

Modeling Good Citizenship for the Next Generation

Susan Leigh Flinspach and Jason Bradley Kay



Birth may make us citizens in law; in practice, however, competent and responsible citizens are created through education in school, in the family, and in the larger community.¹

Young people learn about civic responsibility and government from many sources, including their local public officials. As models of active citizenship, these officials set examples for their community's youth. They can be particularly influential when they take part in classroom instruction, giving students the opportunity to develop an appreciation for them as individuals, for their offices, and for the work of their offices. The time that public officials dedicate to the civic education of students helps strengthen the next generation of American citizens.

This article reports on the performance of today's youth on several civic indicators. It also discusses the notion that local public officials are role models of good citizenship. Finally, it uses cases from two North Carolina high schools to illustrate that notion.

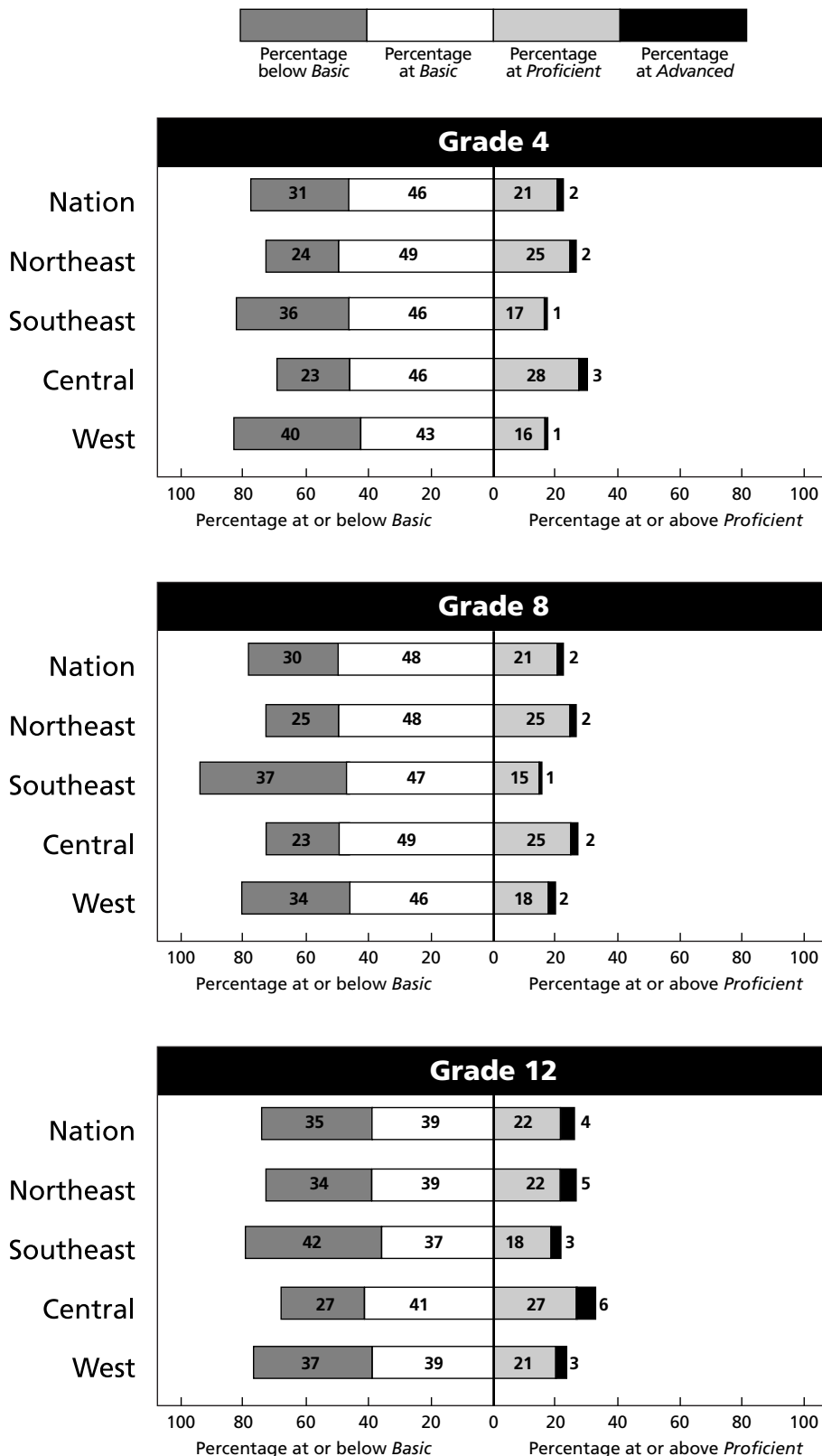
The Problem

The engagement of young people in public life is directly shaped by their political socialization,² that is, by what they learn about politics and government from family, peers, community members, and the media. Less than one quarter of youth report that they often talk about politics, government, or current events with their parents.³ When such conversations do take place, American students may hear more about the negatives of

government than about the positives. Press coverage is perceived by many as highlighting scandals and political strife. Parents' voting behavior strongly affects their children's voting behavior,⁴ and "more than half the children in America live in households where neither parent votes."⁵ Following a longitudinal study of civic education in five countries, including the United States, Carole Hahn reported, "The depth of students' political cynicism . . . is troubling. Few stu-

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Figure 1. 1998 Civics Assessment—Students by Achievement Level



Source: Adapted from ANTHONY D. LUTKUS ET AL., NAEP 1998 CIVICS REPORT CARD FOR THE NATION 58 (NCES 2000-457, Washington, D.C.: National Center for Educ. Statistics, 1999). Percentages may not add to 100, or to the exact percentages below, at, or above achievement levels, because of rounding.

dents have met any elected government officials, and they rarely hear adults talking about the good, hard working representatives. ‘Politics,’ ‘politicians,’ and ‘government’ seem to be dirty words for many youth in this study. . . .”⁶

A recent study by the National Association of Secretaries of State provides more evidence that large numbers of youth in the United States are either apathetic or cynical about government and politics and do not participate fully as citizens of a constitutional democracy.⁷ The study was based on voting records, a survey of fifteen- to twenty-four-year-olds, and focus groups with young people. The report of the study concludes that “[y]oung people suffer from an information and skill deficit about politics and the process of voting. Their personalized and often vague understanding of citizenship deters them from getting involved in the political process.”⁸

