

Civics Education in Massachusetts



Prepared for the Massachusetts Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education



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Why Read This Report?

A healthy democracy relies on its citizens to be engaged in civic life to support and improve their communities, through voting in elections, staying informed about issues that matter to them, attending community meetings, and understanding how democracy is designed to work for all citizens. Citizens' engagement is foundational to helping maintain and improve the quality of life of individuals and communities through democratic processes.

However, people do not naturally know how to engage in civic life. Instead, they need to be taught the principles of democracy, including the rules and laws that govern decision-making in their communities, their states, and their nation. Schools often help teach youth about core concepts of democracy, and how they can participate in public life and their democracy. For example, in schools, youth learn how laws are made, what the Constitution of the United States ensures, how governments function, and how people can organize themselves to make changes in their communities.

In Massachusetts, civics education is required in our middle and high schools. This report helps explain:

- what students are learning;
- how students are being taught in civics instruction and through hands-on projects; and
- where there are areas for improvement.

Knowing more about what students are—and are not—learning about civics in schools is critical to



ensuring that the next generation of community members, voters, and residents is ready to engage effectively in democracy. These lessons are both timely and urgent: a recent national study about students' civics knowledge shows declines in student performance¹, despite increased calls for more civics education by education researchers and civics leaders alike.²

This report describes how civics education in Massachusetts' middle and high schools is helping contribute to the future of our democracy. It builds upon an earlier study, conducted shortly after the state's 2018 History and Social Science Framework was approved (Tichnor-Wagner, Kawashima-Ginsberg, & Hayat, 2020). That study found strong evidence that educators were committed to the underlying principles of civics education and knew about the Framework, yet it also found that educators were inconsistently aware of how to implement civics education. The results likely reflected both the newness of the Framework as well as the learning disruptions that occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, schools were not required to implement student-led civics projects until the 2020-21 school year. As a result, the current study represents the first systematic effort to learn about student-led civics projects since the requirement took effect. ■

¹ See <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/civics/2022/>

² See Civics Education Is About More Than Elections — It's the Foundation of Democracy: <https://www.the74million.org/article/civics-education-is-about-more-than-elections-its-the-foundation-of-democracy-2/>; Agreement across the Aisle: https://dornsife.usc.edu/cesr/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2025/03/UAS_CARE_Agreement_Across_The_Aisle.pdf

Context for This Study

CIVICS EDUCATION IN MASSACHUSETTS' MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS

We begin by describing important recent history and context about civics education in Massachusetts' middle and high schools. Specifically, in 2018, two major changes occurred in Massachusetts' approach to civics education:

1

First, the [2018 History and Social Science Framework](#) (the Framework) was introduced. It includes a new 8th grade civics course as well as standards with *'an increased focus on developing students' civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions across grades.'* The Framework built upon prior curriculum frameworks, reflected significant educator and public participation from across the state, and emphasized civics education specifically.

2

Second, a new legislative act, [Chapter 296 of the Acts of 2018](#), required Massachusetts public school students to receive civics-focused instruction. This mandate requires students to participate in a non-partisan, high-quality student-led civics project: (1) once in 8th grade, and (2) again in any high school grade.

Following this legislative mandate, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) developed expectations for high-quality civics projects in its [Civics Project Guidebook](#). The guidebook describes key stages and characteristics of student-led civics projects. Additionally, the legislation established the Civics Project Trust Fund, which funds the [Civics Teaching and Learning Grant](#), a competitive program available to districts to support civics education and learning across the state.

Since the release of the Framework and the establishment of the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant, DESE has provided support to districts and teachers via:

- guidance about using the Framework;
- curricular resources;
- professional development; and
- grant funding to support curriculum, professional development, and collaborative planning.

The Civics Teaching and Learning Grant has funded several cohorts of districts since the initial grant competition for Fiscal Year 2020, corresponding to school year 2019-20. Now, after several cohorts of grantees have been funded and the Framework has been in place for several years, our study, in part, asks:

How are local districts and schools implementing civics education, including offering high-quality student-led civics projects?

In 2020, researchers from CIRCLE/Tufts University and Wheelock College/Boston University conducted an [initial study](#) to evaluate the implementation of the Framework and student-led civics project requirement. At that time, however, most schools had not yet reached full implementation, and COVID-19 disruptions to education and learning substantially altered both the 2019–20 and 2020–21 school years. This earlier evaluation found that civics education was implemented in many different ways across the state, leading DESE to ask additional research questions in the current study about how districts and teachers make decisions about civics education, and how student-led projects are being implemented, specifically.

In 2024, DESE contracted with [MC² Education LLC](#), an independent education evaluation and research firm with roots in Massachusetts and a research team (the MC² Study Team) dedicated to taking an objective, culturally competent approach in our work, to conduct an evaluation of:

- the overall state of civics education in Massachusetts;
- whether and how students are engaged in high-quality student-led civics projects in 8th grade and in high school;
- the implementation of the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant; and
- the ongoing implementation of the Framework.

The study described in this report uses data from surveys, focus groups, and students' actual student civics projects to understand:

- district-level efforts to provide civics education;
- teachers' experiences, perceptions, comfort, and concerns as they teach civics and guide student-led civics projects; and
- students' experiences, both of their classroom-based civics learning and completing their civics projects.

This report also summarizes how grantee districts reported using grant funds to support civics education, focusing on grants awarded in fiscal years 2023–2025, over which time the state allocated \$4,386,807 through 124 grants to 81 participating districts. Finally, the study examines a sample of student civics projects and considers both the quality of students' projects (heeding state guidelines about elements of high-quality projects) and how educators structured students' civics learning. ■





Executive Summary

The study focuses on four broad evaluation goals:

- first, to learn about the state of civics education across Massachusetts;
- second, to learn about the implementation of student-led civics projects;
- third, to learn about activities funded by the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant; and
- fourth, to describe alignment to the state 2018 History and Social Science Framework reported by district leaders and teachers.

Overall, we learned that access to civics education is widespread and that students have varied opportunities to engage in civics learning, including through student-led civics projects. Districts reported taking advantage of existing resources, not limited to the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant, to support improved civics instruction. Data from our sample of teachers tells us that their students are actively engaged in civics learning through instruction and through civics projects.

Data about the state of civics education comes from surveys of teachers and district leaders; focus groups of teachers, district leaders, and students; and a sample of student civics projects. The district survey sample is representative of the state as a whole. The self-selected teacher sample includes those teachers who responded to invitations sent by district leaders, so the teachers are not representative of their counterparts across the state. Focus group participants were also self-selected. Because the surveys and focus groups each included more questions about student-led civics projects and civics education in general, and the analysis of student civics projects also provides insights about the general state of civics education, we have considerably more information about those topics than about grant-funded activities or alignment to the Framework.

We note the difference in the samples to place the overall findings in context. District leaders provided insights about civics education that we can confidently generalize to the state. Teachers provided insights about their own teaching and classrooms, and while those data help us learn about civics education as implemented by participating teachers, the findings are limited to those self-selected teachers. That group of teachers may be especially committed to civics

education, and therefore more invested in sharing their experiences. Therefore, results about classroom-level experiences are illustrative and certainly informative, although not generalizable. For these reasons, we have prioritized district-level survey findings in our summary.

Selected highlights for the three broad evaluation goals follow.

The Landscape of Civics Education

The large majority of district leaders reported that their students were provided civics education learning opportunities at least several times a year. The civics content included participation in discussions that incorporate diverse perspectives, instruction focused on civics content, researching issues about civic life by examining or evaluating multiple sources of information, and using inquiry to explore issues and themes.

*Most students in MA are provided civics education at least **several times a year.***

A majority of district leaders reported encouraging varied approaches to civics education, including interdisciplinary or culminating projects, extra-curricular activities, integration into social studies or history courses, and stand-alone civics courses. School-wide themes and integrating civics across the curriculum were reported by fewer than half of district respondents. A majority of district leaders indicated that school staff, whether departments or individual teachers, oversaw student-led civics project implementation, more so than district teams or leaders.

Slightly more than half of district respondents reported that their districts had provided civics-related professional development to teachers in various formats, ranging from summer workshops to sessions embedded throughout the year. While nearly half reported providing no civics-related professional development in 2023-24, this does not mean that teachers had no opportunity to participate; rather, that districts themselves did not provide civics-related professional development. For broader professional development, the overwhelming majority of district respondents indicated that they had organized professional development for their districts' social studies/history teachers at least once in the 2023-24 school year, if not more often. The majority of teachers indicated having participated in professional development related to civics learning, and about one-quarter of teacher respondents indicated that they had not done so, a considerably lower

proportion than reported in the earlier study.

The majority of district respondents indicated that they did not face persistent barriers as they implemented civics education. Perhaps unsurprisingly, time—whether for instruction or planning—was identified as a persistent barrier by roughly one-third of respondents, followed by state-provided resources and district resources. Less than 5% of district leaders characterized any other topics as posing persistent barriers, which suggests that civics education implementation is firmly established across the state. There may be opportunities for DESE to help address the barriers of time and resources, for which it could provide additional support or guidance, perhaps by hosting regional convenings, teacher showcases to complement the student showcases, or other ways for educators to learn with and from one another about strategies to implement civics learning more effectively.

Most teachers have participated in civics professional development.

Time is a consistent barrier for civics instruction.

Data from teachers are more illustrative than representative, and offer some insights about how a self-selected sample of teachers described their implementation of civics education and student-led civics projects in the 2023-24 school year.

Teachers' reported knowledge of and use of instructional resources available to support civics learning varied widely; not all were aware of existing resources, and usage of available instructional resources ranged from occasional to extensive for those who reported using them. The persistent barriers reported by teachers also included time for planning or instruction, as well as motivating students and managing the pressure to teach other subjects or content areas. Here, too, there may be a chance for DESE to examine those topics that pose either "persistent" or "occasional" barriers to implementation.

Student-Led Civics Projects

A student-led civics project artifact analysis (student project analysis) provided a unique window into the breadth of student-led civics projects (civics projects). The civics projects addressed varied topics, with the most common including school-

specific (e.g., students' own school facilities or operations), health care, environment, and education. Nearly half of the civics projects were locally focused, and about the same proportion were national- or state-level in their intended scale.

A majority of teachers who assigned civics projects reported that their students' civics projects reflected the key characteristics of meaningful civics learning, for example, projects were real-world, project- and inquiry-based, goal-driven, action-based, process-focused, non-partisan³, and rooted in systems understanding.

The student civics projects reviewed for this study showed consistent evidence that students had engaged in the six sequential stages prioritized by DESE, yet much more so for the first four stages of civics projects (examination of self and community, identifying an issue, investigating/conducting research, and developing an action plan) than the last two (taking action and reflection). That pattern was clear, both in the aggregate and for specific subgroups of students (e.g., eighth graders compared to high schoolers, district socio-economic status, student group size for civics projects).

Student civics projects, while strong across other stages, lack evidence for taking action and reflecting.

Absent having more detailed information about the contexts, instructions, engagement, and resources for the civics projects that might help us understand these patterns, there may be facets of the civics project guidance that could potentially be amplified, including providing sufficient time for meaningful engagement in each stage, presenting evidence and examples in civics project documentation, and providing illustrative examples of completed projects to students so that they understand what is expected.

Civics Teaching and Learning Grant Evaluation

We draw primarily from district leaders to learn about grant implementation. District respondents indicated that they used several resources to implement civics education. The Civics Teaching and Learning Grant was reported as the most used resource, followed by district operating funds, other grant funding, and federal

³ A project is partisan, according to the DESE Civics Project Guidebook, if it takes a "side in party politics and party competitions" or supports a specific electoral candidate. Student projects may "be directed at ballot propositions, involve student communication with legislators in support of a specific bill, and have political viewpoints that reflect the student's political perspective." These activities are considered non-partisan. Only those student projects designed to support a specific electoral candidate or political party counts as "partisan."

funds. Grantee districts reported that the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant facilitated opportunities for civics education in ways consistent with grant priorities, through the following approaches: including interdisciplinary/culminating projects, integrated throughout social studies or history courses, integrated throughout multiple subject areas, experiential learning outside of school settings, standalone course, and school-wide events.

The Civics Teaching & Learning Grant facilitates civics opportunities as intended.

The 2018 History and Social Science Framework

The Framework had just recently been rolled out when the earlier study was conducted in 2020. Evidence from the current district leader survey indicated knowledge of the Framework, and that district leaders routinely interact with and provide concrete supports to teachers about the Framework. Evidence from our non-representative sample of teachers indicates that the large majority described their civics education instruction as aligned with the Framework. Focus group participants from fall 2025 indicated that they are familiar with the Framework and they too describe their instruction as aligned, because it is now part of the everyday fabric of teaching social studies and history.

The 2018 HSS Framework is part of the everyday fabric of teaching.

Based on those who are included in classrooms represented in our sample of participating educators, civics education, including student-led civics projects, is being offered and experienced largely as intended, both for 8th-grade and high school students. Certainly, there are opportunities to strengthen the offerings and ensure that students experience the full range of the civics projects' learning sequence in the future. This could include revising the Guidebook to provide more explicit guidance for teachers about building in sufficient time for students to complete all six stages, and about how to support students' documentation of the stages, as well as providing additional opportunities for peer-to-peer professional learning among teachers. ■

How We Studied Civics Education in Massachusetts

This summary explains how we conducted our two-year evaluation of civics education in Massachusetts. For those interested in technical details, please see the complete methods section in [Appendix 1](#).

Building on Previous Research

As mentioned above, this study builds upon an earlier evaluation conducted by researchers from CIRCLE/Tufts University and Wheelock College/Boston University (“the earlier study”). Those researchers drew from the following sources to draft surveys about civics learning: CASEL, 2020; Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2013; Cohen et al., 2018; Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011; Hammond, 2014; and National Council for the Social Studies, 2017. To provide continuity between that study and the current study, we used modified versions of their survey instruments (“the earlier surveys”) while making a few important changes:

- We added new questions about student-led civics projects, professional development, and teacher knowledge.
- We included specific questions for grant recipients about how funding was used.
- We shortened the earlier surveys considerably to reduce the estimated total completion time from 30–45 minutes to 12–15 minutes, which meant dropping some questions.

These changes allowed us to compare selected findings with the earlier study while gathering information about the current implementation.⁴

⁴ For topics where a direct comparison of the current MC² and earlier CIRCLE surveys is possible, we provide these findings.



How We Collected Information and Who Responded

We strove to gather perspectives from across the state, using three complementary approaches ([Exhibit 1](#)), including:

Surveys

In the 2023-24 school year, we invited 226 Massachusetts districts to participate, including all grant recipients plus a representative sample of non-grantee districts. This approach ensured that diverse districts were included, representing urban, suburban, and rural areas with varying student demographics and financial resources. Ultimately, 114 district leaders from 98 individual districts completed surveys about their civics education practices, challenges, and needs. Our district-level survey respondents closely matched the characteristics of districts statewide, giving us confidence that our findings generally represent Massachusetts schools overall. Notable patterns in who participated include:

- District staff from grantee districts were more likely to respond than were similar staff from non-grantee districts.
- Grantee districts tended to have higher percentages of low-income students.

We asked the district leaders who had received survey invitations to forward a similar survey to those teachers in their respective districts who were responsible for teaching civics content. In the end, 115 classroom teachers from 62 schools in 40 districts responded. While our district survey data is representative (of the districts statewide) of the characteristics we were able to measure, we don't know how representative the teacher respondents are⁵, because we don't know 1) how many or which teachers were invited by their district representative to participate in the study; 2) who among that group of invited teachers then completed surveys; and 3) whether the survey completers are teachers who are more engaged in civics education. Furthermore, we do know the districts they are from are not representative of the state. We've kept this in mind when interpreting our findings.

In addition to the survey detailed above, we sent a short survey to all district staff with questions about civic education sustainability and civic showcase timing. This survey was included in the email sent to district leaders, which asked them to forward an invitation to teachers to submit student civics project artifacts for the student project analysis (see below). In total, we collected 20 responses from 17 districts. We refer to this survey as the "Mini Sustainability Survey."

⁵ See [Exhibit 1F](#) in Appendix 1 for full details of teacher respondent characteristics.

