

#CIVICSFORUS

LISTENING TOUR, SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN, AND PROGRAM

FUELING OUR DEMOCRACY WITH CIVICS THAT SPEAKS TO EVERY STUDENT



iCivics

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CIRCLE

iCIVICS

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The Youth As Civic Experts network logo was designed by our logo design challenge winner, Sophie Li.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Youth As Civic Experts "Our Program"	4
#CivicsForUS Listening Tour "Our Process"	7
#CivicsForUS Social Media "Our Campaign"	24
Youth Projects "Our Learning"	32
#CivicsForUS What's Next "Your Turn"	35

YOUTH AS CIVIC EXPERTS

OUR PROGRAM



OUR PROGRAM

The Youth As Civic Experts Network is a project of iCivics, designed to engage students in conversations so that adults and stakeholders in school communities can use youth feedback to inform policy and curriculum, and ultimately change the way we engage with students to create civic experiences.

The Youth As Civic Experts network includes paid fellows, unpaid interns, and alumni program participants engaged in collaborative virtual workshops and online leadership experiences. Students gain communications and digital media skills to help them tell a compelling story about civic education in their local communities.

Any student that applied but was not selected as a paid equity fellow was granted an opportunity to stay with the program and receive the same experiences, learning, and access as fellows.

"I have learned about how to use everyone's unique skills and backgrounds to accomplish a common goal."

–Morgan Gibson, MA

"This opportunity has opened my eyes to education inequities in the world and the lack of civic education in schools. It has been such an open, inviting and diverse community that makes you feel connected, even through an online platform."

–Sophie Li, TN

The Youth As Civic Experts Network programming includes:

- **Training sessions** – supporting the development of digital media, PR, communications, and leadership skills
- **Facilitated large and small group discussions** – centering civil discourse and best practices to provide students space to engage a variety of civic and equity topics
- **Civic Speaker Series** – engaging with and learning from civic leaders to learn more about "the field"

As a result, our students and their efforts have been featured in local and national media, have worked alongside local and state-level elected officials, and have engaged in advocacy for all students at various levels.

OUR PROGRAM

Civic Speaker Series: *taking service, community, and civic engagement one step further.*

As part of the learning journey, we connected our students with organizations, civic leaders, and civic innovators making an impact at local, national, and global levels. Our goal is to inspire our future leaders to view the civic field and civic work as integral to strengthening our constitutional democracy for all people.

The Civic Speaker Series served to expose students to new ideas; educate students on a range of civic engagement opportunities; and highlight how everything they learned throughout the fellowship can translate into a future career. These speakers also helped illuminate the many ways students can engage in civics and how civics is present across a range of disciplines and interests.

Some notable speakers included education evangelist **Jesse Casap**, journalist **Clement Townsend**, **Sara Gifford** from ActiVote, **Yordanos Eyoel** from New Profit, **Stevie Valles** from Chicago Votes, **Ethan Zuckerman** from UMass Amherst, and **Sofia Jayaswal** and **Sheila Panyam** from Mission Citizen.

"My favorite part of the program was being able to meet new speakers throughout the weeks and learning the jobs that they do and how they got there."

—Sandy Curiel, NY

A few student Insights from the Civic Speaker Series:

Insight from Sara Gifford's presentation on political ideologies: *"I learned that you don't have to go the traditional way to do some acts of public service. Use what you know you are good at and apply it to something you are passionate about."*

Insight from Yordanos Eyoel's discussion on depleting trust in government pushed a student to reflect, *"I will challenge myself to dig deeper on finding ways to trust people since trust has been depleting for the last few decades, and we need to trust each other to be able to work effectively."*

Stevie Valle's conversation on his experiences working in civics highlighted some lesser-discussed topics such as gerrymandering. Many students agreed with this student's realization about the connection between gerrymandering and prisons, *"I never realized how big of an issue gerrymandering really is, especially since in some states they count prison populations as residents of a certain area even if they aren't."*

#CIVICSFORUS LISTENING TOUR

OUR PROCESS



OUR PROCESS

The Youth As Civic Experts Network was divided into three teams – **Team Red**, **Team White**, **Team Blue**. Each team was led by two fellowship captains and one alumni mentor.

- **Fellowship captains** – led group discussions and survey questions, collaborated on social media content, and managed social media platforms
- **Alumni mentors** – supported fellowship captains through mentorship and thought leadership

Teams drafted survey questions inspired by previous work led by iCivics via CivXNow and Educating for American Democracy. Questions were designed to center the experiences, expertise, and insight of students in 5th-grade through college. The final survey included 10 questions and ran from January through May 2021.

"This program allows students to not only have a better understanding of how students receive civic education and the requirements held in every state; but also understand the obstacles that numerous students face and the types of knowledge and skills that will be of great help when sharing your opinion for an important cause."

