

RESEARCH ROUNDUP

The Research Roundup column highlights recent research findings commissioned or generated by CIRCLE. Also included is an update on new CIRCLE products such as Fact Sheets, Research Articles, Research Abstracts, Bibliographies, and Datasets.

CIRCLE JOINTLY HOSTS SUMMER YOUTH MAPPING PROGRAM

On June 25th, CIRCLE began an exciting five-week youth mapping program for fifteen teenagers from Prince George's County in Maryland. Program participants used mapping software to study a community problem of their choice. This program preceded a larger joint project between CIRCLE and the University of Wisconsin-Madison which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education (DoE). The goal of the larger project is to develop and test educational software that can be used in service-learning and social studies classes to map community issues.

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The summer mapping program was jointly hosted by CIRCLE and Maryland-National Capital Area Park & Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). All students were enrolled in summer recreation programs through the M-NCPPC and during the school year they attend Prince George's County Public Schools.

THE BIG ISSUES

The students wanted to know how their school system could be improved. In particular, they investigated funding, discipline, parental involvement, and school size as possible avenues for

reform. They interviewed experts, elected officials, and community activists. The students did all the research, interviewing, and writing. With technical help from CIRCLE, students also created a public Web site that summarizes their research findings.

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Several of the interviewees—especially the University of Maryland's Dr. Martin Johnson—said that Prince George's County Public School students should be held to higher standards. He felt that if students are expected to learn more, they will rise to the occasion. Higher expectations might also help with discipline and order. Other interviewees stressed that schools are not orderly enough and students do not show enough respect. Lack of discipline interferes with learning and makes it more difficult to attract good teachers. The project helped students to understand how the different avenues of reform are often inter-related. The results of the project can be viewed at the Web site the students built: <http://www.princegeorges.org/parksandplanning/index.html>



Program participants and organizers (from the left): Dr. Stephanie Timmons-Brown, Dr. Peter Levine, Andra, Harmonee, Ronai, Leah, Anthony, Gary, Miguel, and Dr. Martin Johnson. (Last names of the student participants are not included.)

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EXPANDING YOUTH MAPPING

A team at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is now developing a software suite, Youth Map, and a curriculum called CivNet, informed in part by the CIRCLE pilot project. Youth Map software is based on the epistemic games research of David Williamson Shaffer in which young people use software tools to play roles that parallel adult professions. In CivNet, young people play the role of civic organizers to explore an issue in their own community. As part of the project, they conduct interviews with real adults who are involved in their issue. The software uses powerful civic mapping tools that have been developed for use by news media, non-profit, and government organizations, to model the process of community organizing in the format of an epistemic game, and publish the results for the benefit of the local community. The result of each project is an interactive, customizable, sophisticated, research-based public Web site. Using U.S. Department of Education funds, Community Knowledgebase has subcontracted with CIRCLE to evaluate Youth Map, first in pilot sites and then in a formal experiment with control groups. ■

STUDENTS INTERVIEWED...

Martin Johnson, Professor of Mathematics Education and former Dean, University of Maryland

Gerron Levi, Maryland State Delegate

Arthur Turner, President of the Coalition of Central Prince George's Community Organizations

Phil Lee, President, Kettering (MD) Civic Federation

Peter Shapiro, Former County Council Chair

CIRCLE FACT SHEETS

CIRCLE has produced numerous Fact Sheets, which are brief documents with basic information and graphs on various topics. The following Fact Sheets have been recently added to CIRCLE's Web site:

≡ **U.S. Civics Instruction: Content and Teaching Strategies.** This fact sheet presents previously unreleased evidence from the 2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation survey (CPHS) about the themes emphasized in civics classes as well as the teaching strategies teachers employ in civics instruction.

≡ **Voter Registration Among Young People.** This fact sheet presents youth voter registration rates in presidential elections. Voter registration among young people reached its highest level in thirty years in 2004. Seventy percent of young people, ages 18-29, said they were registered to vote in the 2004 Presidential election. Uses data from the Current Population Survey, November (Voting) Supplement.