Focus Groups

We conducted conversations with district leaders, teachers, and students to gain deeper insights about their experiences teaching and learning civics. In spring and fall of 2024, the MC² Study Team invited district leaders from the sample to participate in focus groups. Those same district leaders were asked to forward focus group invitations to their teachers. In fall 2024, we added a \$49.99 incentive for all teachers who participated in focus groups. The sample for the student focus groups was derived from the teacher survey respondent sample based on certain question responses, and was then reduced to a representative sample of 11 school districts. The MC² Study Team carried out individual and extended recruitment efforts at those 11 school districts for student focus group scheduling.

These focus group discussions helped us understand the contexts for survey results. The focus groups with district leaders and teachers, held in both spring and fall of 2024, included 23 participants representing 21 different districts. The spring 2024 groups included 9 participants (four district leaders, five teachers), primarily from grantee districts, and the fall 2024 focus groups included 14 participants (six district leaders, eight teachers) with a more balanced mix of grantee and non-grantee districts. We also conducted four student focus groups in early 2025 with 50 students total. All focus group participants were from Title I districts, representing diverse geographic regions and district sizes.

Student Project Analysis

We examined both middle and high school student civics projects to learn how the legislative mandate translates into student learning experiences. We collected students' civics projects by asking district leaders to distribute requests to civics teachers across the state to share examples of their students' projects with us. Teachers used an online form to upload projects and provide information on their instructional practices and the student authors of the projects. Because we wanted to have a good representation of projects, and not only the exemplary projects that are often seen at state and district showcases, we used a structured process to help ensure that we were provided with projects that purposefully varied in quality. Our initial goal was to enlist enough teachers to yield a sample of 100 projects; ultimately, 29 teachers across 25 districts securely uploaded 86 de-identified projects.

In **Exhibit 1** below, we show each data collection method, who responded, and when the data collection occurred across the two-year evaluation. We use the icons listed below throughout the report to remind the reader which data source contributed to specific report sections.

Exhibit 1: Data Collection Summary

Method	Participants	Icons	2023–24	2024–25
Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Leaders • Teachers 		<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	
Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Leaders • Teachers • Students 		<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
Student Project Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students & Teachers 			<p>✓</p>
Mini Sustainability Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Leaders who were sent invitation to Student Project Analysis 			<p>✓</p>

Read as: “District leaders (shown as an icon of a computer survey with the word ‘district’) and teachers (shown as an icon of a computer survey with the word ‘teacher’) participated in surveys in 2023–24.”

Note: We indicate in the results sections below which data sources contribute to each section by presenting the icons listed above.

How We Analyzed What We Learned

We analyzed the data in two main ways:

- Descriptive statistics helped us identify patterns and variations in civics education across different types of schools.
- Thematic analysis of open-ended responses and focus group conversations revealed deeper insights about participants' experiences and needs.

To learn more about our methodology and analysis process, see [Appendix 1](#). ■



General Civics Education

Scope and Access to High-quality Civics Education

In this section, we describe students' general experiences with civics learning across the state. We incorporate both district leaders' and teachers' survey responses to help us understand the landscape of civics education, and whether and how that landscape has changed since the earlier study. We also draw upon focus group conversations to illustrate more specific experiences from district leaders' and teachers' perspectives. The earlier study found that educators were generally aware of the recently enacted legislation and Framework, although less than half of teachers reported that they understood how the Framework would affect their instruction (Tichnor-Wagner, Kawashima-Ginsberg, & Hayat, 2020). The earlier study also reported that teachers had begun to adapt instruction to include more civics content and that student access to civics projects was highly variable (Tichnor-Wagner, Kawashima-Ginsberg, & Hayat, 2020). Those earlier findings led us to focus on the current landscape of civics education and students' access to civics projects.



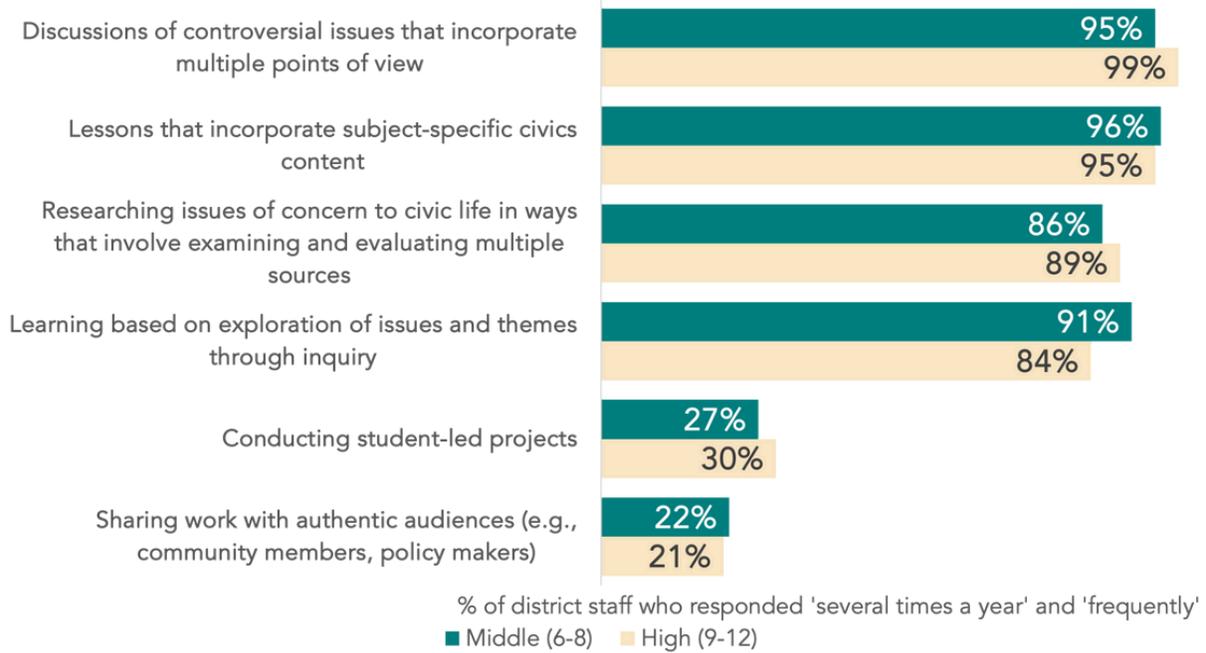
Civics Teaching & Learning

District survey respondents (n=81)⁶ indicated how frequently their own district encourages student access to what research suggests are high-quality civics learning opportunities, including discussions of issues that reflect diverse perspectives, conducting research based on multiple sources of evidence, and conducting student-led civics projects ([Exhibit 2](#)). This exhibit shows only those who indicated that their districts encourage the provision of these varied civics learning opportunities at least several times a year.

⁶ Respondent 'n' counts vary by question throughout district and educator survey data due to the non-required nature of some questions, and some respondents who submitted the survey prior to completing all questions.

Exhibit 2: Frequency of Civics Learning Opportunity Offerings⁷

During the current school year, how often are students offered the following types of civics learning opportunities?



n=81

Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education District Survey

Read as: “95% of district leaders who oversee middle school in their districts, and 99% of those who oversee high schools in their districts, reported that students are provided opportunities to have ‘discussions of controversial issues that incorporate multiple points of view’ at least ‘several times a year’ or ‘frequently.’”

The overwhelming majority of respondents noted that their districts encouraged a variety of student learning experiences, including, ‘Discussions of controversial issues that incorporate multiple points of view’ (middle school (MS): 95%; high school (HS): 99%), ‘Lessons that incorporate subject-specific civics content’ (MS: 96%; HS: 95%), ‘Researching issues of concern to civic life in ways that involve examining and evaluating multiple sources’ (MS: 86%; HS: 89%), and ‘Learning based on exploration of issues and themes through inquiry’ (MS: 91%; HS: 84%). These percentages are substantially higher than those found in the earlier study, where roughly half of district respondents reported that most or all students engaged in

⁷ Ns represent the typical number of respondents to each question, although the number of respondents may vary slightly by row.

⁸ The earlier survey asked district leaders to report on the approximate number of students who engage in various types of learning experiences their districts encourage, and how frequently, in the current school year. Additionally, we don’t know whether the district samples for the earlier and current studies have any overlap; it is quite possible that variation in the district sample alone could help explain observed differences across the two studies’ findings.

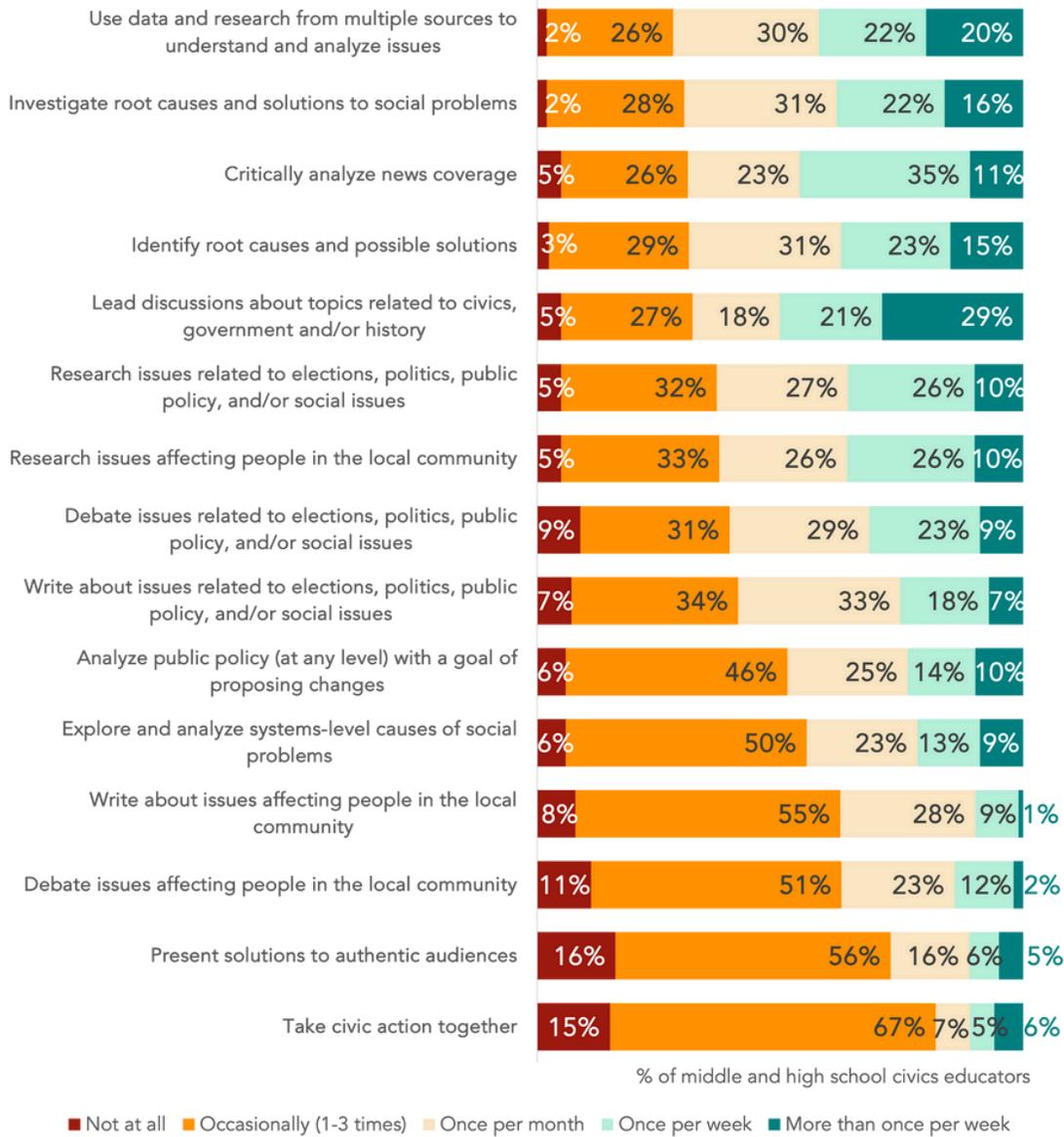
lessons that included these types of experiences addressing such topics (Tichnor-Wagner, Kawashima-Ginsberg, & Hayat, 2020).⁸ District leaders (on the 2023–24 survey) reported that less than one-third of students were offered opportunities to ‘Conduct student-led civics projects’ and ‘Share work with authentic audiences’ ‘several times a year’ or ‘frequently’. This is not unexpected. Students were reportedly offered many more frequent opportunities to engage in types of civic learning, whereas the civics projects were typically one-time endeavors.

District leaders described what they perceived at the district level, while teachers provided more concrete information about the types and frequency of research, discussion, and other learning opportunities made available to students in their classrooms. We note that the teacher respondent sample is opportunistic rather than representative, and what we learn from teachers cannot be generalized to all teachers across the state. Between 58–72% of all teacher respondents (n=82) reported that ‘at least monthly’ their students had the opportunity to research, debate, and write about civic issues; to lead discussions about civics, government, or history; to investigate root causes and solutions; to critically analyze the news; and to analyze issues using multiple sources of data (Exhibit 3). Furthermore, about a third of all teacher respondents reported that their students were offered these learning opportunities ‘at least weekly.’ Teachers reported that other activities were offered ‘occasionally,’ including debating/writing about local community issues, presenting solutions to authentic audiences, and taking civic action together.



Exhibit 3: Frequency of Specific Civics Learning Activities

This school year (including the rest of the year), how frequently do students in your classes do the following?



n=83

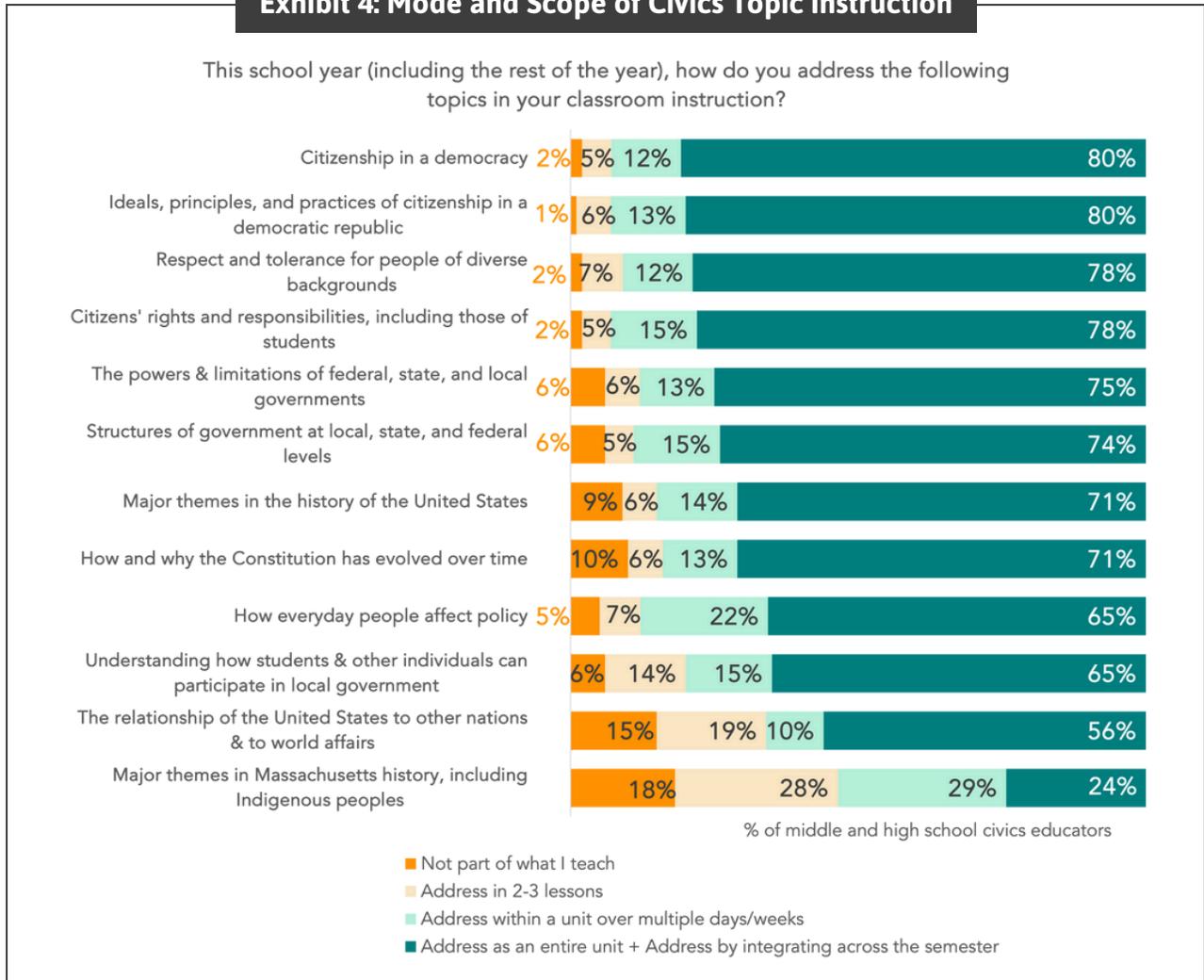
Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education Teacher Survey

Read as: “Two percent of teachers reported that their students ‘use data and research from multiple sources to understand and analyze issues’ ‘not at all,’ and 26% reported that their students do so ‘occasionally.’”