The report documents that, in the United States, from 1972, when eighteen-year-olds were first permitted to vote, to the present, there has been a steady decline in the voter turnout of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds. Fifty percent of eligible adults in this age group voted in 1972, but only 32 percent voted in the 1996 presidential elections.⁹ Just one-fourth of the survey respondents said that “civic duty” motivates them to vote.¹⁰

Many citizens expect education in the social studies, particularly in government and civics (a social science dealing with the rights and duties of citizens), to counter the apathy and the cynicism that students often acquire through years of political socialization. Civic knowledge gained in school can shape students’ attitudes about government and politics, countering some negative socialization effects.¹¹

Unfortunately, too few students are knowledgeable about civics. This finding of the study by the National Association of Secretaries of State¹² is consistent with the Nation’s Civics Report Cards issued by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAEP tested students on citizenship or civics in 1969–70, 1971–72, 1975–76, 1981–82, 1988, and 1998.¹³ The scope and the content of the NAEP assessments have changed over time, but until the most recent one, they focused on stu-

dents' civic knowledge. In 1988, for example, the assessment measured the knowledge of fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders about democratic principles and the purposes, the organization, and the functions of government. At a White House conference on character building, the Center for Civic Education reported the results: "[S]tudents have only a superficial knowledge of civics and lack depth of understanding. For example, only 38% of eighth graders knew that Congress makes laws; and nearly half of high school seniors did not recognize typical examples of the federal system of checks and balances."¹⁴

For the 1998 NAEP civics assessment, policy makers and test designers were interested in more than students' civic knowledge. They designed the measurement framework to include intellectual and participatory skills and civic dispositions (that is, civic attitudes and values), in addition to civic knowledge.¹⁵ The skills component evaluated students' use of knowledge "to think and act effectively and in a reasoned manner in response to the challenges of civic life. . . ."¹⁶ The component dealing with civic dispositions assessed the traits or values of individuals that influence how they carry out their citizenship. These include the "traits of private character" essential to the preservation and improvement of democracy, such as moral responsibility and respect for individual worth and human dignity, and the "traits of public character," such as public spiritedness, respect for law, and civility.¹⁷

