



Assessing School Citizenship Education Climate: Implications for the Social Studies

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the School Citizenship Education Climate Assessment and examines its implications for the social studies. The assessment tool was developed from a variety of research fields and disciplines related to school and classroom climate and educational practices including civic education, educational psychology and service-learning. We begin with a brief examination of several key concepts underlying our assessment including school climate, citizenship education and the social studies. Next we present our theoretical framework consisting of seven characteristics of school climate that we believe are critical to an education for responsible citizenship. Within this section we explore the relationship between these characteristics and the social studies in fostering a positive school climate for citizenship education. A description of the assessment follows with a focus on its development, intended audience and use and application in the field. We conclude with a discussion of future directions for research and implications for practice.

Schools play a critical role in the development of academic abilities of young people. Schools also serve as places that assist students in developing an understanding of society and commitment to political and civic engagement. In this role, schools can help foster the knowledge, skills and dispositions that young people need to develop into politically aware and socially responsible individuals (Torney-Purta & Vermeer, 2004). This process is sometimes referred to as the civic education or civic learning of students, but it is advantageous to frame these concepts broadly in ways that go beyond courses labeled "civics." Traditionally, citizenship education in United States schools has focused on transmission of civic knowledge as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). However, recent work has advanced a broader notion of citizenship education (see Homana et al., 2005; Torney-Purta, 2005). As such, citizenship education is defined as the opportunities provided by schools to engage students in meaningful learning experiences such as role plays, debates, mock trials, classroom deliberations, student councils, service-learning and other active teaching strategies to facilitate their development as politically and socially responsible individuals.

Definitions of school climate are also varied across the literature. For our work, school climate refers to the impressions, beliefs, and expectations held by members of the school community about their school as a learning environment, their associated behavior, and the symbols and institutions that represent the patterned expressions of the behavior (Homana et al., 2005). In this sense, school climate contributing to citizenship education includes explicit curricular emphasis on civic-related topics and an array of co-curricular activities existing in most schools. It supports understanding material presented in texts or by teachers, creates authentic opportunities to frame and address questions, and provides students with opportunities to articulate their positions leading to increased motivation for learning and enhancement of civic knowledge and skills. This type of active instruction is far more likely to be successful than asking students simply

to memorize government structures or "fill in the blanks" on worksheets.

Research suggests that use of active teaching strategies can increase students' opportunities to engage in such inquiry and higher-order thinking in the classroom. In a study comparing over 1,000 high school students, Billig and colleagues (2005) found that use of such strategies was "highly related" (p. 54) to outcomes in civic knowledge, skills, dispositions and civic engagement.

At the same time, empirical evidence indicates that social studies teachers, more often than not, continue to utilize traditional teaching methods, and the effect on student (civic outcomes) civic knowledge and engagement is noticeable. For example, in a study of 135 8th through 10th grade social studies classrooms in Chicago, Kahne and colleagues (2000) found that a typical social studies classroom primarily engaged students in lower-level thinking, provided a thin and fragmented knowledge base, offered few substantive opportunities to experience democracy, rarely linked content to understanding and respecting diversity, and provided limited opportunities to examine and respond to social problems. The problem was made worse when teachers were required to teach to state civics goals. However, they also found that "when teachers provided students with more and varied opportunities to develop as citizens, they simultaneously provided significantly more opportunities for higher-order thinking and deep inquiry" (p. 311). In addition, the IEA Civic Education Study (Torney-Purta et al., 2001) a survey of civic knowledge, attitudes and skills of 90,000 adolescents in 28 countries, found that despite the effectiveness of open and participatory climate in promoting civic knowledge and engagement, the approach is not the norm in most countries. While about one-quarter of the students indicate they are often encouraged to voice opinions during discussion in their classrooms, an equal number say that this rarely or never occurs. In fact, teachers confirm these findings: teacher centered methods, such as the use of textbooks, recitation, and worksheets, are dominant in civic-

related classrooms in most countries, although there are also some opportunities for discussion of issues (Torney-Purta et al., 2002). However, some students lack these experiences more than others. Further analysis of the United States sample of students found that this proportion was even lower among immigrant and Hispanic students (Torney-Purta, Barber, & Wilkenfeld, in press).

A positive school climate is crucial for the development of competent, responsible and capable citizens. Along with the creation of pathways for academic development, positive school climate and classroom climate has the potential to assist in citizenship development to ensure continuation of a strong and healthy democratic society. The social studies, a core dimension of academic study in our nation's schools, has long promoted its democratic purpose (National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools, 1989; National Council for the Social Studies, 1994). From a research perspective, exploring the relationship between school climate for citizenship education and the social studies provides a fruitful endeavor because it can lead to an improvement in how schools enhance students' academic, political, social and civic responsibilities.