Note: This chart includes a subset of respondents—only those who indicated they teach civics in any grades 6–12. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Teacher respondents (n=81) indicated that they integrated selected civics topics in varied ways across the school year (Exhibit 4).⁹ With the exception of teaching about Massachusetts history, a majority of teachers reported that they address each specified topic by focusing on it for an entire unit and/or integrating it across the semester. Further, the majority of teachers (80% or more) reported that they teach most topics over four or more lessons rather than not at all or for a couple of lessons.

Exhibit 4: Mode and Scope of Civics Topic Instruction



n=81

Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education Teacher Survey

Read as: “Two percent of teachers reported that the topic of ‘Citizenship in a democracy’ is ‘Not part of what I teach’ in their classroom instruction, and 5% indicated that they address that topic in ‘2–3 lessons.’”

Note: This chart includes a subset of respondents—only those who indicated they teach civics in any grades 6–12. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

⁹ The current survey generally mirrored civics topics on the earlier survey, although some items were cut to reduce survey burden, and the earlier report did not present findings on individual items within the broader questions about teachers’ general approaches to teaching and to teaching civics.

One participant in a teacher focus group described the school's highly collaborative approach to civics education.

"Teaching this coursework really collaboratively. There's eight members in my department that all teach eighth-grade civics, so we have a calendar, and we have ... set the topics we're teaching, and then each of us kind of put in our little gems that we like to share with our colleagues. So we're following the Frameworks, but we definitely can put our individual spin on it, which is what I really like."

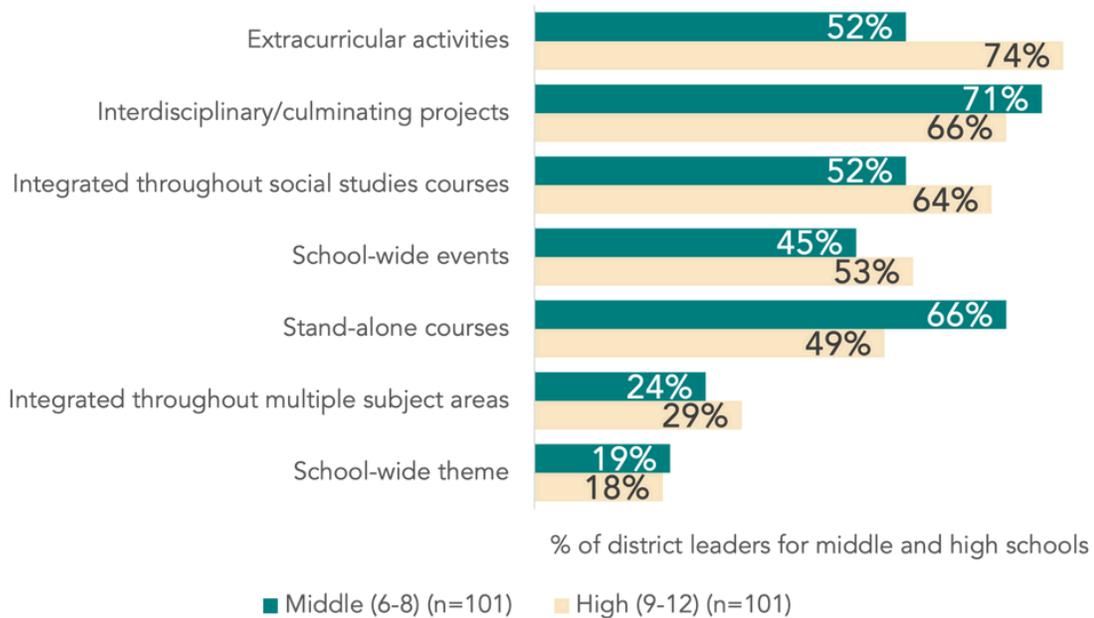
- Teacher, Focus Group



District leaders reported that their districts most frequently approach civic learning through the use of extracurricular activities (MS: 52%, HS: 74%), interdisciplinary projects (MS: 71%, HS: 66%), and civics integrated into social studies (MS: 52%, HS: 64%). Other approaches indicated by district leaders included school-wide events (MS: 45%, HS: 53%), stand-alone courses (MS: 66%, HS: 49%), civics learning integrated throughout multiple subject areas (MS: 24%, HS: 29%), and school-wide themes (MS: 19%, HS: 18%) (Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5: District Approaches to Civics Learning

What are the general approaches to developing students' civics knowledge, skills, and dispositions in your district? Select all that apply for the relevant grade levels.



n=101

Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education District Survey

Read as: “52% of district leaders overseeing middle school, and 74% of those overseeing high school, reported that ‘Extracurricular activities (e.g., student council, debate)’ was one of their districts’ general approaches to developing students’ civics knowledge, skills, and dispositions.”

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% because district leaders could select multiple approaches.

During focus groups with district leaders and teachers, participants described variation in how teachers approach teaching civics in their classes. One teacher said that they focus on building background knowledge and introducing sources to their students by reading aloud so that the texts are more accessible for all learners; other teachers described having students read about a topic on their own, answer questions, and move on. One district leader commented about teaching civics in the current political climate and how that may also affect student experience:

“How comfortable teachers feel impacts the level of implementation and efficacy. So [there are] teachers who do it really well, teachers who try to do it really well, and teachers who, you know, because of some of the political climate in the country at the moment, are kind of going [to be] apprehensive so they don't kind of push, push through the way I would like them to.”

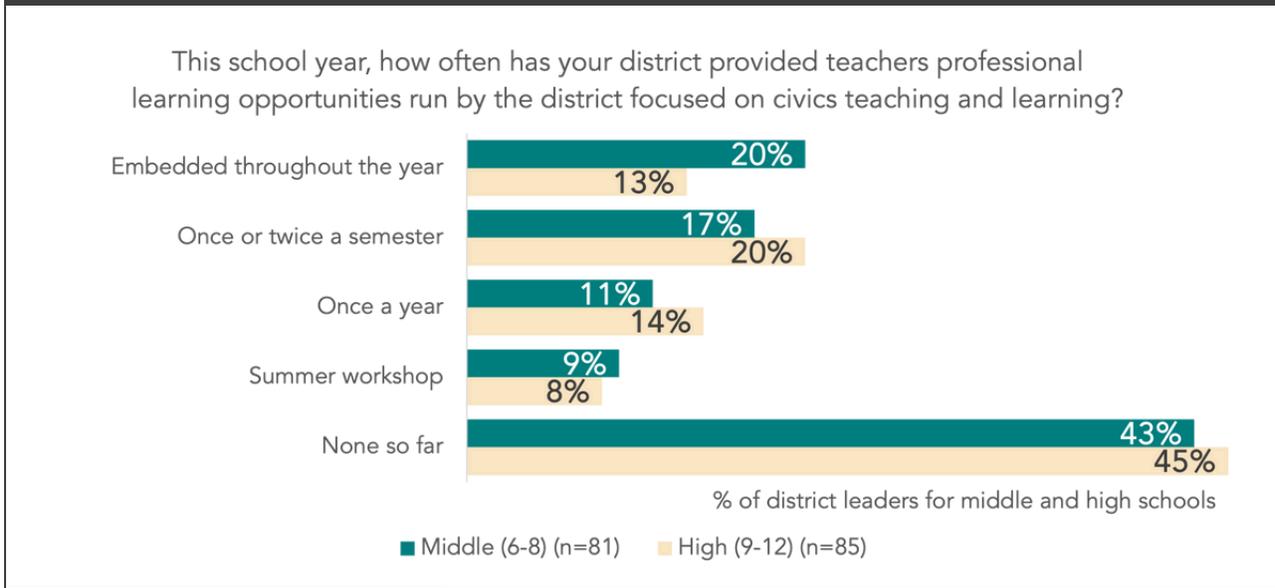
- District Leader, Focus Group

Some focus group participants shared details about DESE-provided resources. For example, they used some DESE resources provided through grant funding, and at the same time, the professional learning experiences provided through civics education organizations like iCivics and/or Generation Citizen meant that DESE's professional development and resources were unnecessary. Another district leader preferred the iCivics resources because they said they were easier to comprehend.

Barriers to Civics Teaching & Learning

A slight majority of 83 district survey respondents (56%) reported that their district had provided any professional learning opportunities about civics teaching and learning during school year 2023–24, with most of those districts providing such opportunities once or twice during the year or as a summer workshop ([Exhibit 6](#)). Given that the survey was administered in April and May of 2024, we can assume respondents were reflecting on the full 2023–24 school year. One-fifth of districts reported more robust civic learning opportunities embedded throughout the year for middle school teachers; one in seven districts provided year-long embedded civic learning opportunities to high school teachers.

Exhibit 6: District Provision of Professional Development on Civics Teaching and Learning



middle school district leaders: n=81;
high school district leaders: n=85

Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education District Survey

Read as: “20% of district leaders overseeing middle school, and 13% of those overseeing high school, reported that their districts embedded district-provided professional learning opportunities for teachers throughout the school year.”

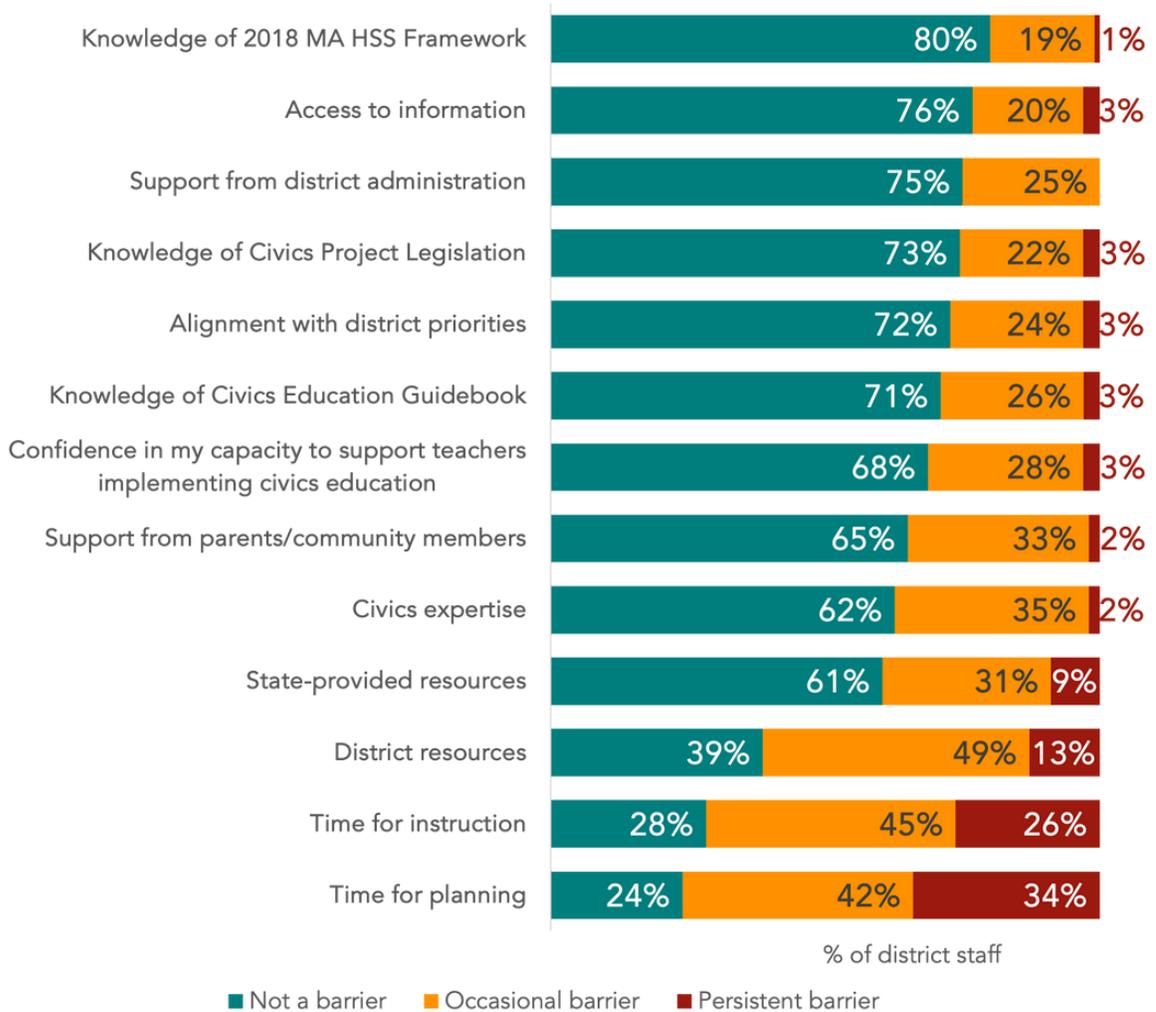
Note: This chart includes a subset of respondents—only those who indicated they work with any grades 6–12.

We want to note that even though we asked survey respondents to indicate which, if any, barriers they had faced in implementing civics learning, the large majority consistently reported that they either never or only infrequently experienced barriers that were specific to civics. We asked district leaders to indicate whether various topics represented something that was ‘not’, an ‘occasional’, or a ‘persistent’ barrier. A small proportion of district leaders noted that ‘*district resources*’ and ‘*state-provided resources*’ (13% and 9%, respectively) were persistent barriers. The remaining topics, including ‘*access to information*,’ ‘*civics expertise*,’ and ‘*knowledge of the Frameworks*,’ among others, were characterized as persistent barriers by 3% or fewer of district leaders (Exhibit 7). However, of the impediments they could have faced, district leaders and teachers alike identified ‘*time for planning*’ (34% and 47%, respectively) and ‘*time for instruction*’ (26% and 28%, respectively) as the most significant barriers to their capacity to implement civics learning (Exhibits 7 and 8 for district and teacher responses, respectively). Teachers responded to questions about how frequently the same topics posed barriers to

their instruction, and about one-fifth of teachers reported that ‘pressure to teach other subjects or content’ was an impediment faced frequently; another 17% indicated that it had been an impediment several times.