The tests were administered to a national sample of students in the fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades. The results are reported in terms of achievement levels: basic, proficient, and advanced (see Figure 1). "Basic" represents "partial mastery of the knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at a given grade"; "proficient" signifies "solid academic performance" for the grade; and "advanced" denotes superior performance.¹⁸ The achievement goal set by the National Assessment Governing Board is the proficient level; performance at the basic level or below is under the standard set for the grade.¹⁹

Across the three grades, less than a quarter of students nationwide scored at the proficient or advanced level. For the

Southeast, which includes North Carolina, about 80 percent of the students tested at each grade level were not proficient in civics. According to Charles Quigley, executive director of the Center for Civic Education, "The NAEP findings are grounds for concern. They call for action to remedy a serious deficiency in the education of American citizens."²⁰

These data paint a troubling picture. Many youth lack the knowledge, the skills, and the dispositions to become fully engaged in the democratic process. Many are cynical about politics, and the percentage of young people who vote

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has been in decline since 1972. Taken together, the indicators highlight a problem with the transmission of the tradition of American democracy from one generation to the next.

Local Public Officials as Role Models

*The habits of the mind, as well as what Alexis de Tocqueville called the "habits of the heart," the dispositions that inform the democratic ethos, are not inherited. They must be fostered and nurtured by word and study and by the power of example. Democracy is not a "machine that would go of itself," but must be consciously reproduced, one generation instructing the next in the knowledge and skills, as well as the civic character and commitments required for its sustenance.*²¹

How can young citizens be encouraged to lead fuller, more productive civic lives? The answer is not simple. The schools, the institutions of civil society,

political organizations, and government officials all have a part in responding to this problem. The strategy described in this section pertains to local public officials and "the power of example."

Local government officials have a unique opportunity to influence the civic dispositions of students. When appointed or elected officials take office, they become part of the civic education of today's youth. What they choose to do and how they choose to do it may be held up for scrutiny at the community's dinner tables and in its classrooms. Because they are accessible, local officials can easily model for students what citizenship is all about. They have firsthand opportunities to help prepare the students of their communities to become better citizens.

For local public officials, the job of role model has two components: collective actions and individual actions. The collective component refers to the ways that government officials work with one another and with their constituents. Do they collectively strive to practice citizenship in their governmental functions? Do they infuse the "ideals of citizenship into the discourse and activities of their organizations"?²² For example, a local governing board with a history of dealing with conflict through personal attacks might begin to use a code of ethics that stresses mutual respect despite disagreements. Over time, that collective action might dispel some of the voters' political cynicism and have a positive effect on the civic dispositions of the community and its youth.

The individual actions of public officials also are likely to influence young people. In the conclusion of her book on the effectiveness of civic education in five countries over the last fifteen years, Hahn posed the following question:

*Few students in any of the five countries reported ever meeting politicians, and I could not help but wonder: If they had more opportunities to talk to people who worked on local councils, in state or provincial legislatures, or in grassroots political organizations, might students develop a more balanced sense of the work that many people do on behalf of the public?*²³

AN ACTIVITY FOR A UNIT ON SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT

Whose Job Is It to Fix It?

The County Commissioner's, the School Board Member's, or Yours . . .

Cooperative Learning Activity

Local government officials, such as the county commissioners and school board members, have the responsibility of making decisions that have long-lasting effects on our schools and community. As you do in your own personal problem solving, these officials have to consider specific costs and benefits as they make these decisions.

County commissioners and school board members each play different roles in relation to public education. One is responsible for funding while the other determines school policy. Today, we will put ourselves in the "shoes" of these local government officials as we try to determine how they would respond to certain issues or problems concerning public schools.

With your assigned group,

- read each of the following scenarios,
- identify who (either the county commissioner, school board member, or both) would address the problem/issue, and
- discuss ways the local government official could respond (be sure to list your suggestions).

Scenario #1

A new study shows that corporal punishment is the most effective means of disciplining the students. As a result, several local high schools decide to reinstate paddling as the primary means of discipline. Students who choose to forgo the paddling are automatically suspended for ten days. Many parents and students are upset by this policy.