This paper provides a background on an assessment designed to enhance the examination of and attention to the fostering a positive citizenship climate, including its powerful relationship to the social studies, that can promote the type of changes necessary for enhanced notions of citizenship. This assessment can help identify ways that the social studies can help foster a positive school climate for citizenship education. Issues concerning the role, views, attitudes and training of teachers; creation of an environment that promotes democratic classrooms and schools through the development of mutual trust, respect and collaboration; the importance of an overall common recognition of the civic purpose of education and the policies that support it; and the implications of broader academic standards on teaching and learning are crucial to this mission.

Therefore, the threefold purpose of this School Citizenship Climate Assessment introduced here is to 1) focus attention on this sometimes-

neglected dimension of citizenship education; 2) provide members of the school community with a self-assessment tool focused on relevant characteristics of positive school and classroom climate; and 3) enable those members to develop workable strategies to increase and sustain policies and practices for school community members in order to enhance students' knowledge, skills and dispositions relating to competent citizenship.

SCHOOL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION CLIMATE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

The School Citizenship Education Climate Assessment relies on an expanded conceptualization of the relationship between positive school climate and citizenship education. The framework presented below outlines what we believe are the key dimensions related to an education for responsible citizenship, and identifies potential ways in which the social studies may help develop each dimension within a school. The framework also serves to deepen understanding of the characteristics and their purpose and establishes the basis for the categories and subcategories under which the assessment scales and items are presented in the School Citizenship Education Climate Assessment Instrument. This work has been developed through a process that incorporated identification of assessment items along with the critical components of the theoretical framework. It has drawn on the education literature of school climate and culture, pre-existing school culture assessments, the Civic Mission of Schools report (Carnegie Corporation & Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2003) and other resources.

We recognize that the expression of these facets of school climate will differ according to the age of students. While this work has focused on middle and upper grades it has an equally important role for the early grades. We believe that there is much vitality in the early grades where students' creativity, sense of wonder and optimism, and hope for the future fit naturally with the characteristics of a positive school climate for citizenship. As such, this instrument can serve as an intervention to identify the characteristics that

may already exist in the school and to build on them, or as an opportunity for schools to deepen their understanding of the potential of citizenship education.

We now turn to what we believe are the key characteristics related to an education for responsible citizenship. These characteristics serve as a basis for 1) development of the citizenship assessment framework and 2) the presentation of actual scales and items related to school climate in relation to students' competency to understand society and their political and civic engagement.

1. Official recognition and community acceptance of the civic purpose of education that is communicated to all teachers, students and administrators

A positive school climate for citizenship requires a substantial agreement among members of the school community on a philosophy of education committed to the goals and objectives of a common civic purpose. This common understanding provides a reflection of the collective will of the school community through strong instructional content and pedagogy that supports the development of civic learning and promotes understanding and commitment to political and civic engagement. As a result, positive school climate can create an environment across the school that fosters the well-being, academic achievement and civic development of students. Underlying this relationship are an explicit school mission statement and supportive policies that promote conscious commitment to citizenship education. Schools and school districts across the country have developed mission statements and policies that emphasize civic and social responsibility. At the same time, policy impediments are identified and reduced so citizenship education is successfully sustained. The National Council for the Social Studies (2006) has long been a leading advocate in this area, linking citizenship education to the core mission of the social studies.

2. Meaningful learning of civic-related knowledge that builds on and enhances academic and participation skills

Classroom instruction that explicitly

focuses on meaningful civic content is a critical element for students' citizenship and enhanced learning. Instructional methods and approaches that foster civic-related knowledge engage students in activities that promote a range of academic competencies. Using data from the United States sample of the 1999 IEA Citizenship Education Study, Torney-Purta and Richardson (2003) concluded that meaningful civic knowledge builds upon students' past understanding that is made authentic by connections to current issues and concerns.

A positive classroom climate can be promoted to enhance academic performance and cultivate development of the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary in a democratic society. For example, when the social studies incorporate active learning strategies linked to community-based experiences, such as those commonly found in service-learning programs, structured around political or civic engagement, results show greater demonstration of civic knowledge, skills, dispositions and civic engagement among students (Billig et al., 2005). Even within the classroom, activities such as debating, role-playing and mock trials can encourage an individual's active construction of knowledge through participation in activities that are meaningful to a democratic society (Torney-Purta, 2002; Vosniadou, 2001). These activities are most successful in fostering citizenship education when they touch upon a variety of topics, including both national and international concerns (National Council for the Social Studies, 2006).

