

## FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

*From Research to Practice, a column dedicated to recognizing successful “bridges” between researchers and practitioners, reports on research with practical implications for youth civic engagement. Additionally, it presents concrete examples of how practitioners have applied this research to encourage the participation of young people in civic and political life.*

### MEASURING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The Core Indicators of Engagement offer practitioners an easy-to-use and comprehensive tool for measuring the level of civic engagement in their communities. Designed and tested by leading researchers, the Indicators consist of a series of questions that measure participants' involvement in 19 core civic activities ranging from voting to volunteering.

Administering The Core Indicators of Engagement to individual participants before and after a program provides program administrators with a clear sense of participants' progress in civic and

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political engagement. According to Scott Keeter and the other authors of the Indicators, “We intended to arrive at a questionnaire that accurately measures behaviors that are both consistent with political and civic motivations and [are] being practiced by people today.”

Practitioners can also compare their results to national results found in the research report, “The Civic and Political Health of the Nation: A Generational Portrait.” Copies of the report as well as a summary of findings can be downloaded from CIRCLE's Web site, ([www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org)).

#### INFORMING FUTURE PLANS: CAMPUS COMPACT FINDS THE CORE INDICATORS OF ENGAGEMENT HELPFUL IN PROGRAM PLANNING

There are many different ways that the Indicators can be used to enhance practice. Campus Compact ([www.compact.org](http://www.compact.org)) — a national coalition of nearly 850 college and university presidents committed to the civic purposes of higher education — recently employed the Indicators to help plan for and implement a new *Raise Your Voice* campaign designed to increase college student participation in public life. The Indicators served as a tool to collect baseline data and suggest program areas that needed greater focus — especially efforts to foster more political activity in otherwise politically unengaged students.

In addition, Campus Compact utilized the national findings reported in *The Civic and Political Health of the Nation: A Generational Portrait* to help analyze their baseline data and develop a set of strategies to effectively engage students. Nick Longo, National Student Coordinator of Raise Your Voice, found that, “The report has given us what we really needed — it gave us a baseline for youth civic engagement; but it also helped us to begin to think more creatively about the way young people define their civic engagement in new ways that we still don't totally understand.”

#### EVALUATING EFFORTS: YOUTHNOISE USES THE CORE INDICATORS OF ENGAGEMENT TO COMMUNICATE RESULTS

The Indicators have also served as a successful evaluation tool. YouthNOISE ([www.youthNOISE.com](http://www.youthNOISE.com)) — a non-profit whose mission is to inspire, connect, and empower youth to help young people everywhere by volunteering, fundraising and speaking out — used the Indicators to measure the extent to which their Web site supports or facilitates each indicator through content, features, and functionality. By placing public testimonials about the YouthNOISE program next to each of the 19 indicators, they are now able to show stakeholders how the YouthNOISE Web site encourages civic engagement among young people.

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According to Diane Ty, President and Co-Founder of YouthNOISE, “In the absence of formal outcome evaluation research this past year, we've been able to use the Indicators as a framework to communicate our results and strategies to current and potential funders.” ★

*Copies of the report “The Civic and Political Health of the Nation: A Generational Portrait” can be downloaded from CIRCLE's Web site, [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org). Requests for hard copies should be sent to [dsapienz@umd.edu](mailto:dsapienz@umd.edu).*