course to download or read more material

Finding 3: Growing an instructional coaching team is key to scalability and it has been successful so far.

The findings from May 2021, when eight trained instructional coaches piloted the CCID, SoDP and IAL Bronze modules as teams, are so far promising. Training additional facilitators who can achieve similar impact is a major benchmark for scalability. The Spring CCID course students achieved a significant gain in both knowledge about CCID as an instructional strategy and how best to support all students’ ability to form and use their voice as they engage in CCID, as well as a gain in their disposition to implement high-quality civic education. This is a very positive sign. As is often the case in a diffusion of practice, the educators who achieved facilitator status are the type of educators who tended to be highly engaged from the beginning, were generally confident in their ability to teach civics well, and were high school social studies teachers who often have a substantial amount of content expertise. While the particular characteristics of facilitators themselves do not invalidate the positive findings we see so far, there are some opportunities and challenges as the team hopes to grow the size of instructional coach cohorts in the future. We present these points in a table on the following page:

Table 3: Unique Features of the Current Facilitator Cohort and Future Opportunities and Challenges

Unique Conditions about Coaching in this Pilot	Opportunities	Possible Challenges
Mostly high school teachers served as coaches	Possible to keep growing high school educators as instructional coaches	<p>Middle school teachers may have less foundational content knowledge. What, if any, additional training would they require to become instructional coaches?</p> <p>Would high school teachers (as coaches) be able to adopt to the needs of middle grade teachers and the different needs of their students?</p>
Most coaches are from Illinois	<p>When instructional coaches are from the same state as the students, they are able to provide feedback/support tailored to the state standards and regulations</p> <p>Illinois represents a wide range of political and cultural climates, so the coaches, especially in the co-teaching model, had a good grasp of the types of issues and framing of pedagogy that might be most effective in diverse communities.</p>	Possibly need to test whether Illinois-based coaches would be as effective with teachers from different states where standards differ significantly.
Coaches team-taught the course	<p>Coaches stated in a focus group that co-facilitating the course was especially helpful as they coached for the first time. It seems that it may be useful to scaffold the coaches, starting with pairing with more experienced coaches and then giving coaches more autonomy over 2-3 iterations might be useful. Another strategy that seemed to work was to have more experienced facilitators "hover" in the background even if they were not actively teaching with them, so that new coaches could get just-in-time "coaching on coaching."</p> <p>Team-teaching itself held a lot of opportunities to extend teacher learning via both incidental learning (e.g., watching how other coaches comment or give feedback) and peer-mentoring (most coach teams had team check-ins, which was an opportunity to debrief and plan).</p> <p>Co-teaching was an emotionally engaging and rewarding experience for teachers, perhaps especially because of the pandemic, which galvanized a "coach team mentality."</p>	Even though they will share a foundation through the GoD course, coaches will inevitably come with different levels of expertise, strengths, and preparation. In this pilot, the original course designers were able to coach the new coaches directly. This will be less possible as the initiative scales up and the course designers develop and teach other courses. A coaching training mini-course would be a logical next step, which may be worth considering as a requirement for coaching.
All of the coaches identify as white	As part of the modules, teachers received a lot of training about creating an inclusive classroom climate for diverse students and communities, as well as centering student voice (especially in the Gold badge course). This gave them a strong foundation for DEI and inclusive classrooms. Continued training and support about inclusivity and diversity, and opportunities to continue reflecting on these topics as coaches, will likely help them continue to serve diverse teachers and students.	We don't yet know whether the camaraderie among the coaches so far has anything to do with the fact that they identified with the same racial group, and were possibly able to share experiences related to issues of diversity and inclusion with vulnerability and openness. As more educators of color (and members of other minority communities of various types) enroll in GoD and become coaches, care should be taken to ensure that coaches, as a community of practice in and of itself, continues to create a safe environment for all.

Recommendations for Scale and Sustainability

Our mixed-method evaluation shows that the GoD initiative has not only proven itself to be a viable model—the initial goal of the pilot. Now that several facilitators have been trained and actually taught a course with strong learning outcomes among teachers, it is well on its way to scaling up and helping more teachers.

Given these positive findings, there are ample reasons to continue growing this initiative. We recommend the following based on the synthesis of our findings and teacher input, as well as knowledge of scaled implementation efforts.