3. Cooperation and collaboration in approaching civic related learning and problem-solving

In a positive school climate for citizenship, members of the school community engage in cooperative and collaborative experiences that enhance and support learning and problem-solving connected to citizenship development. These cooperative activities engage students in meaningful learning tasks and problem-solving by requiring students to co-construct new knowledge while building upon the prior experiences that

individuals bring to the group (Vosniadou, 2001). At the same time, collaborative experiences can create spaces for students and faculty to collaborate as a team, share in the decision-making process, and promote meaningful educational experiences that actively engage students in their learning. Finally, a truly collaborative environment also encourages cooperation among teachers, which creates an environment of support and the creation of common goals and increased efficacy for improving for students' cognitive and social development (Johnson, 2003). As such, these schools create powerful learning environments that promote cooperative learning, group cohesion, respect and mutual trust (Finnan et al., 2003; Ghaith, 2003; Kerr, 2004)—all important characteristics for the development of a sense of school belonging.

According to the Search Institute (2000), the bonding that students feel toward other members of their school community is one of several "internal developmental assets," or characteristics of students and their individual experiences, that encourage positive development. The association of school belonging, cooperation, and cohesion to a commitment to democratic values in particular was noted by Battisch and colleagues (1997). In addition, Bryk and colleagues (1993) found that supportive and caring schools reflecting positive shared values, activities and social relationships fostered distinctive ethos for high academic, social justice and community engagement outcomes. Together, these findings are important for two reasons. First, they illustrate the power of positive school climate to promote a sense of belonging through democratic values. Second, they support the creation of a school environment that emphasizes collaboration, trust and respect based on positive shared values, relationships and activities as a foundation for improved students' learning and the development of citizenship.

4. Mutual trust and positive interactions among diverse students, faculty and administrators

Positive school climate for citizenship fosters a supportive environment that merits mutual trust

and positive interactions among all its members. Group openness, collaboration, cooperation and supportive atmosphere are consistent with schools' mission and goals. While quality collaboration and cooperation have positive influences on a school's citizenship education climate on their own, these qualities are further enhanced when they occur in environments where members of the school community are respectful and trusting of one another. Cohen's (2001) work in the field of social and emotional education suggests that improved classroom and school climate can create "an environment where learning optimally takes place." Indeed, the Search Institute (2000) identifies a caring school climate as one of several "external developmental assets," or characteristics of a student's environment, that encourage positive development both academically and socially.

Such environments can be promoted through the social studies to allow teachers and students to participate in shared partnerships and provide a basis for mutual understandings. These mutual understandings help create a "bridge to civility" that engages youth in experiences that contribute to the well-being of others, develops social consciousness, responsibility, and awareness of the social and political world (Berman, 1998), including cultural awareness and positive interactions among different cultural groups of students. In this role, the social studies also help to increase awareness and acceptance of cultural differences, and develop the ability to communicate more comfortably with culturally and ethnically diverse members of society.

5. Students' input in planning and skills in participatory problem-solving that is valued

McLaughlin (2004) suggests that organizations such as schools should provide opportunities for youth to engage as active learners in ways that lead to confidence in the value of participatory problem-solving. Positive school climates foster environments in which members of the school community respect, value and promote students' abilities to shape their own learning and participate in solving school and community problems. In these schools, students feel a sense of freedom

to express their ideas and respect the ideas of others, both in the classroom and through school-wide activities that bring students together to address issues related to school life. Members of schools with positive climate ask students for their input regarding a range of issues including school policies, and this input is taken into account by teachers and administrators.

Engaging schools in vision-building activities can connect groups of students to best practices and the design and evaluation of programs that acknowledge the value and the contributions of students. Through these experiences students become active participants in the democratic process and meaningfully contribute to school life.