–Aditto Showkat, FL

"The importance of the civic education campaign and listening tour cannot be understated; students need civic education to become engaged citizens able to affect change."

– Dhruv Pai, MD

Team Red, **Team White**, **Team Blue** took their survey to their communities and collected a total of 4,841* responses in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and some international schools.

Team Red, led by Camara Kelly (MD) and Raneen Rehani (NJ), won the team challenge collecting 1,838 responses between January and February.



The #CivicsForUS National Listening Tour is the largest effort by students to understand what young people across the nation think about their own civic learning experience. CIRCLE assisted in the technical analysis of the data.

OUR PROCESS

1. How do you define “civics” or “civic education?” (White, Blue surveys) Fill in Response

2. What does civic education or civic participation look like in your school? (Red, White, Blue surveys)
Check All That Apply – 13 options

3. Which of the activities in Question 1 has the most impact and why do you think they work? (Red survey) Fill in Response

4. What prevents young people from participating (or wanting to participate) in the activities listed in Question 2? (Red, White, Blue surveys) Fill in Response

5. How can your school improve civic education so that you feel prepared to participate right now and as an adult? (White, Blue surveys) Fill in Response

6. Who helps students with community activities and civic-related problems? (Red survey)
Check All That Apply – 9 options

7. Have national events, like Covid-19, Black Lives Matter protests, the 2020 Election, etc. influenced your understanding of how government works? (White, Blue surveys)
Choose – Yes, No

8. Have national events, like Covid-19, Black Lives Matter protests, the 2020 Election, etc. inspired you to want to get involved, volunteer, or make changes in your community? (Red, White surveys)
Choose – Yes, No

9. What civic or community engagement activities does your family participate in? (If none, how can schools help parents with civic engagement?) (Blue survey) Fill in Response

10. What do adults get wrong or misunderstand about student civic participation, student activism, or student voice? (What do you want them to know?) (Red survey) Fill in Response

Listening Tour Questions and Captains

Team Red Captains: Camara + Raneen



Team White Captains: Dhruv + Morgan



Team Blue Captains: Aruna + Gabbie



BY THE NUMBERS

KEY FINDINGS: SURVEY RESPONDENTS

43%

OF RESPONDENTS

ARE STUDENTS FROM THE
NORTHEAST, 18% OF
RESPONDENTS WERE FROM
THE SOUTH

63%

OF RESPONDENTS

ARE STUDENTS IN HIGH
SCHOOL (GRADES 9-12)

35%

OF RESPONDENTS

ARE STUDENTS IN THE
MIDDLE GRADES (5-8)

Low sample sizes for international students, students from U.S. territories, college students, 5th-grade students, and students from a handful of states mean results for those subgroups should be treated with caution.



When asked to **define civic education**, the 2901 students who responded, most frequently used the words:

- "rights" (777 occurrences)
- "citizen" (649 occurrences)
- "government" (587 occurrences)

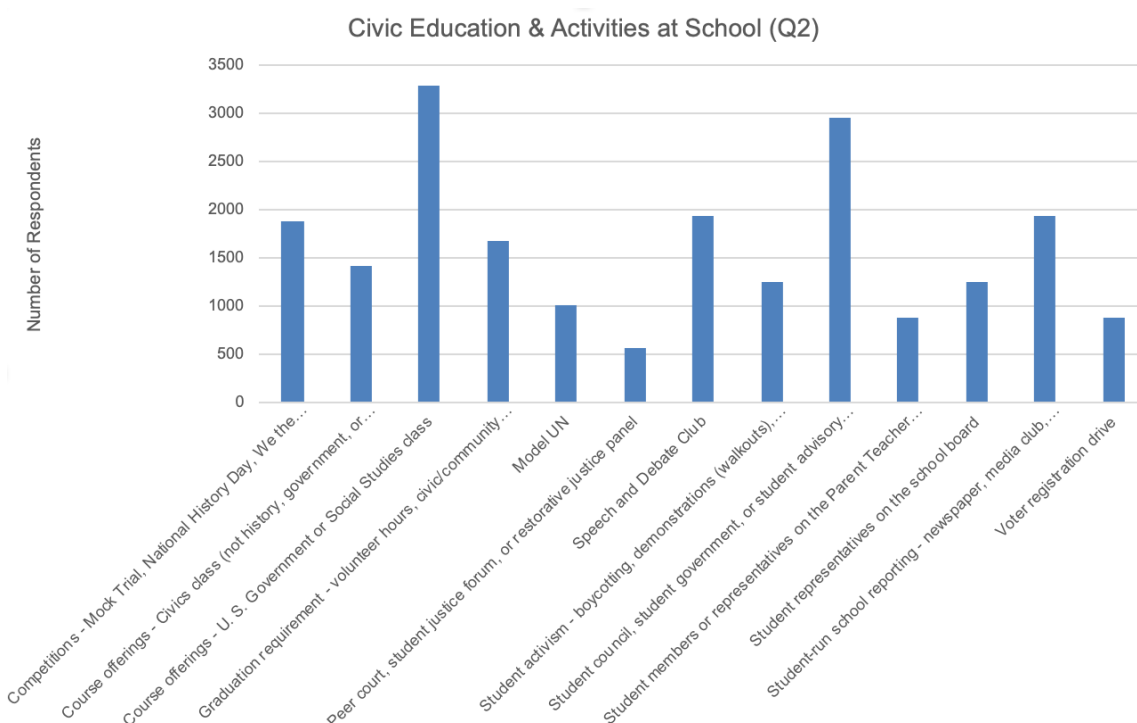
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BY THE NUMBERS