Exhibit 7: Barriers to District Capacity to Implement Civics Instruction

Which of the following, if any, represent barriers to your district's capacity to implement civics instruction aligned to the 2018 MA History and Social Science Framework and Civics Project Legislation and Guidebook?



n=94

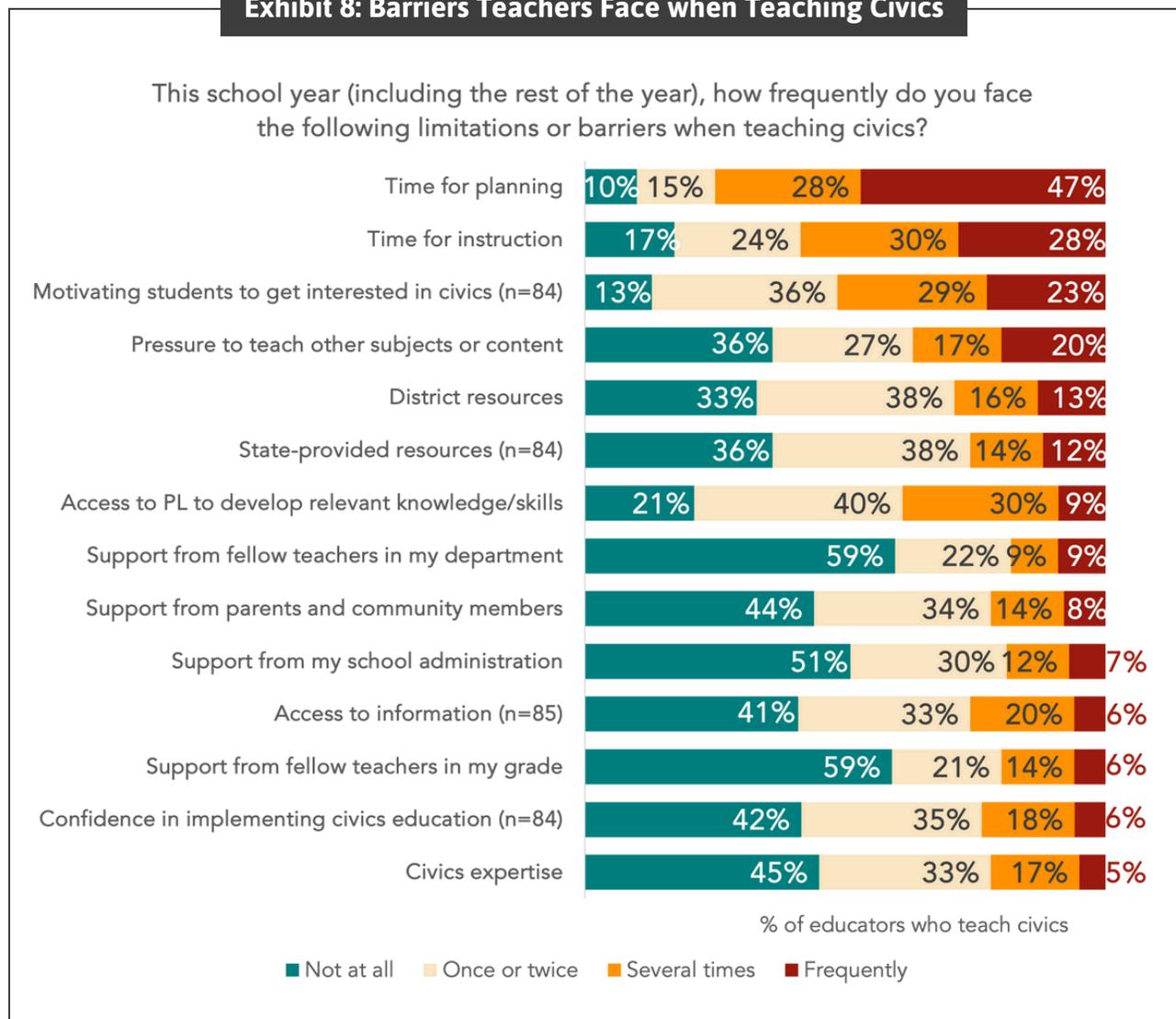
MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education District Survey

Read as: “24% of district leaders reported that ‘time for planning’ was not a barrier in their districts’ capacity to implement civics instruction aligned with the 2018 MA History and Social Science Framework.”

Note: ‘Civics Education Guidebook’ refers to the ‘Civics Project Guidebook’. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Teachers characterized state-provided resources, access to PD, and various types of support as ‘never’ or only ‘occasionally’ posing barriers (note that we do not know whether teachers were referring to access, quality, or amount when they selected ‘state-provided resources’); fewer teachers reported these as persistent barriers (Exhibit 8). Teachers described access to information and confidence/expertise in civics education as either ‘never’ or only ‘rarely’ posing barriers, and a majority reported that support from fellow teachers was not a barrier.

Exhibit 8: Barriers Teachers Face when Teaching Civics



(n=86)

Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education Teacher Survey

Read as: “10% of teachers reported that ‘Time for planning’ was not a barrier they face when teaching civics.”

Note: This chart includes a subset of respondents—only those who indicated they teach civics. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Some district leaders and teachers described facing challenges because of insufficient resources and competing priorities. For example, one district leader reported not having the resources to send teachers to DESE-provided professional development, and instead held their own training sessions:

"We haven't participated in any of the PD from DESE only because a lot of our resources, or the ability to send teachers to PD, is dedicated to English and math... So a lot of what we do has just been in-house."

- District Leader, Focus Group

Others noted that access to resources posed barriers for both students and teachers.

"I'm relying on sources that my school has vetted because we don't have a textbook, so we're relying on materials that we get and share... We have the Frameworks, but in terms of the materials, there's not much out there for us, where I spend a lot of time navigating the internet trying to find, like, the perfect reading or lesson, because it's not really provided for us."

- Teacher, Focus Group

Based on teacher feedback, we recommend that more time for planning and instruction be made available if DESE and districts want to prioritize civics education. DESE might also consider how to allow teachers to opt into opportunities that cater to their unique needs, either via online, asynchronous, or more regional opportunities. ■



Student-Led Civics Projects

Six years after the passage of legislation mandating student-led civics projects, DESE wanted to know whether and how high-quality student-led civics projects are being implemented across the Commonwealth, including how many students have access, what facilitators and barriers students and teachers experience, and how this varies by student, school, or district characteristics. We collected three different types of data to learn more about student-led civics projects:

1

Surveys of district leaders and teachers responsible for the implementation of student-led civics projects in their districts, schools, and classrooms (administered in school year 2023–24).¹⁰

2

Student project analysis of 86 student civics projects, obtained from 29 teachers across 25 districts (obtained and reviewed in school year 2024–25).

3

Focus groups with students, teachers, and district leaders who had been or were currently involved in student-led civics projects (conducted in school years 2023–24 and 2024–25).

¹⁰ Appendix 9 provides cross-tabulations of relevant data from our survey by district type (size, percent low-income students, and percent students of color).

We reviewed the student civics projects using a rubric ([Appendix 2](#)) that reflects DESE’s articulated stages for quality projects. These project reviews provide a snapshot of student experiences, as represented in the products generated by the students themselves. However, understanding students’ actual learning experiences is nearly impossible to measure directly, since the products cannot capture the full range of what students learned and experienced in the classroom.

Therefore, we complemented the student civics project review along with student, teacher, and district leader focus groups to hear firsthand both what participating teachers tried to convey in their project assignments and what student participants learned from the projects. By asking participants directly about their perceptions, experiences, and beliefs, we are better able to describe student experiences across districts and schools. We also draw from selected survey questions to provide additional context about district leaders’ and teachers’ perceptions of how the civics projects are implemented, limiting the teacher responses to those who indicated that they implement civics projects in their classrooms.

Implementation

We draw from survey and focus group data to provide general background information about civics projects, and then turn to the sample of civics projects themselves.

Project Structure

Just as Massachusetts districts seem to be providing general civic learning opportunities to students at high levels, so too are they providing support specifically for student-led civics projects. According to district respondents (n=98), student-led civics project implementation was more often overseen by schools’ history or social studies departments than by either individual teachers or district social studies teams (43%, 23%, and 21%, respectively) ([Exhibit 9](#)).

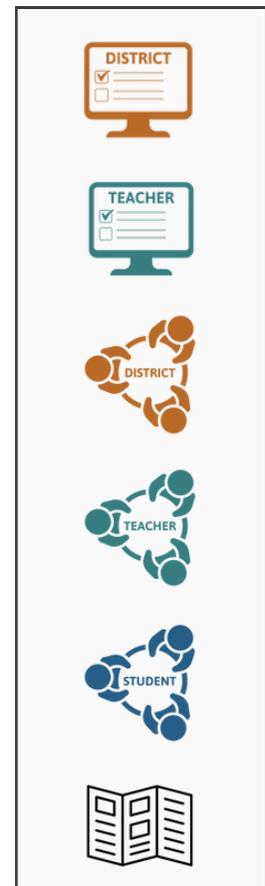
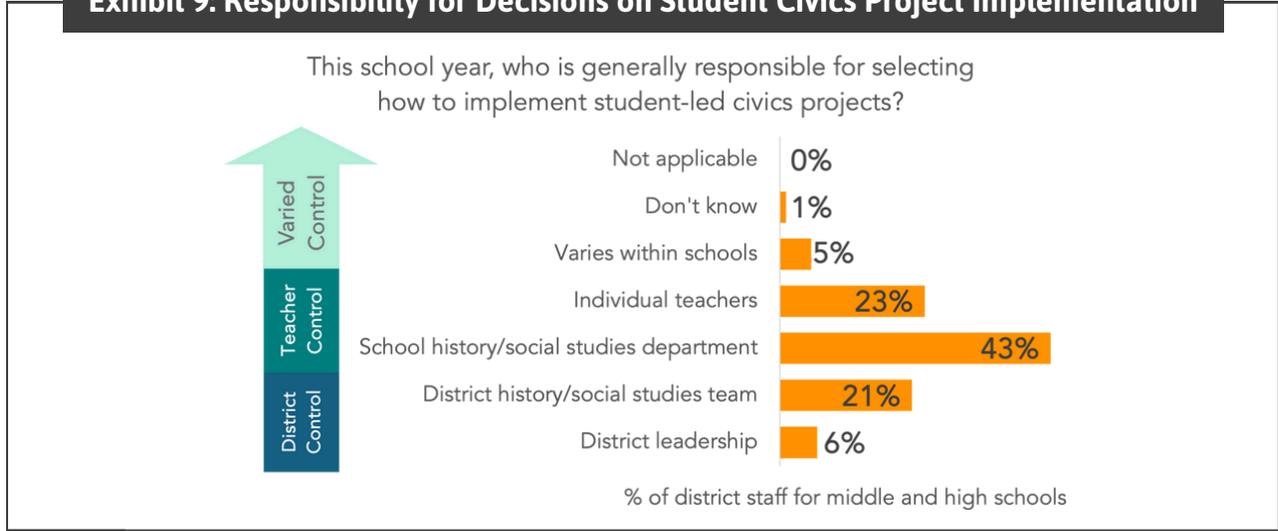


Exhibit 9: Responsibility for Decisions on Student Civics Project Implementation



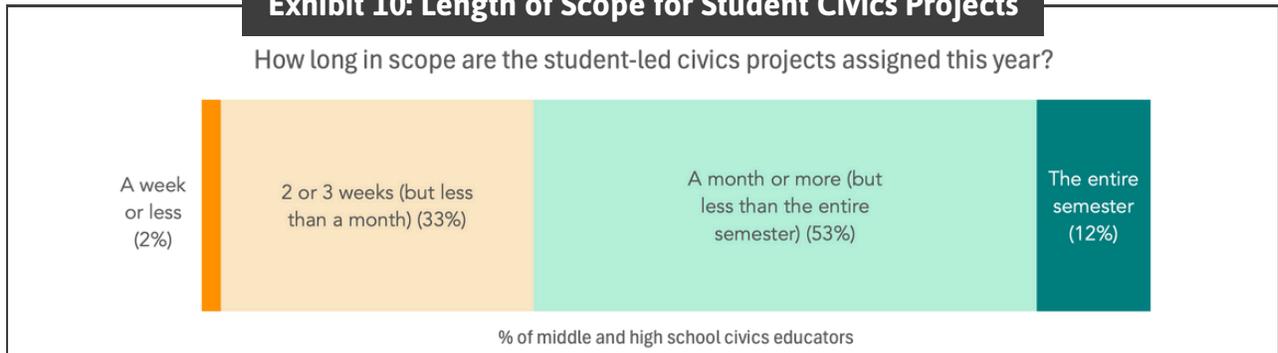
n=98 Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education District Survey

Read as: “One percent of district leaders who oversee middle and high school civics instruction reported that they ‘don’t know’ who is generally responsible for selecting how to implement student-led civics projects.”

Note: This chart includes a subset of respondents—only those who indicated they work with any grades 6–12. Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Over 95% of teachers indicated that the civics projects lasted at least 2-3 weeks, and two-thirds noted the projects lasted a month or longer, including, in some cases, an entire semester (12%); very few (2%) of teachers indicated projects lasted a week or less (Exhibit 10).

Exhibit 10: Length of Scope for Student Civics Projects



n=66 Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education Teacher Survey

Read as: “Two percent of teachers reported that their students’ civics projects are ‘a week or less’ in duration.”

Note: This chart includes a subset of respondents—only those who indicated they teach civics in any grades 6–12.

In fact, some district leaders reported reviewing their entire school schedule to create more dedicated time for civics projects throughout the school year.

“High school civics projects are truly a full-year project with steps laid out throughout the year, while the grade 8 projects are more truncated to the second half of the year.”

- District Leader, Focus Group

“Every last Thursday of the month... We are looking at those days being the days where students can actually focus on a civics project, because teachers meet all of their classes, they're not staggered, and... we would... [have more] time for students to do some research or have conversations about their projects during those times. So that's what we're looking at moving forward for both at the middle school and high school.”

- District Leader, Focus Group

Some teachers in the focus groups described student civics projects as easily aligned with the courses they were teaching, although one participant commented that the time allocated to civics projects meant stopping other course content for the duration of the projects, perhaps indicating certain courses are better aligned with the projects than others.

“So the hard part is... I stop [course] content for two to three weeks to introduce it [the civics project], and then they take a month or a month and a half to actually go out and get outside of the building, get those interviews and experiences done, and then we come back in March, April, to actually write the 1200 words I need from them. And then we make the board and do all that. So it's a full stop as far as [course] content goes.”

- Teacher, Focus Group

District leader and teacher focus group participants acknowledged that there may not be a single “perfect model” for how long civics projects should last. Some said that projects can lose momentum when spread over the full year. On the other hand, shorter and more intensive projects can limit the time students have to get

responses from local officials, what they are able to achieve, and whether there is enough time for them to see any real policy changes. The varied adjustments district leaders and teachers make show both the creativity required and the challenges experienced while trying to provide enough quality time for their students.

Notably, student focus group participants uniformly expressed interest in having more time for their civics projects. While some said they needed a few more weeks, others said they wanted even more than that amount to dedicate to their projects, and students in one focus group advocated for projects that span two quarters.

"I feel like the longer you have the project, the bigger impact you can eventually do. I'm still taking it but if you take it longer and could actually get a bigger chance for half a year, much more could be done to the city and society."

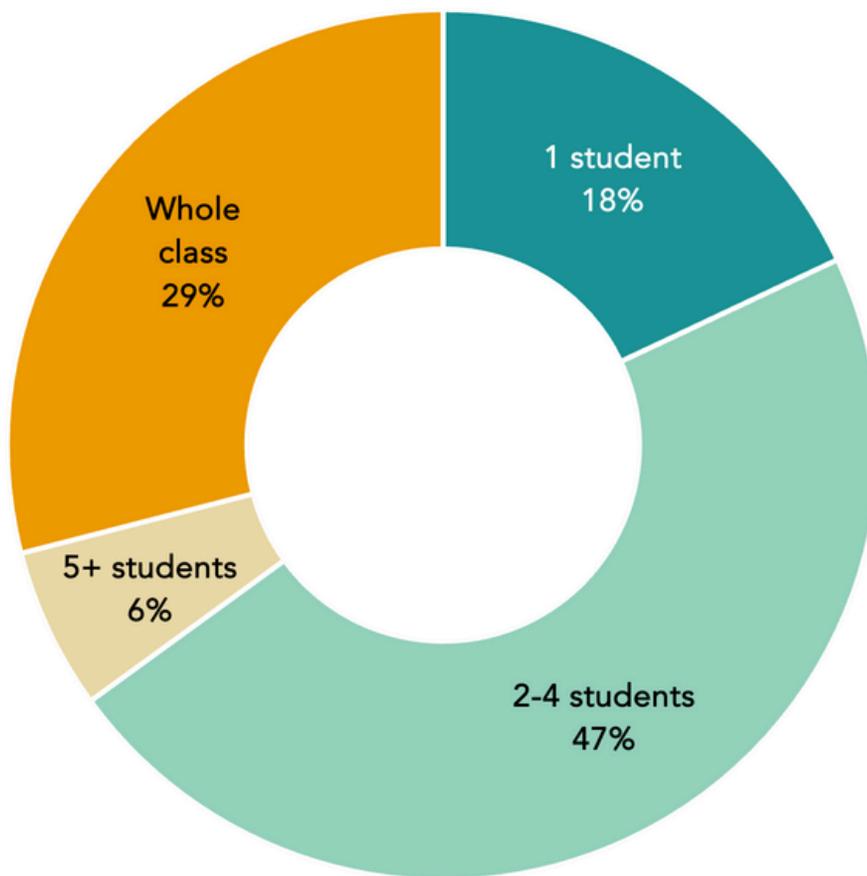
- Student, Focus Group

Students generally acknowledged that extra time does not always lead to greater impact, but still wished for more time. Students in one focus group acknowledged that they needed to improve their own time management skills. Specifically, they recognized that because they had spent so much time choosing a topic and making the plan for their civics project, they didn't have enough time at the end to take full action. However, they still felt having a few extra weeks would be helpful. Some students also mentioned that it was frustrating not to have a choice over their schedules, which prioritized math and science classes over those in which their civics projects were implemented. In one focus group, the students suggested that next year's students should do their civics project advocating for district policy changes allowing students to have more choice in their schedules and a longer civics action class.