6. Deliberation and dialogue about issues that are thoughtful and respectful

The development of citizenship education through thoughtful and respectful deliberation and dialogue is supported by policies and practices that are student-centered, recognize and encourage civic-related professional development, and create genuine opportunities for collaboration, cooperation and communication across the school. Torney-Purta (2002) found that civic knowledge, skills and dispositions are fruitful in a rich classroom climate based on mutual engagement. In such an environment, trying out one's knowledge in interpersonal situations makes the learning experience more meaningful by discussing with others. Schools with positive climate support opportunities for deliberation and dialogue that cultivate the ability to listen to others' views, acknowledge those views, and build on them when expressing one's own ideas. In these schools, teachers encourage students to discuss political or social issues about which people have different opinions. They ensure that there is enough time to talk about a topic and create a safe and welcoming environment where many students are comfortable expressing their opinions (Hess, 2004). Through the social studies students can receive the support they need to express their opinions on social and controversial issues. In this way, students can develop the ability to critique, analyze and formulate possibilities for action critical

for responsive citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2003).

7. Engagement within the school and commitment to learn about and interact with the broader community

Citizenship education has an important relationship to active participation within the broader community. Beginning through involvement in student councils and other types of in-school civic participation, citizenship education continues by building relationships between the school and the community. Democratic concepts developed through the social studies such as inequality, injustice, and an obligation to the broader community are elements that link real community issues, from the local to the international level, to co-curricular activities in the school.

A positive school climate also promotes a shared commitment to policies that encourage more and deeper collaborative interaction between the school and the community. Ongoing involvement in social studies activities linked to the community, through experiences like high-quality service-learning, can help students to identify community problems, create solutions to address those problems, and reflect on the process through multiple points of view.

Therefore, beginning through in-school engagement, the social studies serve as a catalyst to extend the understanding and application of citizenship education into the community. Democratic understandings can be successfully linked to practice through real issues creating opportunities for students to become active and contributing members in their communities leading to increased political and civic engagement (Morgan & Streb, 1999). Beneficial to the community, students, and schools, these experiences provide opportunities for achievement and recognition, participation in meaningful peer interactions, and help students work toward collective goals with each other and adult members, all consistent with the goals of citizenship education.

SUMMARY

The connection between the framework and social studies is powerful. The framework provides a basis to transform policies and practice to promote the civic mission of schools. The relationship between the framework and the social studies suggests a common school mission that cultivates an environment for citizenship across the school and in the community is vital. Meaningful citizenship education tied to innovative social studies experiences focuses on developing trust, collaboration, and cooperation through democratic school practice. These practices can provide students with opportunities to shape their own learning and participate in problem solving through critical thinking. The framework connects the social studies and an open school climate in the common goal of fostering the knowledge, skills and dispositions that students need to develop into politically aware and socially responsible individuals.

SCHOOL CITIZENSHIP CLIMATE ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

The school citizenship education climate theoretical framework is intended to provide the rationale for the intersection of citizenship education and positive school climate for all members of the school community. As such, the framework and the social studies are natural links in school for creating the conditions necessary for improved learning and citizenship. Based on research and other data, the framework provides a deeper understanding of the critical components of each characteristic, their implications for the social studies and serves as a framework the School Citizenship Education Climate Assessment instrument.

COLLECTION OF ITEMS

Using our seven-point framework for the components of an optimal school citizenship education climate discussed in the previous section, we set out to develop an assessment of school citizenship climate that could be used by

administrators and researchers in assessing the attitudes and opinions of various stakeholders in the school. As such, we created a survey of closed-ended questions that could be downloaded from the National Center of Learning and Citizenship's website (Education Commission of the States, 2005) and is designed to be answered by adults in the greater school community. Our first step in developing this assessment tool was to collect items from a variety of sources relating to school and classroom climate, policies, and educational practices. Such items came from a variety of research fields and disciplines. Included in this search were assessments of civic education, educational psychology, and service-learning. For civic education, we considered many attitudinal items and scales from the IEA Civic Education Study (Baldi et al., 2001; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). These included items relating to school and classroom climate generally, students' extracurricular activity participation, and curricular practices relating to civic-related subjects. We also included several items from state program evaluations to develop sections related to school policy and administration (Idaho Department of Education, 2005). Assessments from educational psychologists provided us with several scales relating more generally to school climate, including school outreach policies and perceptions of collaboration among diverse groups within the school (Brand et al., 2003; WASSC, 2005)¹. Finally, in the field of service-learning we drew from two recent inventories of school service-learning environments aimed primarily at school administrators (Minkler, 2005; RMC Research Corporation, 2004). In a few cases where certain characteristics still required more items, new questions were developed drawing from other items and in consultation with members of the National Center for Learning and Citizenship (Terry Pickeral, personal communication).

¹ The Inventory of School Climate (Brand et al., 2003) is a part of the larger High Performance Learning Communities Assessment developed by Dr. Robert Felner of the University of Louisville.