KEY FINDINGS: ACCESS & OPPORTUNITIES

When asked about **civic opportunities at school**:

- The **most frequent response** was "course offerings – U.S. government or social studies class" (3,280 students)
- The **second most frequent response** was "Student council, student government, or student advisory board" (2,958 students)
- The **least frequent responses** were "Peer court, student justice forum, or restorative justice panel" (573) and "Voter registration drive" (887).



N=4,841 *not all states are represented equally or in relation to student population size

BY THE NUMBERS

KEY FINDINGS: ACCESS & OPPORTUNITIES

When asked about **civic opportunities at school**:

- ✓ Students in the South and Northeast listed the highest number of unique opportunities on average while students in the Mountain West listed the fewest.
- ✓ The number of unique opportunities that respondents selected tended to increase with grade level.
- ✓ Students in grades 5–8 have less access to civic education/opportunities and fewer people who help them engage civically.

College students listing 6.48 activities/student on average; High school students listing 4.99 activities/student on average; and Middle-grade students listing 3.04 activities/student on average.

*N=4,841 *not all states are represented equally or in relation to student population size*

BY THE NUMBERS

KEY FINDINGS: ACCESS & OPPORTUNITIES

When asked who helps with community activities and civic problems:

- The **most frequent response** was "classroom teacher – civics, history, or government" (1,457 out of 1,899 responses)
- The **least frequent response** was "classroom teacher – not civics, history, or government class" (112 responses)

Civics, history, government, and social studies teachers are critically important to ensuring that students experience civics and have the skills to tackle the problems they see in their communities.

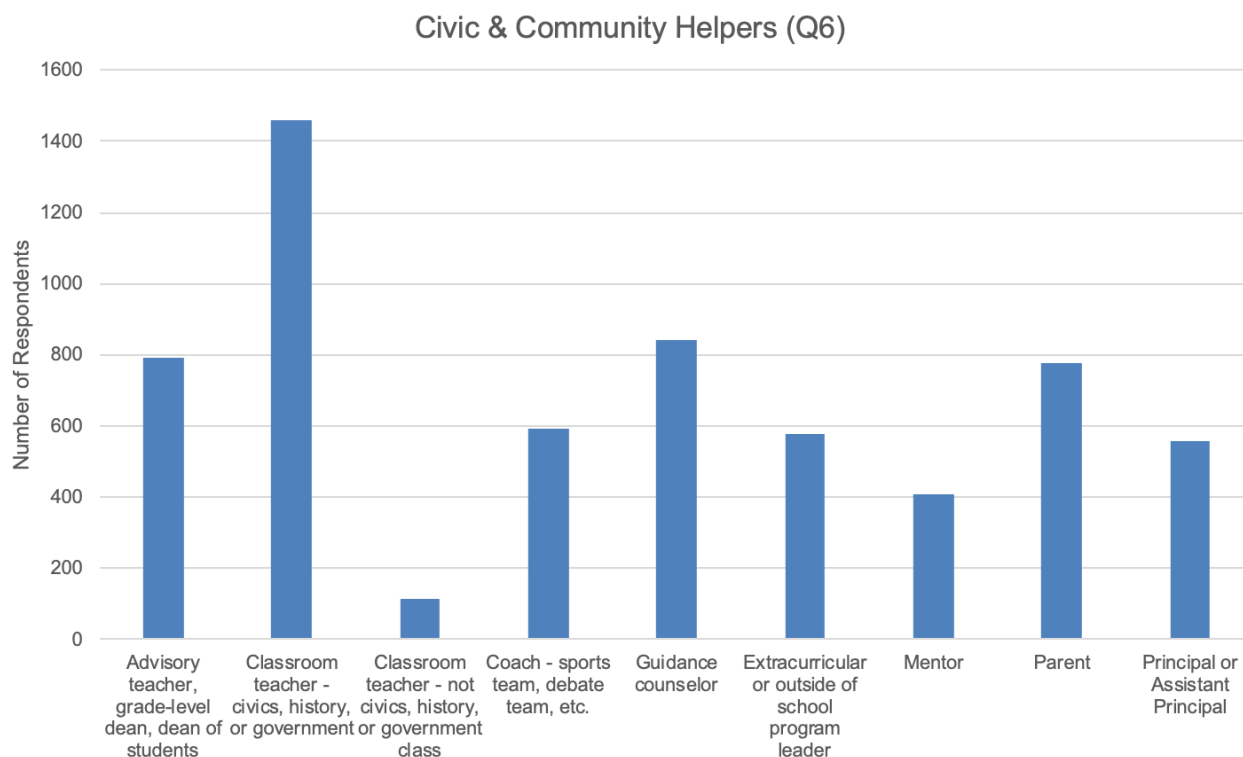
College students listing 6.48 activities/student on average; High school students listing 4.99 activities/student on average; and Middle-grade students listing 3.04 activities/student on average.