Characteristics of Projects

Students work on civics projects either individually or in groups. According to the information provided by the 29 teachers during Student Project Analysis student project upload, almost half (47%) of the 86 civics projects were completed by students in 2–4 person groups (Exhibit 11), while almost a third (29%) were completed by whole class groups of students. Fewer students worked alone or in groups of 5 or more students (18% and 6%, respectively).

Exhibit 11: Student Civics Project Group Composition

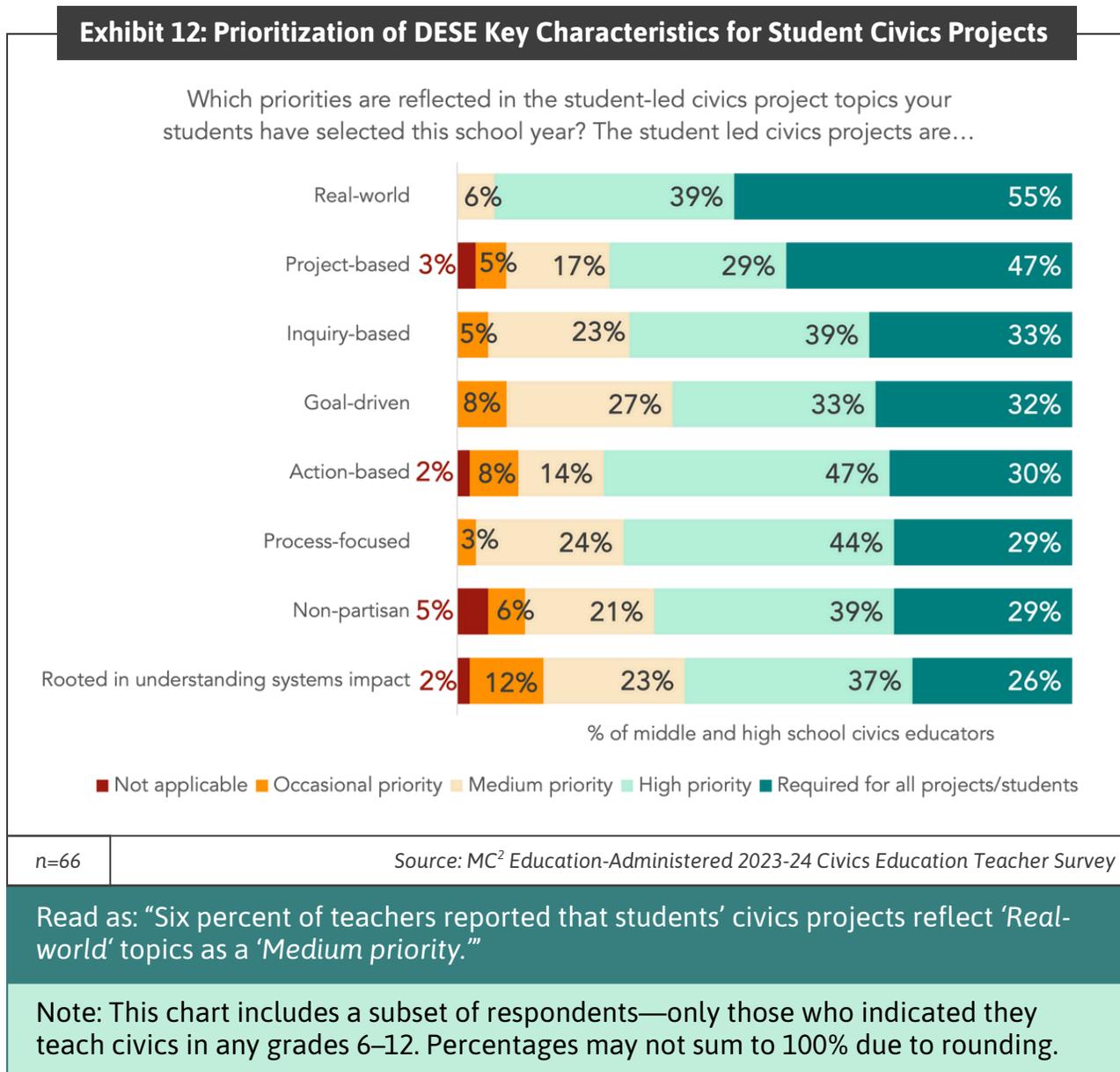


n=86

Source: MC² Education Artifact Analysis Upload Data collected during 2024-25

Read as: “Teachers reported that 29% of their students’ civics projects submitted for student project analysis were completed as a whole class.”

Teacher survey respondents reported that the students’ civics projects consistently prioritized DESE-defined key characteristics to be ‘real-world,’ ‘action-based’, and ‘project-based’ (94%, 77%, and 76% of teacher survey respondents, respectively) (Exhibit 12).



Teachers participating in focus groups described using different approaches to group formation and topic choice in their classes, and both they and students had ideas about how these two project components influence project success. One teacher, for instance, explained that having students work on their projects in small groups of three prevented students from getting lost or disengaged, and also helped them to hold each other accountable. According to students who got to

choose their own small groups:

“For us, we knew from the beginning that we didn’t want anyone else in our group because we both know we’re really hard workers. The teacher is good at saying you need to do your part but we didn’t want that holding us down. We’re both really determined so I think that’s why we got so far.”

- Student, Focus Group

On the other hand, students who were assigned to groups by their teachers reported that they were often frustrated.

“At first, we didn’t get to pick our groups... There were two other people [in my group] and they didn’t really do anything, they kind of just sat there. One of them wasn’t even there for a couple of weeks. So it was kind of hard to get the work done. I feel like we would have gotten it done faster if we had more people interested in it.”

- Student, Focus Group

Some teachers turned their classrooms into a congress of sorts, in which all students researched their own topics, either individually or in pairs, then advocated for their topic in a presentation. This process culminated in a whole-class vote to determine which topic the class would pursue. One teacher observed that this approach helped students learn how to lobby for their selected topics.

“The way I figured works out best for me is I have the kids all do an individual project, and then out of all those projects, we settle on one project that everyone’s working as a group. So I’ve got a legislative team, I’ve got an outreach team, I’ve got a research team and an administrative team that’s supervising, and they basically run the show. We have meetings at the beginning and the end of class about where we are, where we want to be. You know, what do we need to find out? What more do we need to know? And so, they’re all engaged, whether they complete it or not. It’s about the process.”

- Teacher, Focus Group

Students also expressed appreciation for the process of diving into their own research on a topic, and explained how interesting it was to learn from their peers and hear different perspectives on various topics:

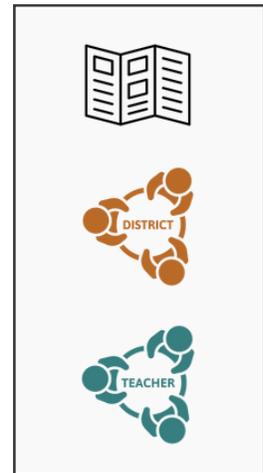
“That was my favorite part was first researching the topic I wanted to research and then sitting down, getting to look at these presentations of all the different things other people wanted to research. To see what they’d come up with, what they found out was just really cool.”

- Student, Focus Group

Examining Students’ Civics Projects

Student-led civics projects represent an essential part of civics learning, and the information from surveys and focus groups described above provides information about the civics projects that helps us understand the broad picture of civics education and student civics projects across the state. We also wanted to learn more concretely and directly what the projects entail, and to begin to describe variation in quality and experience, project by project.

We collected students’ civics projects by asking district leaders to distribute requests to civics teachers across the state to share examples of their students’ projects with us. Because we wanted to have a good representation of projects, and not only the exemplary projects that are often seen at state and district showcases, we used a structured process to help ensure that we were provided with projects that purposefully varied in quality. Our initial goal was to enlist enough teachers to yield a sample of 100 projects; ultimately, teachers securely uploaded 86 de-identified student projects, along with information about the project assignment, instructions, and templates that teachers had used.



“I’ve seen eighth graders tackle issues in a non partisan way that our adults have not been able to tackle”

- District Leader, Focus Group

Project Topics

One of the intended features of the student civics projects is that they are non-partisan, and in fact, *all* of the projects uploaded are non-partisan.¹¹ Beyond that, the projects could address a broad range of topics. We hypothesized that the projects would address any number of substantive policy areas, based on information from the surveys and our experience learning about civics education in the state, so we created a list of potential topics (Exhibit 13). We used this pre-specified list to categorize the projects, recognizing that individual projects could address more than one topic.

Exhibit 13: Prespecified Topic List for Artifact Coding

Arts/Culture	Civic participation	Criminal justice
Discipline/Safety	Drugs/Overdoses	Education
Economy/Jobs/Poverty	Elections	Housing/Homelessness
Food	Gender/Sexuality	Guns
Health care or access (e.g., mental health, reproductive rights)	Environment (e.g., climate change, parks, water quality, outdoor spaces)	Public transportation/Roads
Race/Racism/Ethnicity/National identity	Technology (e.g., AI, cell phones)	School-specific (e.g., school lunch, school policies)
Student rights/Student voice	Religion	War

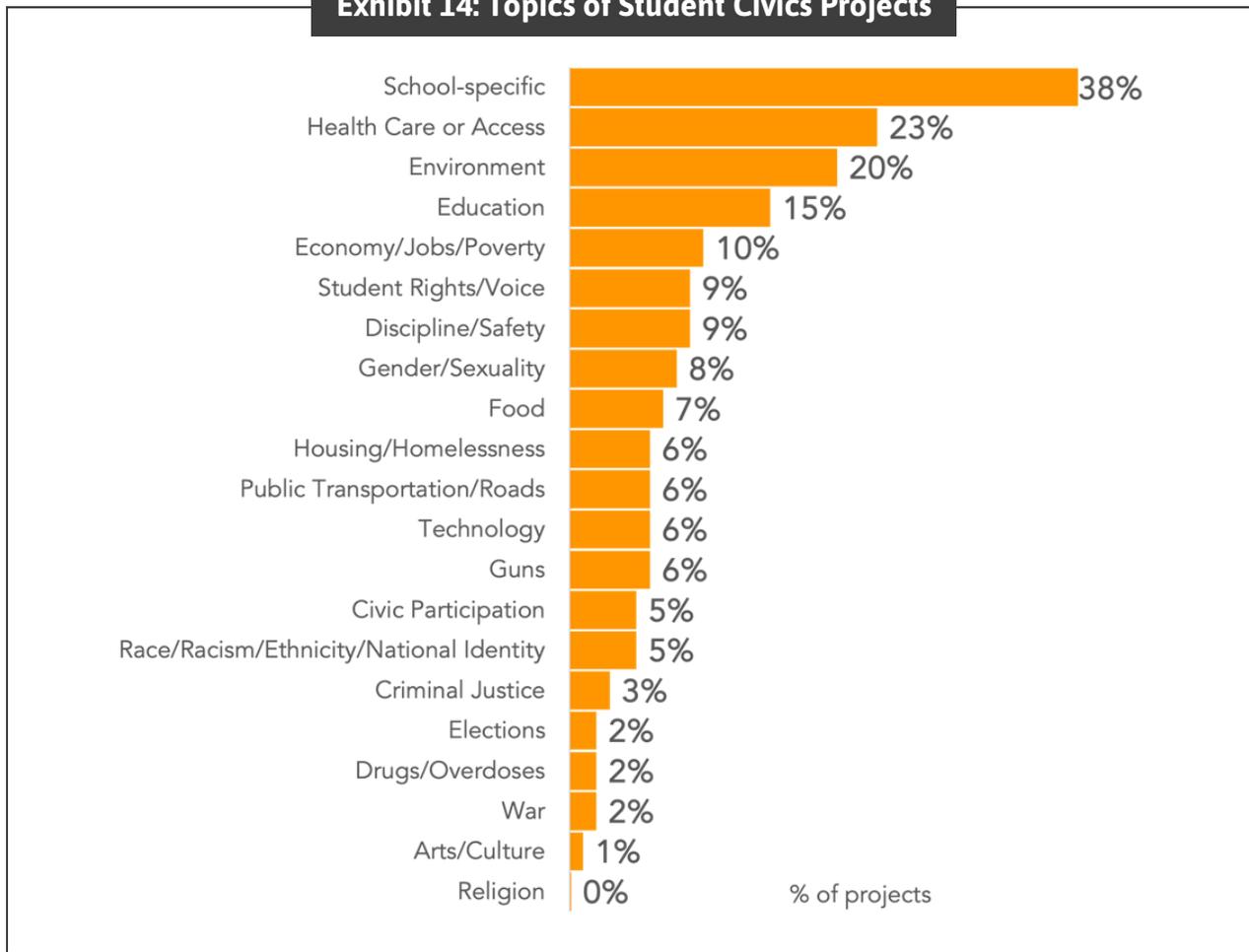
Read as: “Arts/Culture was one prespecified topic used to categorize student-led civics projects.”

Almost half (45%) of the civics projects focused on just one of the prespecified topics listed in Exhibit 13, and smaller proportions covered two or three topic areas (31% and 20%, respectively). Only 3% covered four or more topics. These few outliers were largely uploads from teachers of compilations of civic actions rather than individual projects; while we were unable to rate those projects, we were able to categorize them according to broad topic choices.

¹¹ A civics project is partisan, according to the DESE Civics Project Guidebook, if it takes a “side in party politics and party competitions” or supports a specific electoral candidate. Student projects may “be directed at ballot propositions, involve student communication with legislators in support of a specific bill, and have political viewpoints that reflect the student’s political perspective.” These activities are considered non-partisan. Only those student projects designed to support a specific electoral candidate or political party counts as “partisan.”

The civics projects addressed 20 of the 21 prespecified topics (**Exhibit 14**), although the largest number of projects concentrated on four topics: school-specific (e.g., students’ own school facilities or operations), health care, environment, and education (38%, 23%, 20%, and 15% of projects, respectively). The topic of religion was not addressed by any projects in our sample.

Exhibit 14: Topics of Student Civics Projects



n=86

Source: MC² Education Artifact Analysis Upload Data collected during 2024-25

Read as: “38% of students’ civics projects had a school-specific topic.”

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% because civics projects could cover more than one topic.

“The water fountains were shut down during COVID, and they weren't really turned back on. So we were not in compliance for water fountains. [I mean] not even close, and the kids ruffled feathers, I said, John Lewis, they made good trouble. But they spoke with a lot of people. They reached out to Harvard, they reached out to a lot of different [academics], and they got some great information. And we did get two water bubblers installed and working.”