1. **Scaled expansion outside of Illinois should be carefully designed and implemented.**

The GoD courses did enroll teachers from outside of Illinois, but the notable majority were from within the state. The Illinois civics implementation model (in-person training, high-school mandates, Democracy Schools, Chicago public schools' comprehensive efforts to promote civic engagement) is widely regarded as the best in the nation. In fact, it's so successful that thousands of Illinois teachers, including many of those who enrolled in a GoD course, received one or more trainings from Illinois Civics and Mary Ellen Daneels in the past five years. That means that Illinois teachers already had some familiarity with the pedagogies taught through GoD. Without the mandates on the GoD pedagogies and/or familiarity with the instructor, it may be challenging to maintain the high levels of engagement we saw among Illinois teachers. Because of these unique assets in Illinois, we would not assume that simply enrolling more teachers from across the country will yield the same result for everyone. The fact that Illinois teachers are legally mandated to use all three of the pedagogical approaches likely helped to motivate teachers to enroll, at least initially.

Therefore, when the model scales to other states, the team should carefully consider the types of assets that can be replicated in a way that's attentive to a particular state's educational, economic, and cultural assets and challenges. For instance, states often have multicultural competency standards intended for use with their social studies standards, but how these are integrated differs from state to state. Illinois, which has new social science standards that embrace culturally responsive teaching, may direct teachers in one way, and another state may do so differently. To be successful in those states, teachers must feel that they are learning how to use IASL while meeting their multicultural standards and the grade-level content-standards. This does not mean each state should have a separate course. Rather, it may be a matter of training educators from those states to serve as state-based facilitators, using the same course, so that they are able to make locally relevant recommendations for resources and provide pointers on how they would use the practice to meet all the requirements in their state. In the previous study, we noted that regional coaches' cultural knowledge and social capital and Mary Ellen Daneels' direct experience as a

classroom teacher in Illinois (and her knowledge of the state's various laws and requirements) were instrumental in Illinois Civics' success. We believe these lessons should carry over to scaling GoD.

2. **Maintain the community and bonds created in the GoD courses, potentially by adding some synchronous elements.** It is sometimes assumed that "content" is what drives professional learning impact and everything else is non-essential. While it is true that rigorous (and well-organized) content is key to GoD's success, we believe the community of practice and peer-led teaching was just as essential. For example, Module 1 could possibly benefit from even more community-building elements, such as additional discussions or virtual meet-and-greets among teachers and students to learn, ask questions, and establish a connection to the community of practice from the beginning. That said, the fact that teachers can complete these courses "anytime, anywhere," is a strong asset of the GoD courses, so the balance between ease of access and depth of relationships must be calibrated carefully.
3. **If possible, create a module for new course facilitators so that expectations are clear and foundational knowledge of adult-learning theory is in place.** The new course facilitators come to this role with the invaluable experience of being GoD learners themselves, which will help them understand when and why some teachers struggle. At the same time, they may not come with the same level of familiarity with adult learning theories. We suggest identifying one or more adult learning frameworks that are evidence-based and consistent with the strategies GoD course designers have taken (e.g., transformative learning theory) and explicitly naming some key design principles behind the instructional approach (e.g., letting peer-teaching occur organically and modeling trust in students) in advance may help facilitators feel more grounded and prepared. This should be balanced with helping facilitators discover who they are as adult "coaches," though the process of discovery appeared to be happening via team-teaching, which included frequent team reflection.
4. **Keep the course facilitator onboarding sequence which starts with team-teaching and builds in an increasing amount of autonomy.** The spring CCID Bronze course was the first group that learned from newly trained facilitators—and the results are strong. In a focus group for facilitators, several mentioned benefiting from the team-teaching structure as they watched veteran facilitators provide comments and point teachers to the right CAPES resources. We recommend maintaining this apprenticeship-like model for facilitators and, eventually, setting some benchmarks for determining when teachers are ready to be fully independent. Another option would be to keep a structure of pair- or team-teaching, in part because facilitators seemed to truly enjoy an opportunity to collaborate with other teachers who are just as passionate about civic education as themselves. Facilitators' mutual respect and

affection for each other was palpable in the focus group and we think that would not be lost on the GoD-enrolled teachers either.