*N= 1,899 *not all states are represented equally or in relation to student population size.*

BY THE NUMBERS

KEY FINDINGS: ACCESS & OPPORTUNITIES

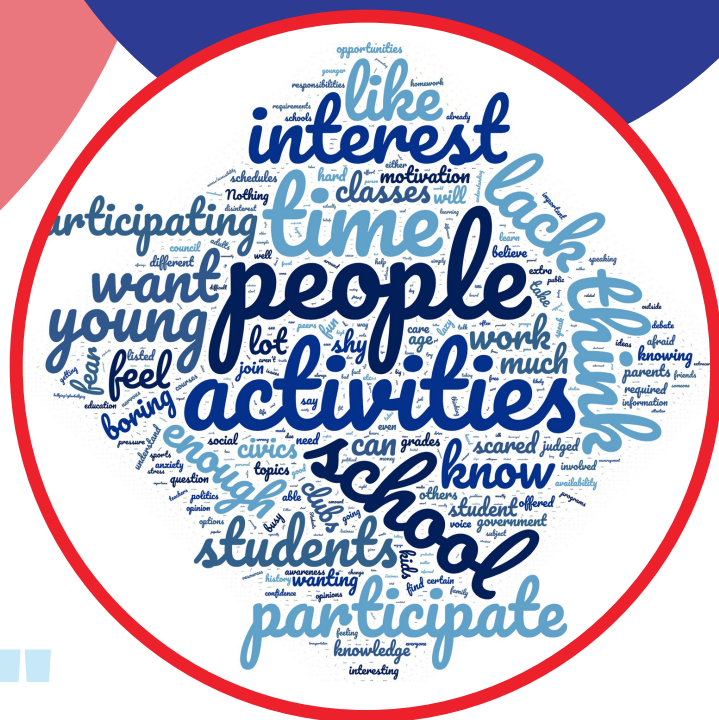
High school students reported having the most number of unique "helpers", while middle-grade students reported having the fewest.



College students listing 6.48 activities/student on average; High school students listing 4.99 activities/student on average; and Middle-grade students listing 3.04 activities/student on average.

N= 1,899 *not all states are represented equally or in relation to student population size.

Students speak out on "apathy" and engagement



When asked **what prevents young people from participating or wanting to participate in civic opportunities** respondents discussed key themes including:

- *time*
- *lack of opportunities/interest*
- *fear*
- *insufficient awareness/advertising of existing civic activities in and outside school*

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When asked **how their school could improve civic education**, respondents frequently discussed:

- Increasing the number of civic classes, activities, or clubs offered
- Increasing awareness of existing civic opportunities
- Improving ties between student voice and leadership
- Connecting civic education/opportunities to current events and issues in their community

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BY THE NUMBERS

KEY FINDINGS: NATIONAL EVENTS

The 2020–21 school year has undoubtedly presented a multitude of challenges for students and their educators, specifically in the civics and history classroom as polarization at the national level has made its way into the K–12 learning space. The Youth As Civic Experts network took the opportunity to explore whether national events like the protests for Black lives, the contentious election cycle, COVID–19, the Insurrection at the Capitol Building, and other events, impacted student attitudes about civic participation and civic life.

"Even though millions of people committed to racial justice last summer, my neighborhood still struggles with the same issues it did before the protests, the same issues it faced decades ago when my grandparents were my age..."

– **Caleb Dunson** (alumni fellow), IL

*We Still Aren't Safe: 6 Young Americans on George Floyd's Death,
New York Times*