ADAPTATION OF ITEMS

Once scales and items were identified and categorized in terms of our seven-point school citizenship climate framework, we refined individual items in several ways in order to fit them into our overall assessment instrument. First, we gave each item four response options, and added an option for “Not Applicable” only in cases where a particular activity or policy may not exist in the school. Since the items came from such diverse sources, they had anywhere from two to five response options in their original form. Keeping the same number of responses for each question made for a more uniform assessment. Second, we standardized the wording of the response options so that each item was a question either of the frequency with which an activity occurred (almost never, rarely, sometimes, or often) or of how strongly the respondent agreed or disagreed with a statement (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree). Similarly to adapting the number of response categories, this adaptation led to more uniformity within the instrument.

Our third change involved adapting the wording of many of items in ways that made them more suitable for an adult audience. Many of the items used in this survey were originally designed to assess middle-school students’ attitudes and perceptions (Baldi et al., 2001; Brand et al., 2003; Torney-Purta et al., 2001), and as such, were worded in ways that young adolescents could understand. In many of these cases, the language used could be streamlined in order to be adapted for a more adult reading level. Additionally, any question aimed at students that was worded in the first or second person (i.e., “I” or “you”) was adapted to refer to what “students” do more generally.

Finally, we made changes to individual items in order to be certain that the questions and statements were addressing the correct concepts. In some cases, this involved adapting items so they did not address two concepts at once (e.g., parents are encouraged to come to school and feel welcomed in the school)—a characteristics known in survey research as “double-barreling” (Converse

& Presser, 1986). In these cases, we split the double-barreled item into two items with each item addressing a different concept, or we substituted a more general concept in the term for the two more specific concepts.

In other cases, this involved substituting a more specific topic for a more general topic. For example, questions from the national items in the IEA Civic Education Study (Baldi et al., 2001) that asked about curricular practices in social studies classrooms were adapted to address practices in contexts where students “study topics related to civic education.” This was particularly important in adapting many of the existing survey items, which were aimed at middle-school and high-school, so that they were appropriate for all K-12 grades.

INSTRUCTIONS AND SURROUNDING MATERIALS

Accompanying the survey itself is a document describing the development of the seven characteristics of an optimal school citizenship education climate (Homana et al., 2005). It also provides instructions on how to properly use the assessment, including a description of how to compute composite scale scores, recommendations of who should complete the survey, and suggestions for using assessment results. The document also provides a list of assessment items and their sources grouped by scales. It serves both to provide users information about information data sources and to indicate explicitly which items group into scales.

EVALUATION OF INSTRUMENT

After collecting, organizing, and adapting items for inclusion in this assessment, we solicited evaluations of the full assessment and surrounding materials from individuals with different sources of expertise in issues relating to school citizenship climate and who would be representative of future assessment users. Among the evaluators were school superintendents and evaluation directors, researchers in the fields of political science and citizenship, and members of policy advocacy groups such as the Campaign for the Civic Mission

of Schools. We made final changes in response to several of their suggestions, including refining the structural material of the assessment (e.g., the text accompanying the actual items), adapting the list of potential adult users, and making several additional modifications to the wording of individual items. The version of the assessment currently available through the National Center for Learning and Citizenship (Homana et al., 2005) reflects the suggestions of this group of experts.

FUTURE WORK

While the procedure above describes the process taken to create an instrument designed to be administered to adults involved in schools from grades K-12, additional steps are also being taken to further adapt the instrument. Pending additions to this assessment include a series of open-ended questions that culminate each section, further discussion of its use in understanding a variety of student-level and school-level outcomes, and the addition of new scales. Also, there are several adaptations that are planned for further in the future. First, the process of expert evaluation of the instrument is ongoing. Changes to the content of the instrument will continue to be made in line with recommendations about additional questions that should be asked relating to the seven characteristics of a positive school climate outlined in our framework. Second, we are working to develop differentiated versions of this assessment that will be more tailored to specific grade levels. In the future, there will be instruments relating more specifically to characteristics of school climate in elementary, middle, and high schools. Finally, while we designed the first version of the instrument for adults, we plan to adapt the assessments in ways that will make them appropriate for student respondents. The input of student voice into decisions about the school is invaluable, and developing an instrument to capture this voice is critical.