Scenario #2

Governor Jim Hunt has officially declared 2001 as the year of technology for North Carolina's Public Schools. Wake County, as the location of the state government, wants to be an example for the other counties to follow. Who will decide how Wake County can become the leader of technology in North Carolina?

Scenario #3

One municipality in Wake County experiences a huge population boom after Microsoft decides to build its East Coast headquarters there. As a result, the high school is extremely overcrowded. Lunches are shorter, lockers must be shared, both trailers and classes are filled past capacity, and grades are on the decline. Parents are angry and want this issue to be addressed immediately.

Scenario #4

Your parents receive a letter that the new school assignment plan has decided that your younger brother will be attending another high school. However, you will continue to go here. Your parents would prefer that the two of you attend the same high school. What can be done?

The seventy-eight people attending a Partners' Meeting of the North Carolina Civic Education Consortium in autumn 1998 agreed with Hahn about the importance of public official-student interactions. When polled about the major barriers to civic education in the state, they indicated that students' lack of direct contact with public servants in city, county, and state government was the greatest barrier.²⁴

Many public officials are happy to make time to shake hands with students at graduation or to attend a principal's breakfast for honor students. Some local politicians participate in the annual Elected Officials Go to School program sponsored by the North Carolina Parent-Teacher Association. Not only do these "ceremonial tasks"²⁵ make students feel special, but as students learn about the people they meet, the experience breathes life into classroom lessons about local government. Both effects are likely to bolster students' civic dispositions.

Local public officials have the opportunity to influence students directly and more substantially as civic role models when they act as resources for teachers, especially when they participate in instruction about what government officials do. At the request of a teacher or a principal, some officials agree to speak to students about how their community is addressing a particular problem. Others visit classes to answer students' questions as part of an instructional unit on local government. Still others allow students to interview them or to "shadow" them—that is, to follow them around for a day or so as they carry out their public responsibilities. Activities that bring local public officials into face-to-face learning interactions with students who are interested in their work are likely to make a lasting impression on the students.²⁶

Two Cases

The two cases presented in this section have their roots in the 1999 Summer Civics Teaching Institute sponsored by the Civic Education Consortium. The Civic Education Consortium is a partnership of more than 200 organizations and individuals that seeks to build a new generation of knowledgeable, caring, and involved North Carolina citizens. The

Consortium's Summer Civics Teaching Institute is a professional development program for high school social studies teachers throughout the state. During the one-week Teaching Institute and in the subsequent months, the teachers create and refine an instructional unit focusing on civics or government. The Teaching Institute encourages teachers to break away from the textbook and use their community as a resource for learning. Each unit builds up to a culminating activity through which students demonstrate their mastery of the material.

Local government officials were key community resources in both of the cases discussed here. The first case describes a unit entitled "Why Can't I Go to School with You? A Look at School Assignment and Redistricting," which brought three school board members and a county commissioner into a Wake County high school. The second case features a unit called "That's Not Fair!," which introduced Henderson County High School students to the law. Local officials helped with field trips and classroom activities.

A Unit on School Assignment

Kara McCraw and Susan Taylor, teachers at Leesville Road High School in Raleigh, decided to focus their local government unit on a subject that would engage their students personally: the assignment of students to schools. Many of their students had had to attend several elementary and middle schools, mostly to accommodate the rapid growth of the school system. Students living across the street from Leesville Road High were not within its attendance boundaries, yet some of the school's students rode the bus 15 to 20 minutes every morning to come from another neighborhood. Because of their experiences with student assignment, many students had strong feelings about the topic, and Kara and Susan hoped that these feelings would draw them into the local government lessons.

The teachers designed the unit to instruct students about the ways that governments, particularly local governments, affect schools and students. Recognizing that the assignment plans that shape actual school boundaries are complex, they developed the unit around four



general approaches to student assignment. They asked several public officials to participate in the local government lessons and in the culminating activity, a School Board Forum at which school board members would select the best small-group presentation about student assignment in Wake County Schools.

The teachers divided the unit into four lessons. The first lesson had two objectives: (1) to introduce the students to the roles of the federal, state, and local governments in education and (2) to help students understand what student assignment is and how it affects them personally. The classes read about governmental roles in education, and they discussed why class members from different neighborhoods attended Leesville Road High School. Their assignments included creating a graphic organizer (a visual organization of their thoughts) entitled Public Schools, the Government, and You and making a pie chart to represent educational funding in North Carolina from federal, state, and local sources.