BY THE NUMBERS



Students
speak up
on current
events and
civic education

KEY FINDINGS: NATIONAL EVENTS

88%

OF RESPONDENTS

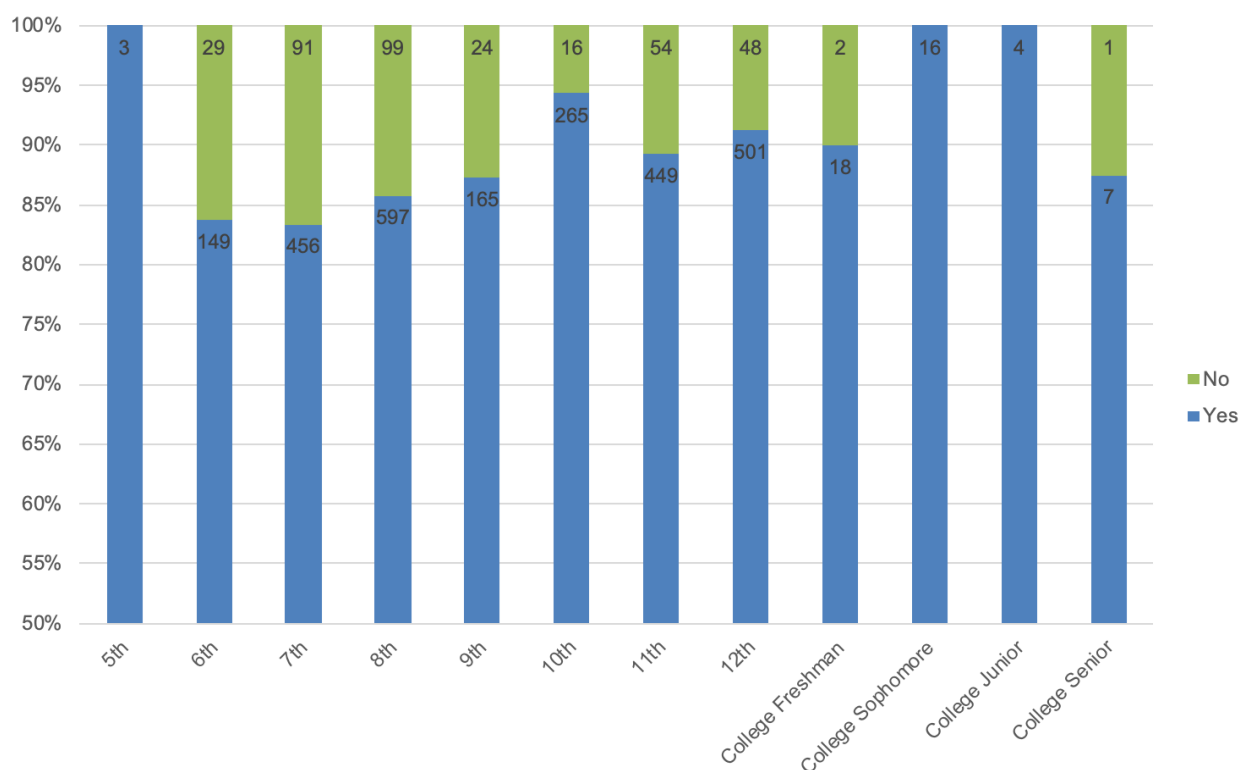
SAID THAT NATIONAL
EVENTS HAVE
INFLUENCED THEIR
UNDERSTANDING OF
HOW GOVERNMENT
WORKS

*N=2,994 *not all states are represented equally or in relation to student population size*

BY THE NUMBERS

KEY FINDINGS: NATIONAL EVENTS

A higher proportion of students from the Southwest and Northeast said "yes" to national events influencing their understanding of civics than did students from the South. Additionally, the proportion of students who said "yes" tended to increase with age.



N=2,994 *not all states are represented equally or in relation to student population size

BY THE NUMBERS



Students
speak up
on the
motivation
to engage

KEY FINDINGS: NATIONAL EVENTS

76%

OF RESPONDENTS

SAID THAT NATIONAL
EVENTS HAVE INSPIRED
THEM TO GET INVOLVED,
VOLUNTEER, OR MAKE
CHANGES IN THEIR
COMMUNITY

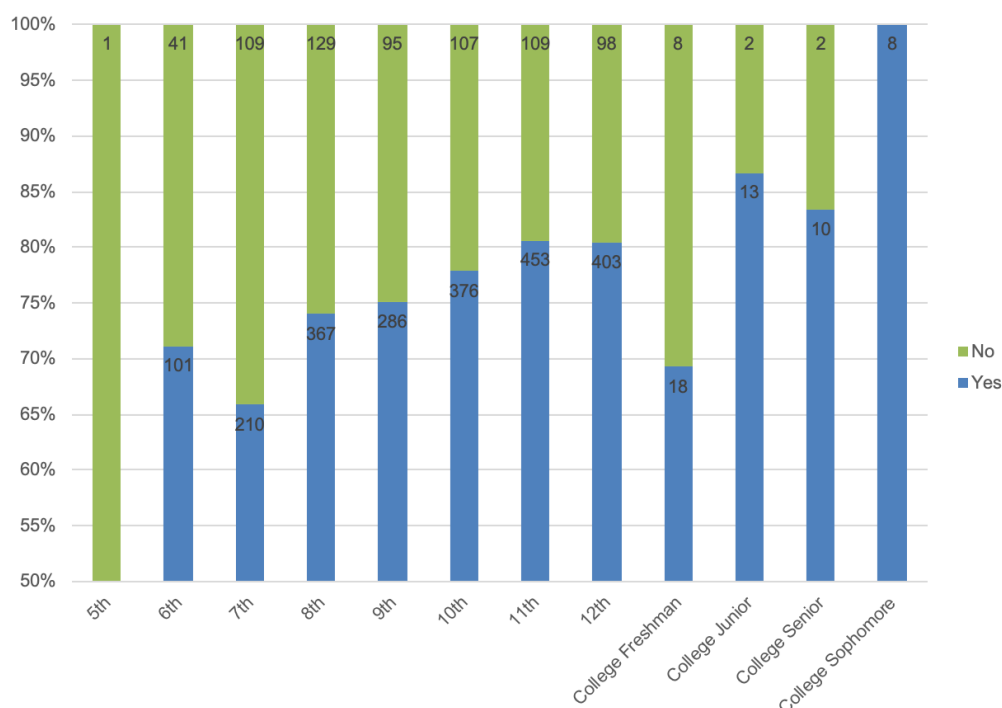
*N=2,946 *not all states are represented equally or in relation to student population size*