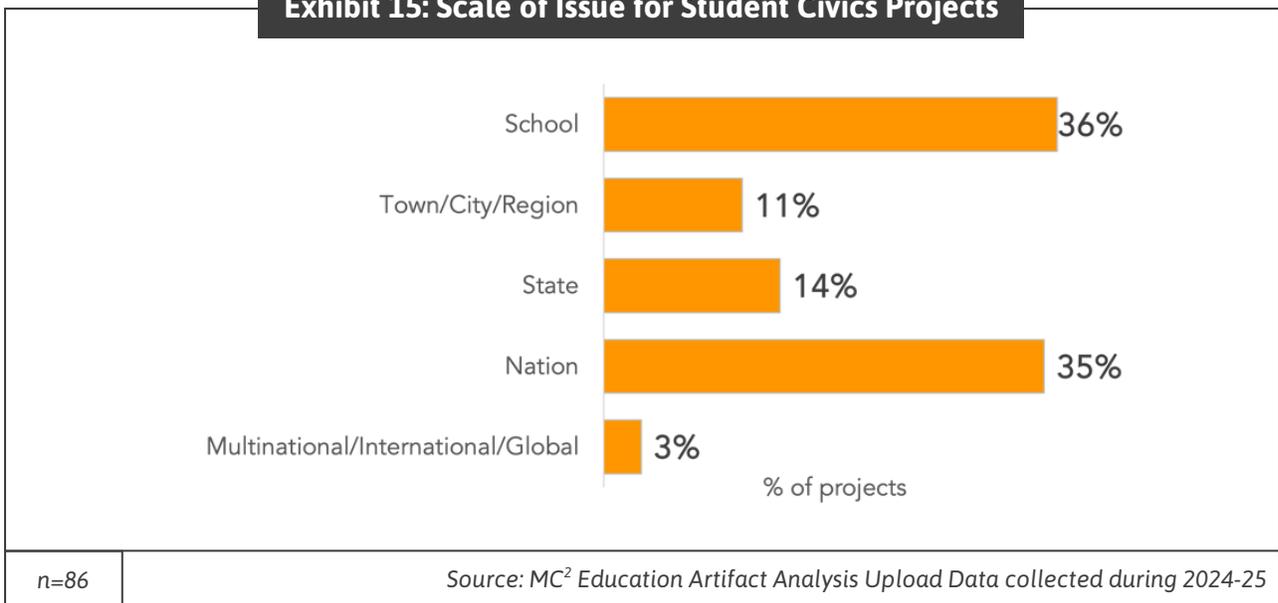
- Teacher, Focus Group



Project Scale

The topics student civics projects addressed could be very different in their intended scale or reach, tackling their focal issue (e.g., the environment) at the classroom, school, community, regional, national, or global levels. Therefore, we categorized projects according to their intended reach. A substantial proportion of the projects (47%), regardless of topic area, were decidedly local in scale and targeted students’ own schools, towns, or communities (**Exhibit 15**). Another 49% of projects were at the national- or state-level in their intended reach. Interestingly, while almost all of the topics *could* potentially be national in scope (except school-specific issues), the scope was national for only three topics, addressed by 11 projects, including: ‘guns’ (five projects), ‘civic participation’ (four projects), and ‘elections’ (two projects). This finding echoes what we heard from teachers about deliberately encouraging students to focus on more locally-relevant topics so that they could meaningfully engage in the key stages of civics projects within the time available.

Exhibit 15: Scale of Issue for Student Civics Projects



Read as: “36% of students’ civics projects had a school-level scale.”

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

During focus group conversations, teachers described the value of narrowing the focus of students’ projects to the school district, as that helped to keep the workload more manageable for both teachers and students. One teacher explained that when students have total freedom to pick their own topics, they are more likely to be engaged, and guiding students toward a local focus increases the likelihood

that students can see the impact of their action.

“A lot of our kids do choose things that are local. And when I say local, I mean local government, like city, municipal government, but also local, like, looking at actions within our school district... sometimes our students are critical of the district itself, because that's close to them, and it's most tangible... It also produces change.”

- District Leader, Focus Group

“I let them do pretty much anything that they want, because I found one of the biggest challenges, recently, is getting them to care about it... really care... but I really do make them only do the local-type level. So if they're doing LGBTQ rights, I want to know what that means at the local level, because that's action that I want them to show that they can actually make an impact.”

- Teacher, Focus Group

Project Actions

Next, we summarize the type(s) of actions students described in their projects ([Exhibit 16](#)). Here, we looked at all submitted artifacts (n=86), not only those that were rated (n=79).¹² In many cases, students took multiple approaches. For example, a project might have included both a petition and a fundraiser to advocate for a specific policy. The categories listed below were created from the artifact data, meaning we did not have a preconceived list of possible action types. In some situations, it was not clear what, if any, action had been taken.

The most commonly observed action was some form of letter writing or email to one or more official representatives (25 projects). Creating a public service announcement was next (22 projects), whether the project included a social media campaign, public education, or other efforts to raise awareness ([Exhibit 16](#)). Altogether, 29 projects included incomplete information about the intended actions, because the artifacts weren't clear or had no evidence of any action, there were proposed policy changes without an accompanying action plan to enact said policy, or the artifact included no action plan at all and was uncodable (13, 11, and 5, respectively). The remaining action types were addressed by fewer than 8 projects.

¹² Some projects could not be rated due to the incomplete nature of what teachers had uploaded, or because the images uploaded were illegible. More detail on un-ratable projects is provided below in the report.

Exhibit 16: Student Project Analysis Action Types

Action Type	Count
Letter/email writing or meeting with officials	25
Public Service Announcement (social media campaign, raising awareness)	22
Unclear or no action plan	13
Proposed policy	11
Direct action	8
Petition	7
Fundraiser	6
Advocacy/lobbying*	5
Uncodable, no action plan	5
Partnering with local organizations	1

n=86

Source: MC² Education Civics Project Artifact Analysis

Read as: “25 civics project artifacts included letter/email writing or meeting with officials as an action.”

Note: * e.g., presenting a petition in front of the school board for a policy change, advocating at the state house for a specific bill.

Project Quality Ratings

Finally, we describe the civics projects in terms of how well they represent the kind of quality experience they are intended to have. We used our rubric ([Appendix 2](#)) to rate each project on the evidence that students had meaningfully engaged in that specific stage. We developed this rubric in collaboration with DESE specifically for this analysis; it reflects the six stages DESE expects to occur in high-quality civics projects (see the [Civics Project Guidebook](#)).

Quality Ratings Methods

The rubric is purposefully flexible enough to apply across presentation modes (e.g., document, photo essay, slide deck, video), grade levels, content areas, and project types, among other characteristics. We also wanted a tool that includes both quantitative information about each stage, as well as narrative information that

could meaningfully be analyzed across a larger number of projects. The rubric uses a scale from ‘0’ for no evidence presented, to ‘1’ for limited evidence with no explanation or example, to ‘2’ for evidence presented with an explanation or example, to ‘3’ for evidence presented with supporting or illustrative detail (Exhibit 17). Higher ratings would signal higher quality, insofar as the artifacts included evidence that the students had engaged in each of the six stages. Next, we trained the MC² Study Team staff to code projects and piloted the use of the rubric on a small sample of projects (n=10), double-coding projects to assess coders’ inter-rater reliability.

Exhibit 17: Student Project Analysis Scoring Rubric

Stage	Rating Scale*
1 = Examine self and community	3 = Outstanding, Component is present and a detailed explanation or fully illustrative example is provided. 2 = Adequate, Component is present and an explanation or example is provided. 1 = Limited, Component is present but incomplete. It is not explained and no example is given. 0 = Not at all, Evidence of component is absent.
2 = Identify an issue	
3 = Conduct research and investigate	
4 = Develop an action plan	
5 = Take action	
6 = Reflect and showcase what students have learned	

Note: *Scale descriptions were applied to all stages except when the item required the use of additional clarification. For example, Stage 3a is about sources (i.e., ‘Sources are clearly and consistently cited’), and the scale was adapted as follows: (0=no sources given, 1=sources are referred to but not identified, 2=the majority of sources are identified (whether through link or title), 3=all sources are identified (whether through link, title, or full citation)). See [Appendix 2](#) for the full rubric with all scales.

The results of piloting the rubric led us to refine the rubric and its associated instructions, and after a second training, we coded the 86 submitted projects. Not all submitted projects could be rated across all stages, however, because teachers submitted combinations of digital/electronic documents, photographs of artifacts were illegible, or projects were missing information on three or more stages. We contacted teachers who had submitted incomplete projects to ask for additional clarification or resubmission, although that didn’t always result in more legible or

complete submissions. The final number of ratable projects in our sample is 79, including 44 from high school students and 35 from middle school students.

The student project analysis has some limitations. The sample is opportunistic and expedient, and far from representative. We asked district representatives to forward invitations to teachers to submit projects, and we don't know how many teachers received invitations; some teachers may have been altruistically motivated, while others may have been motivated by the offer of an incentive.

We asked teachers to identify a specific, random set of student civics projects so that we could examine a wider range of projects than those deemed as exemplary by their teachers, although we don't know whether teachers selected projects in the way requested. Additionally, while we hope that the scoring rubric can capture what is measurable in the artifacts, it may be a blunter tool than is optimal for rating such multifaceted and complex projects. And perhaps most importantly, the artifacts are snapshots of what students documented and teachers uploaded, and do not necessarily reflect all the steps taken toward project completion, the dynamics of group learning, other learning processes experienced by the students, or systematic knowledge of the instructions or resources teachers provided to their students. Nonetheless, we believe the student project analysis provides a helpful window into the breadth of students' projects and some insight into patterns across the projects.

Patterns in Quality Ratings

We present results for each stage of the rubric, rather than in a single summary score, to illustrate the variation evident across the stages.

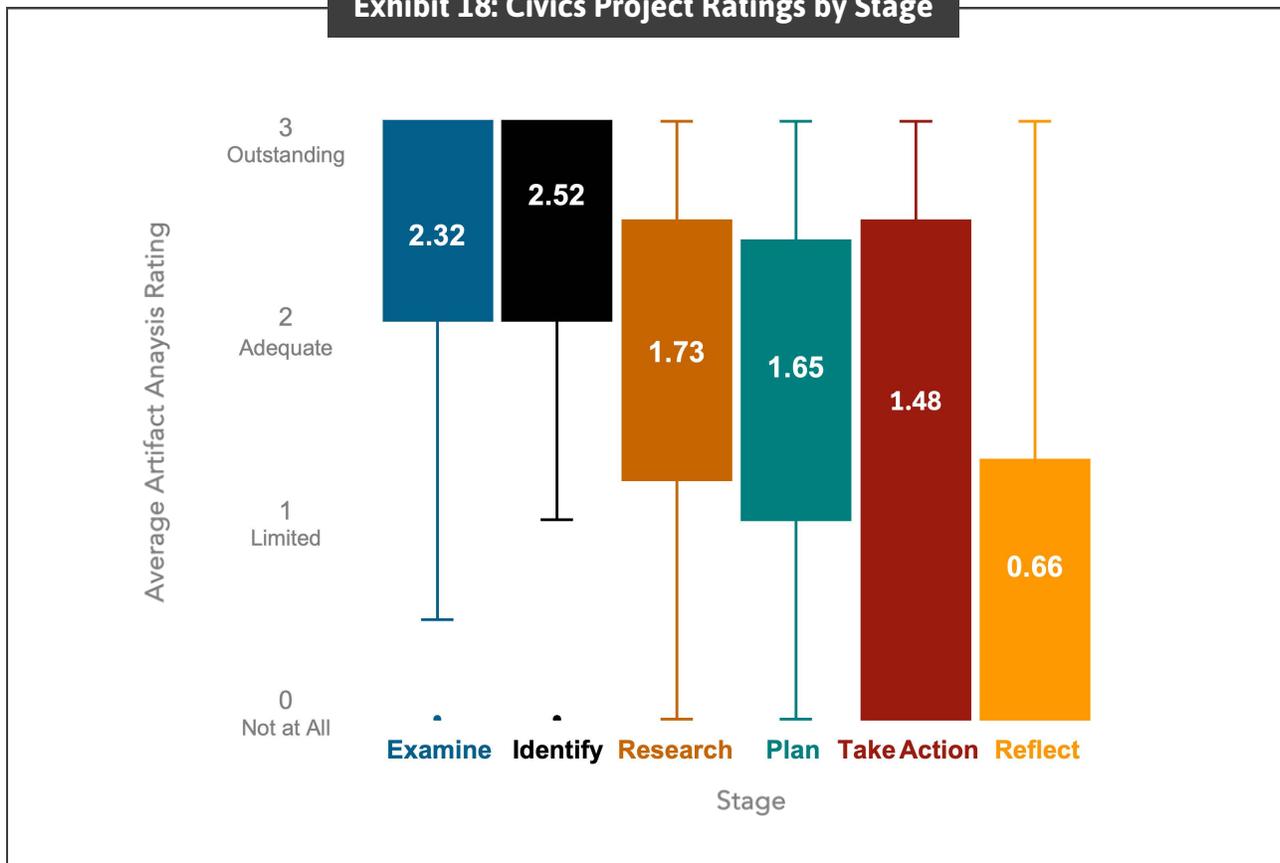
As shown in [Exhibit 18](#), the average scores are consistently higher on Stages 1 and 2, and decline across the following four stages. The average ratings are below '2' (Adequate) for Stages 3, 4, and 5, and below '1' (Limited) for Stage 6. The data from this sample suggest that:

- 1 Students are generally participating in high-quality civics projects as measured by this particular rubric in the initial phases [*Examine and Identify*]
- 2 Students' civics projects are generally of lower quality as measured by this particular rubric in the later stages [*Take Action and Reflect*]
- 3 There is considerable variation in civics project quality as measured by this particular rubric, both across stages and within projects in each stage.

4 There may be opportunities for improvement both in how civics projects are structured over time and in the nature of guidance teachers provide to their students about documentation and evidence.

5 Future researchers may also want to observe more of the processes students engaged in to understand the nature of student learning experiences as well as what is demonstrated in final products or artifacts alone. They may also want to explore other features of civics projects, including target audience (complementary to the locus), and whether students continue to focus on the same topics/projects as they move from middle to high school grades.

Exhibit 18: Civics Project Ratings by Stage



n=79

Source: MC² Education Artifact Analysis Upload Data collected during 2024-25

Read as: “Students’ civic project artifacts were rated an average of 2.32 for Stage 1 (Examine self and community) on a scale ranging from 0 to 3. The shaded box represents the middle 50 percent of the distribution of ratings for the stage, and the lines above/below represent the top and bottom 25 percent of the distribution of ratings for the stage. Shorter shaded boxes represent more compressed ratings, and longer shaded boxes represent more dispersed ratings.”

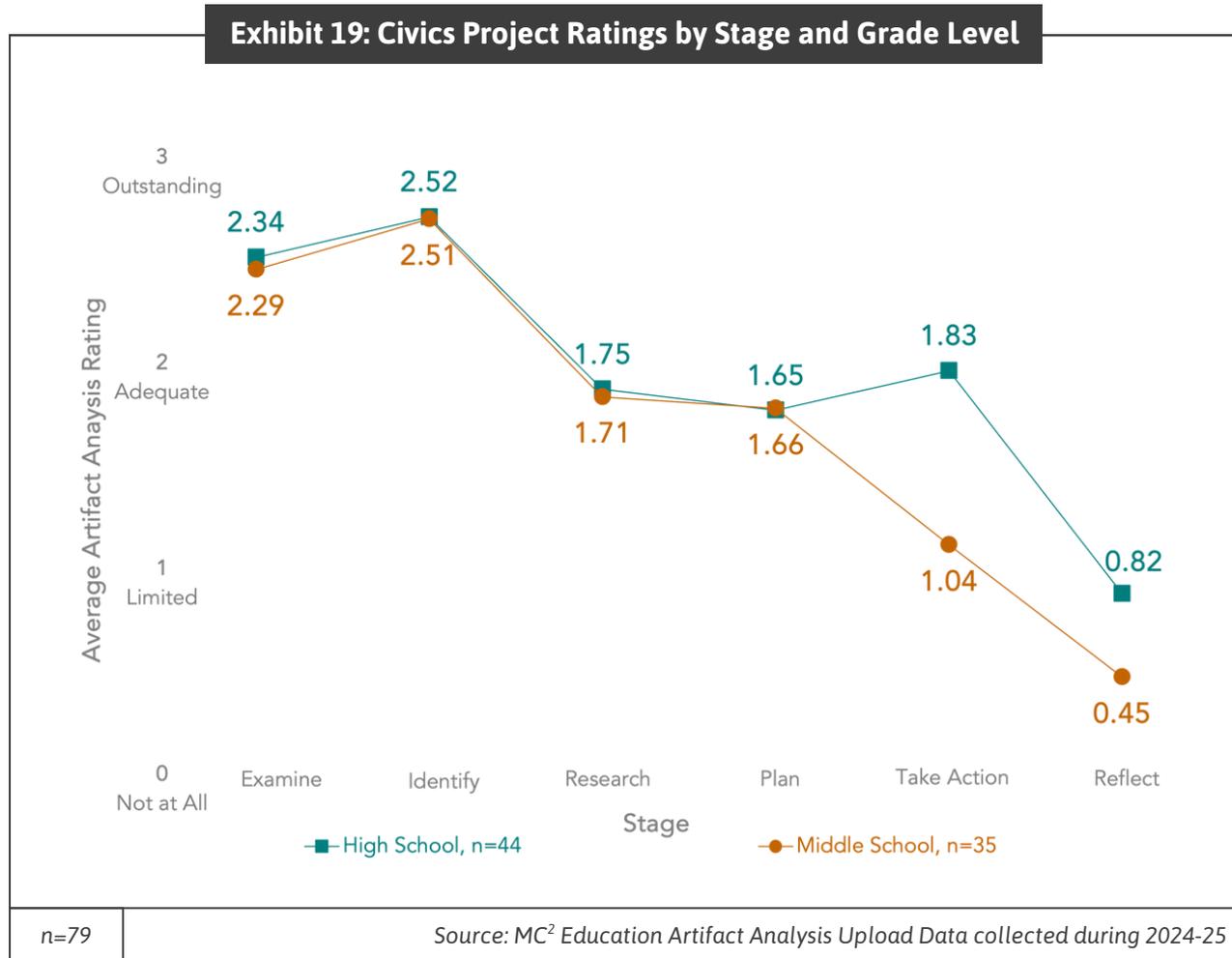
“... last year, a girl did her report on choice, and she did some great research, and she went to, [a] pro choice rally and talk[ed] to some people there. Then I told her, I said, Hey, you know, up in this town, there's a Planned Parenthood and there's usually people out there. I just kind of mentioned to her in passing, and she went the next week and interviewed, talked to all these people standing outside protesting. She was able to reflect on that authentically, and able to kind of reinforce her own beliefs through that too, and she seemed to get a lot out of it.”