In the second lesson, entitled Whose Job Is It to Fix It?, two Wake County public officials visited the classroom to teach students about their work. A school board member and a county commissioner helped students distinguish the education-related jobs of county commissioners from those of school board members. (For one activity in this lesson, see the opposite page.)

Students begin learning about the workings of government when they are young.

The third lesson dealt with student assignment and the judicial system. After reviewing three court cases, *Brown v. Board of Education*, *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, and *Capacchione v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*, each student wrote a reflective essay considering whether race should be a factor in Wake County student assignments. (For a legal discussion of this issue, see the article on page 2.)

The final lesson sent students to the Web to learn about four approaches to student assignment: neighborhood schools; controlled-choice plans; charter schools; and the goals and the criteria for the 1999–2000 Wake County student assignment plan (not the plan itself). Working in groups of four, the students researched the approaches using Web sites and materials selected by the teachers. Each student wrote a research paper, and each group prepared a presentation recommending one of the approaches for the Wake County Schools. The groups made their presentations to the other students, the teachers, and the assistant principal, who selected four groups to present their projects at the School Board Forum. Three Wake County school board members attended the School Board Forum, which was held in the high school's media center. They rated the presenta-

Loony Laws

EXERCISE FOR UNIT ON THE LAW



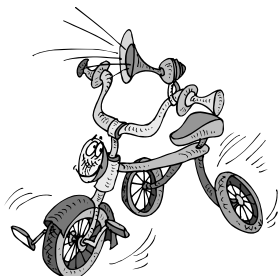
In Vermont it is illegal to whistle under water.



In Pueblo, Colorado, it is illegal to raise a dandelion or permit one to grow within the city limits.



To take a bath in Boston, you must have a doctor's written prescription.



You can attach a horn to your bicycle in New Mexico only if it produces a harmonious sound.



Idaho law makes it illegal to give your sweetheart a box of candy weighing less than fifty pounds.



A kiss can last no longer than one second in Halethorpe, Maryland.



In Hawaii, it is illegal to insert pennies in your ears.



In Nebraska, sneezing in public is prohibited by law.



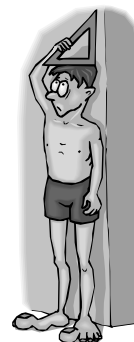
In South Dakota, an eighty-year-old woman cannot stop on the street to talk to a young married man.



It is illegal to shoot open a can of food in Spades, Indiana.



Singing out of tune in North Carolina is against the law.



A Louisiana law upholds your right to grow as tall as you like.

Can you figure out why each law might have been passed?
What conditions in society might have led to its passing? Share your ideas with the rest of the class.

Are there laws today that might be considered loony in the future?

Write down a rule or law that you must follow at home or at school that seems silly to you.
Explain why you think it is silly. Ask other students to provide good reasons for your rule or law.

For more Loony Laws, visit www.dumblaws.com.

tions, picking the student group with the most convincing arguments as the winner. The school board members praised all the students for their high-quality research and their presentation skills.

As the unit progressed, Kara and Susan noticed several indicators of heightened student interest—for example, 100 percent participation (with one excused absence) in the student presentations; excitement about writing the research papers (“because they wanted to write on this topic”); and a student coming to school on a snow day to get a book needed to finish the assignment. Kara and Susan said that, as a result of the unit, “our students are aware of the issues surrounding the new school reassignment plan, they know who represents their district on the school board, and they know who their county commissioner is.”

The teachers counted on the assistance of several Wake County public officials with the instruction, and they felt that the officials’ participation was one of the best features of the unit. For example, students were able to pose their questions about the jobs of the county commissioners and the school board directly to representatives of those two groups. The School Board Forum, which involved three school board members, honored the top student groups and reinforced the point that the school board makes final decisions about student assignment. A student in one of the top student groups commented that his favorite part of the unit was the School Board Forum. The officials involved in this unit presented the students with personal examples of public service and civic duty, as well as information about local government.