BY THE NUMBERS

KEY FINDINGS: NATIONAL EVENTS

The proportion of students who said "yes" to national events inspiring them to volunteer, get involved, or make changes in their community again tended to increase with age.

Students from the Mountain West region said "yes" least frequently relative to other regions.



N=2,946 *not all states are represented equally or in relation to student population size

BY THE NUMBERS

CHALLENGES, BLINDSPOTS & FINAL THOUGHTS

A survey of this magnitude is always a massive undertaking no matter who leads the effort. We admit that our data is heavily influenced by the voices of youth in the Northeastern region of the United States. However, we are inspired that from inception to execution, this effort was student-led.



"This civic education student voice campaign and listening tour are important because it gives a marginalized demographic the opportunity to express their passions and concerns in concurrence with equipping them with the agency to initiate equitable environments within their communities."

-Keynon Settle, NC

Opportunities to improve this effort are as follows:

- increase input from students in southern states
- expand data such that it includes student perspectives as it relates to race and gender
- increase clarity on questions that relate to civic life at home
- increase clarity on questions that interrogate civics and school-home connections

#CIVICSFORUS SOCIAL MEDIA

OUR CAMPAIGN



OUR CAMPAIGN

#CIVICSFORUS SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

The Youth As Civic Experts Network used their digital media training combined with quotes from student responses to build a national social media campaign, [#CivicsForUS](#).



Follow the campaign using the [#CivicsForUS](#) hashtag and find the social media accounts on Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and Facebook at [@CivicExperts](#).

OUR CAMPAIGN

#CIVICSFORUS SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

A few campaign hashtag highlights between
March through June:

SOCIAL MEDIA
REACH

2

MILLION

4,980

SOCIAL MEDIA
CONTENT LIKES

USER GENERATED
CONTENT

1,510

8,100

LANDING PAGE,
PAGEVIEWS

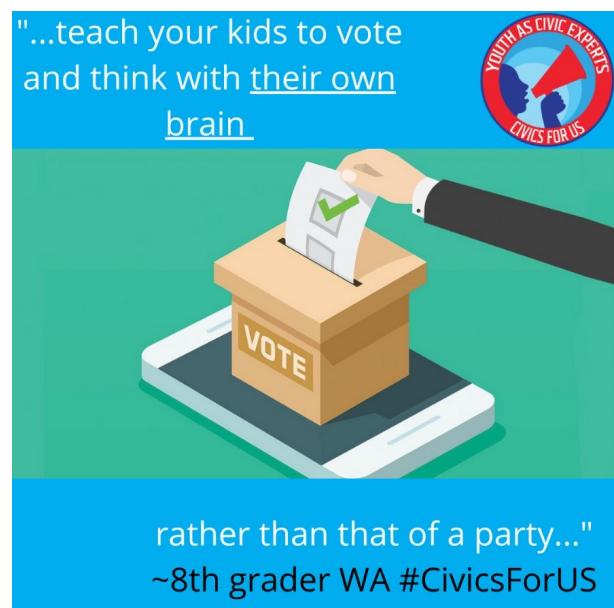
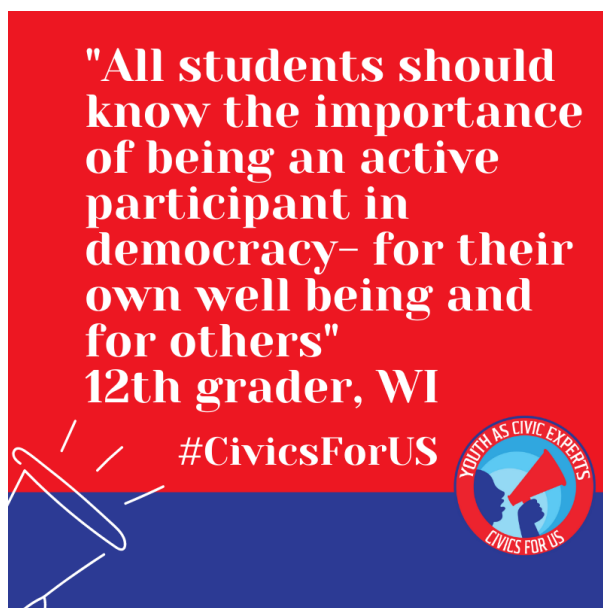
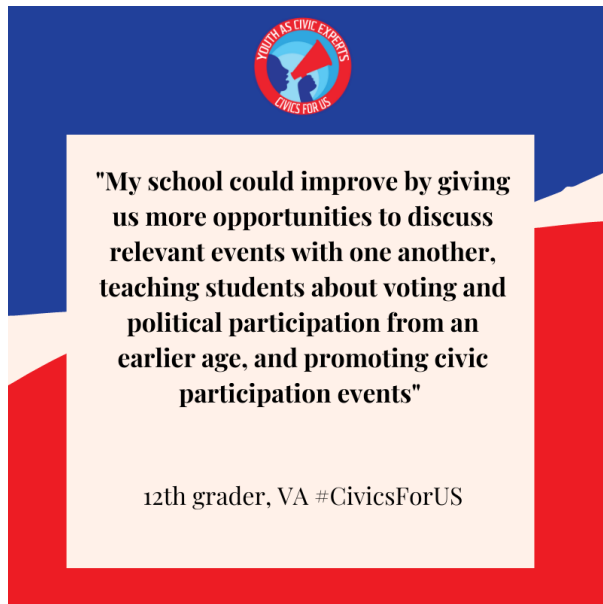