- Teacher, Focus Group



While we cannot confirm why we observe these patterns, given the available data, we can surmise that because the stages represent sequential phases in civics projects, students may have spent more time on the earlier phases than the later phases, which some teacher and student focus group comments suggest may have occurred. It may also be that documentation of the first four stages is more straightforward than for Stages 5 and 6, that teachers’ instruction is more readily adapted to the earlier, concrete stages than for the latter more idiosyncratic and even abstract stages, or that simply the process is not adequately captured in the materials teachers uploaded.

We next present results separately for middle school and high school projects. The patterns are generally consistent across the six stages, except that high school projects have higher ratings on Stages 5 and 6 (Exhibit 19).



Read as: “High school students’ civic project artifacts were rated an average of 2.34, and middle school students’ artifacts were rated an average of 2.29 for Stage 1 (Examine self and community) on a scale ranging from 0 to 3.”

Focus group conversations suggested that high school students have more experience with conducting civics projects, because they had completed 8th grade projects that adhered to the same guidebook, and some may have elected to continue with the same topics.

“One of the approaches that we are continuing to explore is to start the Civics Action Project in grade six and scaffold it... what we would do in grades six and seven is really introducing broader themes and trying to have students find opportunities to think about a topic that they would like to explore deeper by the time they get into grade eight... This way, we feel that by the time they're in grade eight, teachers will be able to integrate throughout the year, you know, specific tasks towards the Civics project... This would continue as they go into high school. Students can choose to stay with the topic that they had worked on in eighth grade, because many have learned that sometimes you know you're not able to accomplish what your targeted goals are with your Civics project, and that's part of the learning process. And so some students feel like they've invested so much of their time that they would like to continue that.”

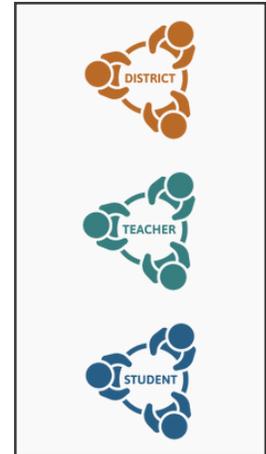
- District Leader, Focus Group

We explored other approaches to summarizing the ratings by analyzing the scores as a function of subgroups (e.g., socio-economic status, project group size, duration of civics projects), and observed somewhat similar patterns reflected in the two exhibits presented above. These additional subgroup analyses are presented in [Appendix 3](#). Across each subgroup analysis, the ratings are consistently highest for Stages 1 and 2, and lowest for Stage 6, with some fluctuation among the other stages.

We learned that civics projects provide strong evidence that students engaged in and documented completing the first two stages, and limited evidence that they completed the last two stages. We also learned that the ratings diverge more substantially for Stage 6. Why is there such variation across the stages? We turn next to exploring that variation through qualitative data.

Variation in Civics Project Experience

District leader, teacher, and student focus group participants alike commented on variation in civics project experience and quality, with educators appreciating how much energy students bring to the process as well as acknowledging concerns about how students’ academic and behavioral needs affected both struggling students and their classmates. In one district where eighth-grade classes are heterogeneously grouped, teachers felt they could not spend as much time supporting on-level students with their civics projects because they were leading small groups for students who struggle with reading, writing, or behavioral needs. In another district, teachers who focus on literacy, reading comprehension, and writing with their students commented that students struggling with literacy faced different challenges when assigned projects that required students to read and write independently or collaboratively.



District and school staff also found that varying levels of student motivation and interest in the project affect their experience:

“Our students talk ... so passionately about the topics at our showcase. Specifically, we've done a very good job at inviting our community members, our mayor, business owners in hearing our students just really talk about the issues that matter to them and things that are local to us here. I think that it just brings up a lot of pride and a lot of excitement about getting them active in their community.”

- District Leader, Focus Group

“Less motivated learners sometimes resist the additional mandated project, so occasionally [it is] a struggle to really motivate them to complete a project and topic.”

- District Leader, Focus Group

During student focus groups, we heard from students who found the experience to be very meaningful and exciting:

"There wasn't really anything I didn't like, it was probably one of my favorite classes ever."

- Student, Focus Group

"I was excited about like actually going out and being able to do something that helped the community."

- Student, Focus Group

"I think all the topics were super interesting and just getting to make an impact on the community it didn't really matter what topic we were doing."

- Student, Focus Group

Students spoke about how their teacher's approach influenced their experience. Students appreciated when teachers valued their opinions, allowed them choice in the project topic and their group, and let them take the lead on project work. One student said, "It was interesting to have the creative freedom we did, and the feeling of making an impact on your community. I thought it was interesting hearing everyone's ideas and being able to bring them together to make our project successful."

Another student praised the teacher as "excellent. She made sure we expressed our opinions in a respectful manner, which was helpful." Many students said that the advice they'd give to teachers implementing the civics project in the future would be to find a balance between supporting students and letting them take the lead, so students have the best experience possible.

Students similarly described facing challenges when they couldn't choose their groups, and group members did not contribute to the project in meaningful ways. One student said, "I had to steer the research for my group and show them what they needed to look for. They didn't know how to research a topic and put it into our essay." According to another student, "A lot of kids weren't doing what they were supposed to, so those who were doing what they should had to pick up the slack, and we didn't comprehend as well as we could have."

Students' lived experience may also influence their engagement, motivation, and commitment to conducting civics projects, as reflected in both teacher and student comments.

“There are some students who are very concerned about the environment, because they go hiking, they go to the ocean, they experience that stuff. And then there's other kids who haven't left town... So I know those experiences are going to play into maybe what their topics are, and you want them to choose something that they can really dig into and get passionate about... So when you give them a topic, it's just okay, it's, I'll do it, but I don't really know much about it.”

- Teacher, Focus Group



“I think often we learn about a lot of problems that are happening like economically or socially or just like in our own communities but I think it's rare that we actually go out and do something about it so I thought that was really cool and exciting.”

- Student, Focus Group

Barriers to Implementing Civics Projects

Across open-ended survey responses and focus group conversations, we learned from district leaders and teachers alike that the combination of MCAS standardized testing and the civics projects in the 8th grade represents a major challenge. This theme emerged amongst both grantee and non-grantee districts. Respondents commented that teachers are crunched for time and reported that they are unable to do justice to both MCAS preparation and student-led civics projects within the 8th grade.



"...to do due diligence on civic action, and then also feel like we had to prep our kids for MCAS was an insane task. And so every year ... we shortchange this piece of like, the development of this or this strand, because there's so much you could do. And I think that the time issue is an issue. And then with the idea of the testing and the civic action, I feel like the project, if we're keeping the MCAS, is going to have to be re-imagined in some way. And I know at least for my high school colleagues, they have a hard time getting civic action in, too, and it feels like maybe you have MCAS in one level, and you have civic action in another, but maybe not doing them both in eighth grade, like that. It just seems like I haven't talked to anyone that successfully feels like they've done justice to all seven strands.¹³"

- Teacher, Focus Group

"Please consider separating the MCAS test and the action project from 8th grade. Perhaps one in 8th and one in 11th. The depth that is required for the curriculum in general is tight with just the project. The addition of the MCAS just adds an unnecessary stressor that takes away from the purpose and meaning of this course."

- Teacher, Survey

¹³ From the [2018 History and Social Science Framework](#): "The seven Standards for History and Social Science Practice encompass civic knowledge, dispositions, and skills and the range of disciplinary skills often used by historians and social scientists. They focus on the processes of inquiry and research that are integral to a rich social science curriculum and the foundation for active and responsible citizenship."

District leaders and teachers noted that integrating civics projects into already busy schedules was difficult, especially given other district curricular requirements. One district leader said that their teachers are often exasperated and overwhelmed because they are asked to participate in so many initiatives during the same time period. Finding enough time for the civics project within a school day was also a reported challenge in some districts, particularly in high schools where civics projects can occur at different grade levels.

I think because of the high school schedule, it is much, much harder to do any cross-disciplinary work. And so while our eighth-grade project involves all teachers and the whole cluster working together on a common curriculum, logistically, that's very, very difficult in the high school with any of the courses. So it means that student-led projects happen only during the 10th-grade social studies time."

- District Leader, Focus Group

Others noted that access to funding for resources posed barriers for both students and teachers.

"I think the funding piece of somehow knowing that every child would be provided with a poster board to display their ideas for the showcase would alleviate some stress for both students and teachers. Time can be overcome with careful utilization of in-service time, but the funding to support remains a consistent challenge."

- District Leader, Focus Group

One district staff member simultaneously appreciated the availability of teacher resources specifically designed for 8th grade while recognizing that civics projects being integrated into multiple grades and courses in high school mean that high school teachers have to do more digging to find appropriate resources.

"...because it is a mandate at grade eight, a lot of the resources are geared toward that grade eight, while it's embedded in different iterations at high school. So I feel like the resources aren't as plentiful because... it's a moving target. Every district and every town and city in Massachusetts has an eighth grade.... So it all kind of looks the same, so you can make it a little more homogeneous while at high school, you know, two schools might not look the same."

- District Leader, Focus Group

District leaders and teachers also described student capacity and interest as a challenge, because the civics projects are complex both in terms of content and behavior management. The projects require a high level of teacher involvement to keep students engaged and interested when students are working in small groups.

“In many cases, our student skills need a lot of remediation to do the kind of independent work that this project requires. It’s very different than so many ‘regular’ projects and assignments, so we can struggle with the expectations vs. reality with some students. I think that keeping things working effectively within groups is the biggest challenge.”

- Teacher, Focus Group



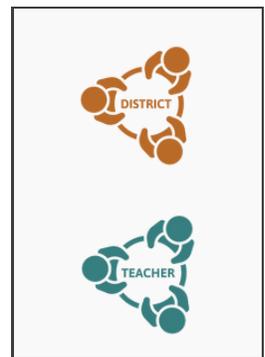


Teacher Experiences Beneficial to High-quality Civics Projects

District leader and teacher focus group participants described multiple approaches and experiences that have made civics projects easier to implement. These included: creating opportunities for collaboration, for example, through one-on-one meetings or cross-district convenings; creating tools to organize resources and making community outreach easier; and having previous experience in project based learning.

In one district where civics projects are scaffolded across grades, a district leader described using online resources and templates, and documenting the types of tasks and assignments at each grade level “so every teacher at every grade level knows exactly what students have done the year before and what the students will be doing the following year.”

A different district leader described having created tools to support teachers, specifically a database of local community members and other leaders who are willing to work with students on their civics projects. This district leader described plans to create a 1-page guidance document for people outside of the school on how to talk with students.



"I don't want to necessarily burden them [community leaders], so that's why I'm trying to create, like, not really a database, but more of a spreadsheet... When your kids pick your topics, please add them here so I can see the buckets, so that I can, one provide supports for them. But also get a heads up to just let you know you're going to get like, 30 calls or even... because I think preparing people who are going to read on the other end... to have that sort of empathy and compassion for dealing with a student. They don't necessarily all have that role where they understand them. So, giving some of the preface. And I've also said to kids and partners and local officials and teachers, I'll be there any step of the way if I can. When I go to talk to state police, I'll bring one in, you know. Or, I'll jump on the Zoom with you so I can ask some follow up questions, you know, or to make you think. ... I think we should just have a thing that's like tips to talk to students, just a little one pager."

- District Leader, Focus Group

Other district leaders explained the benefits of simply meeting with their teachers to discuss the civics projects, by using district-wide meetings to “discuss ideas and resources for the civics project... which unfortunately, don’t happen as often as any of us like”, or by collaborating with other districts to learn more about the various details involved in the civic action process. One district leader also described being able to hire a teacher leader who had attended professional development outside of the school, who “provides on-the-ground support for all of our US 1 teachers... [they do] a lot of organizing for our local showcase and support in the state showcase”.

A non-grantee district leader lamented the lack of resources available to convene district teachers and provide them with helpful resources.

"... If we were able to get the grant, I might be able to develop professional learning communities among the department and using also the money to either bring teachers or other[s] from other school districts that have been doing this a lot better than what we're doing, being able to kind of share their experiences in terms of the design, the development and implementing a showcase, or having teachers being able to go to their other school district to see a showcase, to see how that's done. And then also, you know, providing some resources. I don't want to just kind of flood them with resources, because then they just become overwhelmed and they just don't do anything. But finding them the time and to kind of explore some of the resources that they would be able to easily incorporate into their existing already packed curriculum, but definitely would be continuing with that scaffold approach. So it's not just 8th and 11th grade teachers, but I want to include 6, 7/9, 10th grade teachers as well, and figure out a path at each grade level and how students can build upon each year."

- District Leader, Focus Group

Teachers described different experiences that helped prepare them to teach civics projects, including applying for fellowships, serving as program leaders with DESE to train others on the civics project, building project-based learning experiences into their instruction well before the civics projects started so their students would be ready, and departmental collaboration.

"[What I] feel good about is, I know my students love group work, and they'll work well together. And I feel like, you know, I have enough knowledge, and we've done enough, I guess, other projects in research that I think it's just channeled in the right direction to say, now we're doing this civic engagement piece that, you know, they'll embrace it and run with it."

- Teacher, Focus Group

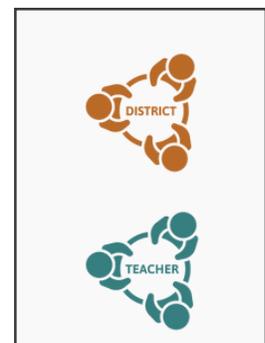
Experience doing the civics projects themselves was described by one teacher as the best preparation for guiding new students through the projects the next time. After several years, both teachers and their students were more familiar with the experience and were no longer as intimidated, but rather excited about it:

"I think our students, our teachers, feel prepared and ... the first students that went through a school showcase, a city showcase, a state showcase, are now coming into 10th grade, and so when their teachers have already started saying we're gonna be doing a civics project this year, it's it's actually the opposite. It's not like, 'oh no!' It's like, 'Oh awesome. Like, can I work on what I worked on before?' So I think there's a lot more like connection between them, seeing it as like a way to be empowered, instead of seeing it as like, 'Oh no, we have to do this again.'"

- Teacher (former District Leader), Focus Group

Integration of High-quality Civics Projects into Curricula

We draw from data about civics education from both district respondents and teachers to provide context for how civics projects are integrated into social studies/history curricula. We also note that civics projects are implemented in a variety of courses and subjects, including civics (in eighth grade), social studies, and American history, among others. Focus group participants generally described civics projects as situated



within other courses rather than as stand-alone courses, especially for middle school, although two district leaders described plans to pilot a course focusing just on the civics project.

The concept of making the civic projects more interdisciplinary was brought up by several teachers and district leaders. Some commented that students would benefit from looking at their projects across multiple subjects. Additionally, participants noted that sharing the responsibility for the projects across multiple departments would reduce the pressure on social studies teachers (especially in schools where there may only be a single teacher). However, as mentioned earlier, one district representative observed that interdisciplinary civics instruction would likely be more difficult at the high school level due to scheduling.

“... the civics project needs to be more interdisciplinary, and we really should involve superintendents, assistant superintendent, school committee, especially elementary principals, because some of the social studies coordinators or directors are not involved in elementary ed, right, in many districts, it's the elementary principal that is the educational leader, or the curriculum leader in their own schools. And so, I think it also balances the responsibility. It's not just the social studies, it's not within the jurisdiction of social studies departments.”