A Unit on the Law

Sue Moon and Patty Poston from North Henderson High School in Henderson County developed a unit to help their students understand government institutions. The purpose of the unit, entitled “That’s Not Fair!,” was to increase students’ knowledge of and involvement in a subject close to home but often poorly understood by high school students—the law. The teachers wanted students to see the law from the perspective of the local government officials who create,

implement, and enforce it. Consequently they designed the unit to expose students to the difficult choices that must be made in creating and enforcing new laws or policies. Rather than focusing exclusively on the laws themselves or on the process of law enforcement, Sue and Patty sought to give the students a living perspective of the relationship between laws and individuals in a democratic society.

The teachers organized the lessons within the unit to help students achieve

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three primary goals. The first goal was for students to be able to explain why laws are needed and how they are enacted, implemented, and enforced. To help students meet this goal, Sue and Patty created an activity called Loony Laws, which required students to examine a “strange” law and think of a reason why it might have been written. (For the exercise given to students, see the opposite page.)

The second goal was for students to investigate issues and problems confronting the American legal system. To meet this goal, students examined problems with either prison overcrowding or parole laws, and they thought about how these problems might be solved.

The unit’s final goal was for students to gain an ability to explain their rights and to analyze the obligations of responsible citizenship. A critical part of achieving this goal was to teach students how to take an active part in their local communities. Overall, the unit gave students a knowledge of the laws affecting their community and engaged them in

creating solutions to local legal issues.

The teachers depended on local government officials to help teach and act as role models for the unit. Local officials helped with both in-class activities and field trips. Students conversed with a local sheriff about the distinction between civil and criminal laws and about the punishments for various crimes. They analyzed a difficult parole decision and discussed their solution with a parole officer. They visited a state prison and talked to inmates. Several other government officials, including an assistant district attorney and a judge, visited the class to give the students a perspective on working in law-related jobs and dealing with legal issues. Throughout the unit, students were exposed to officials who work closely with legal issues and who were eager to invest time and energy in the students’ learning.

The unit culminated with students creating final projects that reflected what they had learned from the unit and what opinions they had formed. Some students investigated and reported on a current law and its impact on society. Others wrote well-researched editorials on issues such as treatment of prisoners, effectiveness of early release programs, and success of prison rehabilitation.

The final projects included articles, editorials, surveys, public opinion polls, interviews, and political cartoons. Local government officials involved with the legal system reviewed and evaluated the projects. The teachers displayed the projects around the classroom and the school, and they submitted the best examples to the local newspaper.

At the end of the unit, the teachers noted that the students showed marked improvement in the three goal areas, especially in understanding their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Students developed an understanding of the relationship between laws and individuals, and of the complex issues involved in creating and implementing laws. The students also showed an increased respect for the role that laws play in a democratic society, and a desire to get personally involved in the legal process. One student wrote a letter to the Center for the Prevention of School Violence, and another said he would write his congressman to disagree with a proposed law.

In addition to these indicators of learning and citizenship behavior, students simply enjoyed the unit. One student's comment typified this sentiment: "I liked the unit, in general, and I learned a lot about laws, the law system, and court procedures. I think this knowledge will really benefit me when I get older."

Sue and Patty highlighted the benefit that local officials brought to the students throughout the unit. Sue observed that the involvement of local officials in the field trip to the prison had an especially

room through their involvement is not only knowledge but the real-life example of civic responsibility. One goal of the unit was to help foster civic responsibility in the students, and local officials provided excellent examples for the students to follow. Sue stated, "We talk about responsibility and citizenship with the students and stress its importance. When local officials come in and help with units like this, they are sending a message that they are willing to take responsibility, too."

Conclusion

Local public officials are part of the solution to the problems of cynicism and apathy among young citizens. As role models of public service and civic duty, they set an example for their communities. Whenever their good example directly touches the lives of students, it helps counter the negative influences that are part of young people's political socialization. Local public officials who serve as instructional resources model civic responsibility for classrooms of future voters and public officials in ways that only those who fulfill that responsibility can do.