Data collected on hashtag measurement Brand24 platform and Google Analytics

OUR CAMPAIGN

#CIVICSFORUS SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

SAMPLE STUDENT SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



OUR CAMPAIGN

#CIVICSFORUS SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

SAMPLE STUDENT SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



OUR CAMPAIGN

#CIVICSFORUS STUDENT MEDIA COVERAGE

Our current and alumni students used their communications and PR training to engage with local and national media.

- **Caleb Dunson, IL** – *Commentary: After George Floyd's death, remedy for apathy is equity in civics education* (Chicago Tribune, August 3, 2020)
- **Alexandra Henderson, LA** – *Power to the Students: A NonPartisan Guide for Empowering Youth to Engage in Elections* (ShareMyLesson, October 1, 2020)
- **A'Niya Bankston, CA; Viren Mehta, CA; Matthew Green, PA; Marcus McNeill, MA** – *Student Summit on Civics* (Commonwealth Club of California, October 6, 2020)
- **Marcus McNeill, MA** – *Reebok Vote Social Media Campaign* (Reebok Twitter, October 14, 2020)
- **Matthew Green, PA** – *How students in battleground Pennsylvania view the presidential election now vs 2016* (ABC News, October 19, 2020)
- **Caleb Dunson, IL** – *How Young People Can Wield the First Amendment for Civic Engagement* (CIRCLE, October 23, 2020)
- **Alexandra Henderson, LA; Viren Mehta, CA; Nicolle Badillo Velez, PR** – *As the election draws near, civics and government teachers walk a fine line* (Washington Post, October 29, 2020)
- **Laqueenda Adu, PA** – *Student Voice: Why civics education is necessary* (PBS NewsHour Extra, November 3, 2020)

OUR CAMPAIGN

#CIVICSFORUS STUDENT MEDIA COVERAGE

Our current and alumni students used their communications and PR training to engage with local and national media (con't).

- **Raneen Rehani, NJ** – *Egg Harbor Township High School students share reactions to inauguration of President Joe Biden* (January 23, 2021)
- **Viren Mehta, CA** – *Viren's presentation to the Board of Trustees on climate change (legislation)* (February 4, 2021)
- **Morgan Gibson, MA; Dhruv Pai, MD; Madison Allen, MD; Raneen Rehani, NJ** – *Educating for American Democracy National Forum Panel Q&A* (March 2, 2021)
- **Raneen Rehani, NJ** – *Students reflect on recent events in America, unifying a generation* (CBS, March 18, 2021)
- **Fellowship Students** – *An Open Letter From Our Youth Fellows To Secretary Cardona* (March 24, 2021)
- **Dhruv Pai, MD** – *Students Open Dialogue on Making Civic Education More Relatable, Equitable Nationwide* (Montgomery Community Media, March 29, 2021)
- **Morgan Gibson, MA** – *HMS: National History Day* (March 29, 2021)
- **Caleb Dunson, IL** – *'We Still Aren't Safe': 6 Young Americans on George Floyd's Death* (The Washington Post, May 21, 2021)