POTENTIAL USERS AND PURPOSES

It is our hope that individuals and institutions interested in school climate in a variety of capacities will find this assessment useful in understanding how schools foster citizenship education. Following from the importance that we place on the opinions of superintendents and district-level assessment experts in evaluating our instrument, we hope especially that schools will use this assessment as an evaluative tool. For principals and teachers the School Citizenship Education Climate Assessment can serve as an intervention to identify the characteristics that may already exist in the school and build on them. In this sense, the assessment can be used both to collect baseline data on the state of a school's citizenship education climate, and to conduct follow-up evaluations at regular intervals in order to chart progress and improvements. If initiatives to improve school citizenship climate have not yet been undertaken, the assessment can also serve as a conversation starter that can help schools to deepen their understanding for the potential of civic opportunity for all students. Users of the assessment may also be interested in relating schools' performance on this assessment to students' performances on tests of academic achievement (particularly in the area of civics or social studies) in order to research the connection between a positive school climate and enhanced school learning.

Social studies educators, however, should not feel as if they are alone in realizing the civic mission of schools. While we believe the social studies are pivotal in citizenship education, and this assessment can serve as a catalyst for schools to address deeper notions of citizenship education democratic principles and civic and political engagement, we understand that placing the brunt of citizenship education on the field cannot ensure the civic mission of schools. This assessment can help support the social studies by creating opportunities for embracement of citizenship at a broader level of partnership across the school. Therefore, we recognize the work of others in the social studies field (Grant & Vansledright, 1996; Levinson, 2003) who advocate for schools to

recognize that citizenship education requires cross-discipline responsibility—establishing and building interactive relationships across subject areas, including math and science. In fact, a convened series of five professional judgment groups between 2003-04—consisting of policymakers, expert teachers in civic education (including those in social studies), school leaders and academic researchers—recommended a whole-school, interdisciplinary approach to citizenship education as part of its goal to develop a coherent policy and practice framework for citizenship education. (Torney-Purta & Vermeer, 2004).

We encourage researchers interested in the education and political domains to use these instruments in order to collect empirical data. While all of these instruments are also available from their original sources, our assessment provides researchers with the scales and items most salient to a study of school citizenship climate from each of the viewpoints outlined in our framework. In particular, this resource is designed to accompany an item bank of student outcomes developed by the National Center for Learning and Citizenship (Education Commission of the States, 2005). Researchers interested in outcomes relating to students' civic knowledge, interpretative skills, participatory skills, and dispositions could relate students' responses to these questions to characteristics of their schools' citizenship climates as rated by adult members of the school community. The variety of outcomes that can be measured using these databases allows researchers from a vast range of disciplines (including educational psychology, social and moral development, and political science) to determine how school climate influences those characteristics of young people most salient to their work. This flexibility is particularly beneficial to researchers who are interested simultaneously in the academic and socio-emotional development of students in the context of school and community.

We believe that successful instruction requires a shared commitment to articulate the citizenship theme across the curriculum, across grade levels and more broadly across the school. This assessment tool can assist in this process.

Furthermore, it can help identify the elements of engaging instructional methods, as defined in terms of their contribution to citizenship education climate that both connect the curriculum to issues of concern in the broader community and lead to enhanced learning and social outcomes for students.

We also believe that this assessment can be used to shift policies and practices in support of teacher collaboration and ongoing professional development to help faculty develop the skills that they need, such as assistance in establishing open classroom climates for effective citizenship education. This is especially true for new teachers. Additionally, faculty can be engaged in acquiring the skills of curriculum and assessment development wherever possible. As such, this assessment can serve as a springboard for schools to identify ways that faculty can encourage students to construct their own learning; while also recognizing, respecting and supporting student voice and diversity throughout the school.

This assessment can lead to the identification of shared values for civic learning extending to school district administrators, board members and community leaders who understand and support the democratic principles embraced and enacted by the school. In these schools, policies will move to encourage and reward school-wide civic learning in alignment with the values and principles shared throughout the school. Creating the overarching structure for students to achieve this goal requires a school mission that embraces the values of citizenship education.

In summary, a positive school climate is crucial for the development of competent, responsible and capable citizens. The formation of a positive school climate for civic involvement requires the shared recognition and commitment of the school community members—the student learner as a prime focus; the need for intellectual and institutional leadership; and the need for a competent and caring teaching staff who share common goals with students, parents, and the community. A positive school climate includes an identifiable, open and nurturing school ethos that attempts to foster a sense of responsibility and

efficacy among students and staff. There is mutual respect and collaboration among administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the community. Above all, there is an atmosphere of conscious commitment to foster the well-being, academic achievement and civic development of students. In working with other disciplines across the school, the social studies provides a powerful framework with a natural relationship to the goals of citizenship education through which positive school climate for citizenship can be achieved.

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