5. **As the initiative scales up further, a smart technological solution could be introduced to make operations more efficient.** The GoD initiative utilized Canvas, a popular learning management system, which helped teachers stay organized and track their work. As there will be more course facilitators and enrollees in the future, the team should evaluate various technology-based solutions to reduce the administrative load on a single person. Currently, data collection is distributed across multiple platforms and modules to which individual access permissions must be given, and not all data are visible to anyone except the course administrator (who had access to Canvas, Qualtrics, Google forms, and portfolios). One idea may be to distribute the administrative responsibilities to coaches or multiple staff members who will utilize a shared “toolkit”, or a comprehensive data and project management solution, that allows stakeholders to transfer information from one platform to another without having to hand-enter information. Having coaches hold more responsibilities could also open up additional opportunities for the coaches to collect data that would improve their own instructional practices and find ways to be more effective in a specific context (such as a different state or different populations of interest—like elementary-grade teachers).
6. **Develop a business model that balances teacher access with equity and financial sustainability.** While the virtual format and train-the-trainer model of scaling is ripe with opportunities to scale, serving more teachers will come with an increase in operational costs. Instructional coaches are compensated and staff who develop, improve and program the courses, and maintain the CAPES section will need to remain engaged even after the courses are as well-established as the first three GoD courses have become. At present, all of the GoD courses are offered to teachers free of charge. In the future, tying the GoD course to continuing education credits with a nominal fee could cover part of the cost, ideally with scholarship options available to teachers working in disadvantaged communities. Another potential strategy which is already being partially employed in Illinois, is a partnership with local and state education agencies and unions—all of which could invest in their members by supporting the program operation cost. Again, a sliding-scale fee system may help simultaneously address access and equity. Individual districts could seek funding from local foundations, when applicable, to invest in their teachers to train through the GoD program and serve as district-based instructional coaches thereafter. Because GoD courses not only increase the knowledge base but also shift teacher disposition toward more self-reflection, continuous improvement and student voice, fully GoD-trained educators are likely to be well-prepared for a peer-leadership role. Finally, external grants from private foundations and government agencies are another way to sustain

this initiative while also evaluating its effectiveness under different circumstances, standards/frameworks, and student/teacher populations. Given GoD's accomplishments, it may qualify for funding that supports professional development, technology-assisted tools for teacher learning, communities of practice, professional-learning communities, teacher deeper learning and project-based learning, and student-centered teacher training.

Recommendations for Course Quality Improvement

Based on our findings, here we include some key recommendations for continuous improvement of the GoD courses:

- A. Consider including more hands-on practice in the Bronze module of SODP.** We observed a different pattern of learning and disposition development in SODP than in other courses. In the SoDP Bronze course, teachers displayed a very high disposition throughout that course but experienced more challenges than the CCID and IASL Silver course teachers and a steep learning curve once they started to implement SODP in their classrooms. It's possible that the SoDP course could benefit from more hands-on practice with SoDP beyond planning, so that teachers are more prepared for implementation in real classroom settings. Teachers in the SoDP silver course may also need more coaching and support than their peers in the IASL and CCID courses at the same stage because they may experience a temporary decline in confidence, which could result in hesitance to try the SoDP in the classroom.
- B. Consider integrating the Integrating CAPES section into the modules more often.** While teachers all praise the CAPES section, there seem to be a number of teachers who do not start looking through CAPES until the end of the course. One teacher pointed out there should be more engagement with it beyond a "look at the CAPES" section in the module, such as asking teachers to use it in an assignment. One teacher in the SoDP fall cohort suggested spending two weeks on Module 5 and giving teachers more guidance and time to delve into the CAPES.
- C. Consider providing an even more explicit roadmap of the course with the synchronous check-in.** When asked what they need after Module 1, several teachers across all the courses asked for videos and examples. These are, of course, provided in later modules, but reading the syllabus does not appear to be conveying this information. One possible solution, which would also integrate an earlier recommendation, would be to hold a synchronous session in which instructors can explain the roadmap directly and allow teachers to ask questions earlier. This solution may also remedy a challenge we saw in the

first pilot: some teachers dropped out after realizing how much work was involved in completing a GoD course. A synchronous session could provide the teachers and course facilitator to come to a shared understanding of the workload as well as the benefits of the course based on their personal experience.

- D. **Continue to provide early, timely, and relevant feedback on the portfolios, and acknowledge small successes and community contributions.** As stated throughout this report, the community of practice which enabled peer-to-peer support and course-facilitator participation was one of the essential features of the GoD program. Our formative evaluation recommends that specific feedback be provided early. We think these goals were met in the recent cohorts, and we believe this should be a standard for all new course facilitators. Similarly, we stated that it is important to acknowledge highly engaged and often courageous teachers who take the risk of being vulnerable and stepping in when a peer teacher posts ideas and comments that clearly violate community norms (and course lessons). We reiterate that validating these teachers' efforts and encouraging others to do the same will be an important expectation to convey to the new course facilitators, as these efforts to improve the learning community are often invisible.
- E. **Help new facilitators learn how to recognize disengagement and low efficacy in GoD teachers and provide concrete guidance on how to support them.** Because the new course facilitators are still getting used to teaching entirely online and to adults, they will likely come with different levels of knowledge about adult-learning theories and how to recognize signs of disengagement, which may differ significantly from how their students show disengagement. They may also be unfamiliar with how adult learners respond to various types of support and remediation. Perhaps including a resource on adult-learning in the facilitator orientation materials and using a common framework for coaching teachers could help ensure that all facilitators are well-prepared to support diverse adult learners.

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