OUR CAMPAIGN

#CIVICSFORUS STUDENT PRESS RELEASES

The **Youth As Civic Expert network** were trained in writing press releases. A total of 17 press releases were placed in the following communities:

- **Ellie Durgarian, WA** – Battle Ground Public Schools – Prairie sophomore selected for national civics program (October 22, 2020)
- **Joshua Ortiz, MA** – Weston History Department Tweet (October 23, 2020)
- **Morgan Gibson, MA** – Hanscom student accepted to national equity, civics program (October 23, 2020)
- **Suzan Norfal, IL** – Hinsdale Central Student Joins Equity Program (October 24, 2020)
- **Madison Allen, MD** – Prince George's County Public Schools Tweet recognition (October 26, 2020)
- **Keynon Settle, NC** – Settle named member of ICIVICS Equity in Civics Youth Fellowship (October 27, 2020)
- **Dhruv Pai, MD** – School Facebook Post: Congratulations to Dhruv Pai, Blair Junior, one of just 21 students selected nationwide for the National Equity in Civics Youth Fellowship Program! ★ #CivicForUs (October 27, 2020)
- **Aruna Bundu, MD** – Springbrook Senior Wins Yearlong Civics Fellowship (October 28, 2020)
- **Madison Allen, MD** – Potomac High School @pgcps student Madison Allen joins the @icivics Equity in Civics Youth Fellowship. Allen along with other students from across the country will learn more about civic education. CTV News will have more on this story tonight. (CTV News, October 30, 2020)
- **Gabbie Stokes, AR** – Ozark High School student selected to help improve civics education (November 1, 2020)
- **Ellie Durgarian, WA** – Prairie High School sophomore named to iCivics Equity in Civics Youth Fellowship (November 11, 2020)
- **Ellie Durgarian, WA** – Prairie High School sophomore named to iCivics Equity in Civics Youth Fellowship (November 16, 2020)
- **Clayneashia Jones, PA** – #CIVICSFORUS: EQUITY IN CIVICS YOUTH FELLOWSHIP (November 18, 2020)
- **Anvitha Marlapati, CA** – Arcadia teenager Anvitha Marlapati keen on role in national civics fellowship (November 26, 2020)
- **Raneen Rehani, NJ** – Raneen Rehani has been named a member of the Equity in Civics Youth Fellowship (January 28, 2021)
- **Ellie Durgarian, WA** – iCivics backed program hopes to elevate the importance of civics education in U.S. classrooms from 5th grade through college (April 1, 2021)
- **Nia Rackley, CT** – A Local Student's Efforts With 'Youth As Civic Expert Network' (May 18, 2021)

YOUTH PROJECTS

OUR LEARNING



OUR LEARNING

#CIVICSFORUS STUDENT PANELS

The **Equity in Civics Youth Fellows** took insights from the listening tour and combined them with their own lived experiences and their public speaking skills to produce panels. Fellows were divided into five groups. Each panel tackled a challenging topic facing students today. Students crafted their own questions, developed speaking points, and choreographed the flow of their conversation.

Equity Fellows presented the following panels:

- *Increasing Equity in Rural Communities*
- *Addressing the Needs of BIPOC and Marginalized Students*
- *Elevating Student Voice in the Curriculum*
- *Students Take on Making Civics Relevant*
- *Students Discuss Civic Education Policy*

Panels can be viewed at: www.civicsforum.org

OUR LEARNING

#CIVICSFORUS STUDENT PROJECTS

The **Youth As Civic Experts network** took insights from the listening tour and combined them with their own lived experiences and their digital media skills to create final projects. Students were expected to leverage learning and research from this program to tell a story of equity in civic education in their community.

Students created the following:

- Presentations / PDFs
- Documentaries and short videos
- Op-eds / Blog posts

Projects can be viewed at: www.civicsforus.org

#CIVICSFORUS WHAT'S NEXT

YOUR TURN



YOUR TURN

#CIVICSFORUS GET INVOLVED

We've accumulated feedback from the listening tour, and student panels and projects to provide a list of next steps for educators, families, administrators, policymakers, and the general public:

1. **Empowerment, Not Apathy:** When it comes to civic engagement turnout, address student confidence, time constraints, and poor advertising.
2. **Investigate Disinterest:** Gain insight from students who do not like civics, history, or social studies to inform how to make it more engaging.
3. **Include More Voices:** Encourage students of color, students in rural communities, and students with other marginalized identities to see their culture, identity, and community as a civic asset and an important part of the democratic narrative.
4. **Convene and Connect:** Bring parents along on the journey. Make stronger home-school connections with civics and history from K through 12.
5. **Encourage and Engage Student Voices:** Provide opportunities for students to participate in democratic processes at school, with the intention to leverage student feedback, student expertise, and student proposals more meaningfully.

OUR STUDENTS THANK YOU!



iCivics



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www.CivicsForUS.org



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