Notes

1. CENTER FOR CIVIC EDUCATION, CIVITAS: A FRAMEWORK FOR CIVIC EDUCATION 4 (Charles N. Quigley ed., Calabasas, Cal.: the Center, 1991).
2. See G. ALMOND & S. VERBA, THE CIVIC CULTURE (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963); K. P. LANGTON, POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969); J. D. MILLER & L. KIMMEL, The Education of 21st Century Citizens: Crossing the Bridges to Participation, Paper presented to the Social Science Education Consortium, Asilomar, Cal. (June 1997).
3. NATIONAL ASS'N OF SECRETARIES OF STATE, NEW MILLENNIUM PROJECT—PHASE I, A NATIONWIDE STUDY OF 15–24 YEAR OLD YOUTH 33 (1999), available at <http://www.nass.org>.
4. NEW MILLENNIUM PROJECT, at 8.
5. Adam Clymer, *Why We Don't Care about Politics*, RALEIGH NEWS & OBSERVER, Jan. 2, 2000, at 6A.
6. CAROLE L. HAHN, BECOMING POLITICAL: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION 31 (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1998).
7. NEW MILLENNIUM PROJECT, at 5.

8. *Id.* at 7.
9. *Id.* at 11.
10. *Id.* at 40.
11. Quigley lays out a framework for how this works, and Hahn documents this empirically. Charles N. Quigley, *Rationale for Civic Education and Civic Participation*, in CIVITAS, at 3–8; HAHN, BECOMING POLITICAL, at 239.
12. NEW MILLENNIUM PROJECT, at 7–8.
13. NATIONAL ASSESSMENT GOVERNING BD., CIVIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE 1998 NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS 10–11 (NAEP Civics Consensus Project, Washington, D.C.: the Board, 1996).
14. Center for Civic Education, The Role of Civic Education: A Report of the Task Force on Civic Education 7, Report Presented at the Second Annual White House Conference on Character Building for a Democratic, Civil Society, Washington, D.C. (May 19–20, 1995).
15. CIVIC FRAMEWORK, at 24–33.
16. *Id.* at 18.
17. *Id.* at 31–32.
18. ANTHONY D. LUTKUS ET AL., NAEP 1998 CIVICS REPORT CARD FOR THE NATION 11 (NCES 2000-457, Washington, D.C.: National Center for Educ. Statistics, 1999), available at www.ed.gov/nationsreportcard.
19. LUTKUS ET AL., NAEP 1998 CIVICS REPORT CARD, at 10–11.
20. Charles N. Quigley, *Response to Findings of the NAEP 1998 Civics Report Card for the Nation (1999/2000)* (visited Oct. 31, 2000), available at http://www.civiced.org/naep_response.html.
21. Center for Civic Education, The Role of Civic Education, at 3.
22. Tony Massengale & Peg Michels, *Civic Organizing and the Renewal of Public Education*, 64 SOCIAL EDUCATION 53, 53 (2000).
23. HAHN, BECOMING POLITICAL, at 238.
24. E-mail and follow-up mailing of survey form and results, from Debra Henzey, Executive Director, Civic Education Consortium (Mar. 27, 2000).
25. James H. Svara, *Key Leadership Issues and the Future of Council-Manager Government*, in FACILITATIVE LEADERSHIP IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: LESSONS FROM SUCCESSFUL MAYORS AND CHAIRPERSONS 216, 225 (James H. Svara & Associates eds., San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994).
26. The North Carolina City/County Management Association maintains a list of managers and other local officials who have volunteered to help teachers with local government. The list is at <http://ncinfo.iog.unc.edu/programs/civiced/community/resources/index.html>. For more information, contact Jan Boyette, Civic Education Coordinator, at (919) 220-2552 or at j.boyette@gte.net.

What local officials add to the classroom through their involvement is not only knowledge but the real-life example of civic responsibility.

strong influence. "The students don't forget that stuff," she said. "It makes a lasting impact. The local officials know so much more than I do—they have hands-on knowledge."

The students corroborated the teachers' observations with their comments. For example:

- "I liked the people that came in and talked to us. . . . It was fun, and I learned a lot of stuff at the same time."
- "I liked having the live interviews."

Sue observed an unanticipated change in the students' perspectives. She found that they began to have greater respect for their local officials: "The students started to see them as real people who deal with hard issues, and as valuable resources for their learning. It was great for the students to see the officials take an interest in their education."

The unit was greatly enriched by the involvement of local public officials, and the teachers stressed the importance of their participation. Sue commented that local officials "add to the classroom. Who better to come in and talk about these issues than someone who does it?"

What local officials add to the class-