- District Leader, Focus Group

According to one district leader, “There is not enough time to teach history and social studies content and have students engage in meaningful civics projects. One always gets the short end of the stick.”

Impact of DESE-Offered Resources

As described above, in the discussion about barriers and resources needed, both district and teacher survey respondents consistently described having accessed and used a variety of state resources. The impediments identified by survey respondents had more to do with time constraints than the availability of state-provided resources. Focus groups provided additional insights into the benefits and challenges associated with resources from the state. The specific DESE-provided resources that focus group participants identified as helpful



included the artifact library, project guidebook, local-level performances, and showcases.

“I’ve found the guidebook straightforward and easy to use. The artifact library has very helpful resources I’ve used in my own course, in PD with colleagues, and have recommended to others.”

- Teacher, Focus Group

One teacher described how attending the showcase helped not only the teachers but also the students:

“And then really a huge tool was seeing a state showcase and being able to go to the first state showcase... and we were also able to get transportation provided by DESE as well, which was very helpful. And I think ... that students know and teachers know that it's kind of expected that we'll be at state showcases. I think it just kind of gives more validity to the project and the importance of it... So I would say those resources, if anything, have made it more important in the eyes of teachers, parents, staff, students, thanks.”

- Teacher, Focus Group

Two additional teachers recognized that the showcases represent a valuable experience for all, yet competing priorities during the spring schedule mean that they are not always able to attend—or send students—because they are trying to balance MCAS scheduling, field trips to Washington D.C., and the showcase. ■



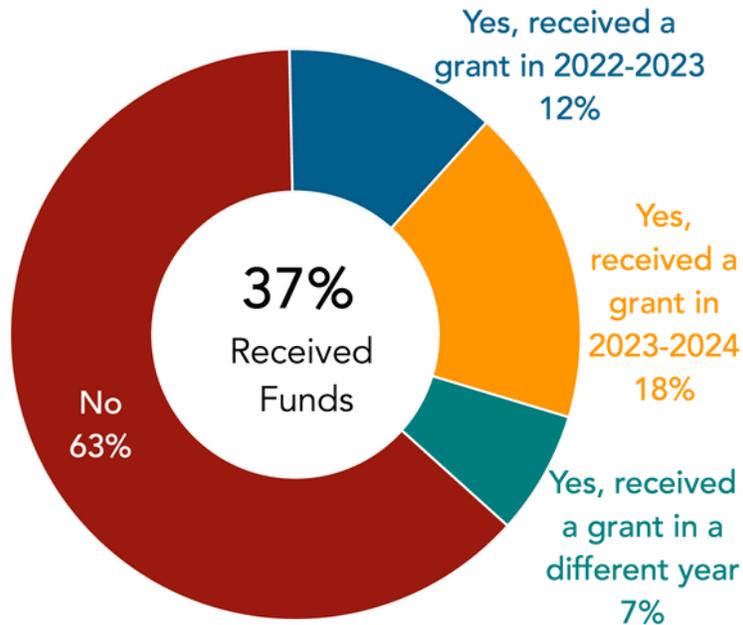
Civics Education Grant Evaluation

One part of the evaluation focuses on how districts used their grant funding to support improving access to high-quality civics learning for all students. The 2023-24 district leader survey asked a series of questions about their grant priorities, the role of the grant in shaping various offerings, the nature of professional development, and other resources. We summarize findings from our 114 district responses below (representing 98 individual districts, or 43% of our representative sample of 226 districts). We also draw from non-grantee district leader and teacher survey responses, where appropriate, to help us learn whether the experiences reported are similar or different for grantee district and non-grantee district respondents. While this comparison does not provide causal evidence of the grant's impact, it does help provide useful benchmarks for how grantee districts and non-grantee districts compare. [Appendix 9¹⁴](#) provides cross-tabulations of relevant survey data by district type (size, percent low-income students, and percent students of color). Finally, we include information from district leaders and teachers who helped us obtain student artifacts; the mini sustainability survey, completed by 20 respondents from 17 districts, asked about expected plans for sustainability of civics programming once the grant period ends.

¹⁴ To preserve formatting, this appendix is presented last.

Exhibit 20: District Leader Self-Reports of Civics Teaching and Learning Grant Receipt

Did your district receive a Civics Teaching & Learning Grant in any of the following school years?



n=114

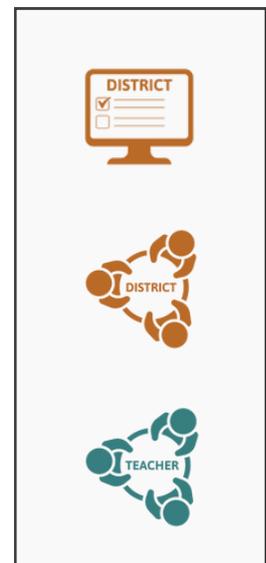
Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education District Survey

Read as: “63% of district respondents reported that their districts had not received a Civics Teaching and Learning Grant.”

Uses for Grant Funding

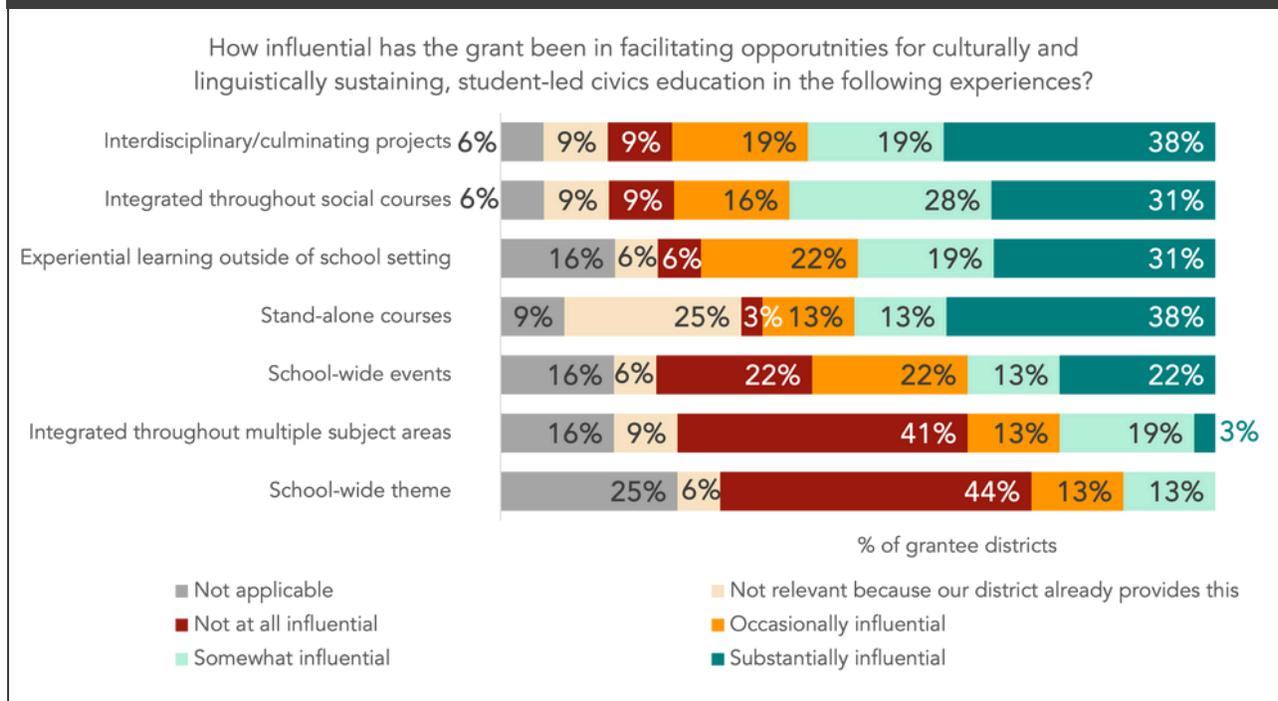
In school year 2023-24, over one-third (37%) of district survey respondents reported having received a Civics Teaching & Learning Grant at some point (Exhibit 20).

Grant funds can be used to support different activities, such as professional learning, curriculum, support for student-led civics projects, and experiential learning. We asked district leaders to indicate whether and to what degree grant funding had facilitated the integration of culturally and linguistically sustaining civics education into various activities, using a scale of ‘not at all influential’ to ‘substantially influential’ as well as a ‘not relevant because our district already does this’ option. The



majority of grantee districts indicated that grant funding had at least some influence on several activities, including interdisciplinary/ culminating projects, integration of civics throughout social studies courses, experiential learning in non-school settings, stand-alone civics courses, and school-wide events (Exhibit 21). Fewer grantee districts reported that the grant was influential relative to integrating civics across multiple subject areas or teaching civics using school-wide themes (35% and 26%, respectively). Note that we performed analyses by grade level (middle school vs. high school) and found no relevant differences between those two groups.

Exhibit 21: District Respondents’ Perceptions of Grant Influence on Civics Education Activities



n=32

Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education District Survey

Read as: “Six percent of district leaders reported that the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant was ‘not applicable’ in facilitating ‘interdisciplinary/culminating projects (e.g., student-led civics projects)’.”

Note: This chart includes a subset of respondents—only those who were grantees in fiscal year 2023 or fiscal year 2024. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Qualitative data from the survey and focus groups highlight how some respondents reported that the grant has helped districts, and that the resources have been key to their efforts to implement high-quality civics projects.

“The grant has helped us work with teachers to implement learning that leads to greater engagement among students because they have voice and choice in the projects they choose to do. In addition, through high-quality professional development, we have used the grant to increase teachers' capacity to lead the project work and facilitate civics-related discussion in their classes.”

- District Leader, Survey

“Without the grant, a lot of this wouldn't be possible. [We] wouldn't be able to support the culture and the enrichment and the team like that. The fact that I have six people, I can pay six people to plan with me for the year and do PD and have teachers, that's huge.”

- District Leader, Focus Group

We also heard from a teacher from a non-grantee district who described how they would use the grant if they were able to get it.

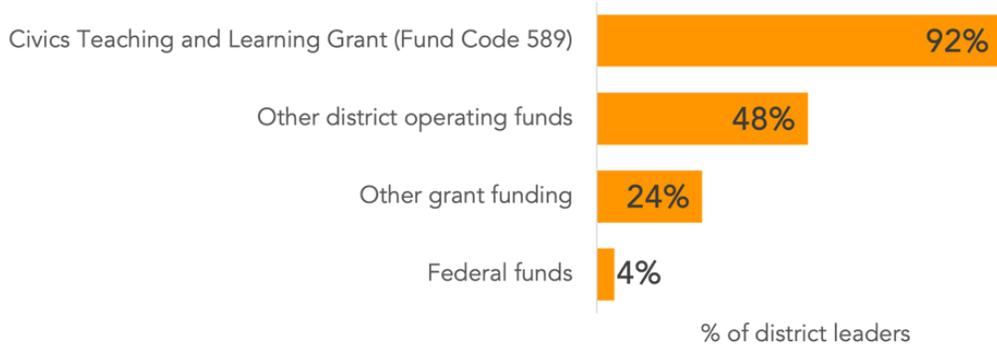
“I would love to be able to take students on a trip to see the government in action. The district applied for a grant to do this but lost two years in a row. Our students come from challenging socio-economic backgrounds, and an opportunity like this would be life- and career-changing for many of them.”

- Teacher, Focus Group

Grantee districts reported using a variety of funding sources to offer civics education ([Exhibit 22](#)). Not surprisingly, the vast majority (92%) indicated that the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant represented one such resource; just under half reported that they also use other district operating funds (48%), and about one-quarter reported relying on other grant funding (24%) to offer civics education.

Exhibit 22: Self-Reported Resources Used for Civics Education among Grantees

Please select any resources you've used to offer civics education.
Check all that apply.



n=25

Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education District Survey

Read as: “Four percent of district leaders reported that their districts used federal funds to offer civics education.”

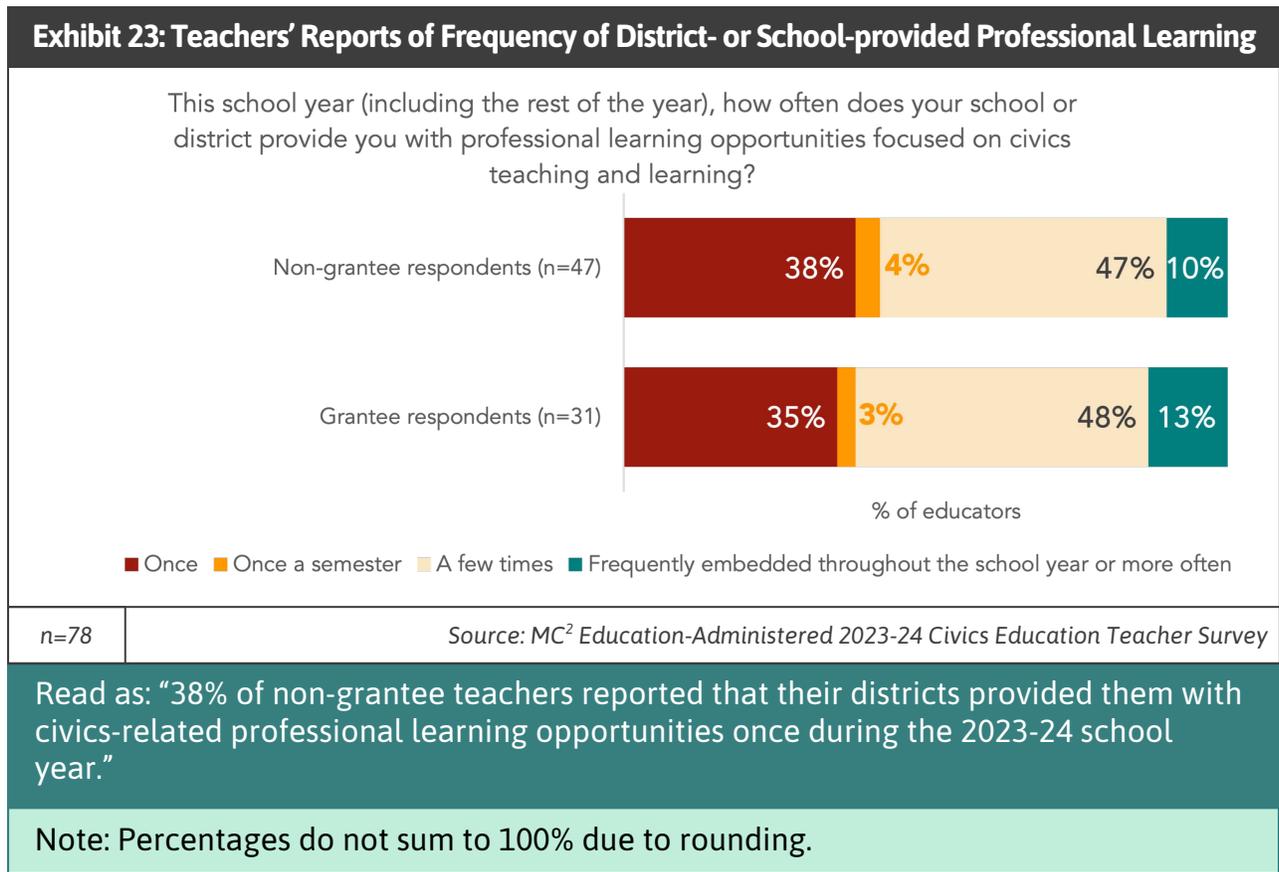
Note: This chart includes a subset of respondents—only those who were grantees in fiscal year 2023 or fiscal year 2024. Percentages do not sum to 100% because district leaders could select multiple resources.

Professional Development Approaches and Impact on Teacher Readiness

Information from both teachers and district leaders described professional development offerings that were roughly similarly available to teachers; comparable proportions of teachers from both grantee and non-grantee districts reported having adjusted aspects of their teaching as a result of professional development. However, teachers from grantee districts indicated having had both more, and more variety, of professional development offerings related to civics instruction. Specifically, all teachers from both grantee (n=31) and non-grantee (n=47) districts reported that their districts had provided civics-related professional development offerings at least once, and over half of the teachers reported having participated more often in school year 2023-24 (Exhibit 23). Note that teachers’ depictions of the availability of professional development do not necessarily mean they actually took part in



it. We don't know, however, why teachers did or did not participate in professional development, or whether particular barriers prevent their participation.



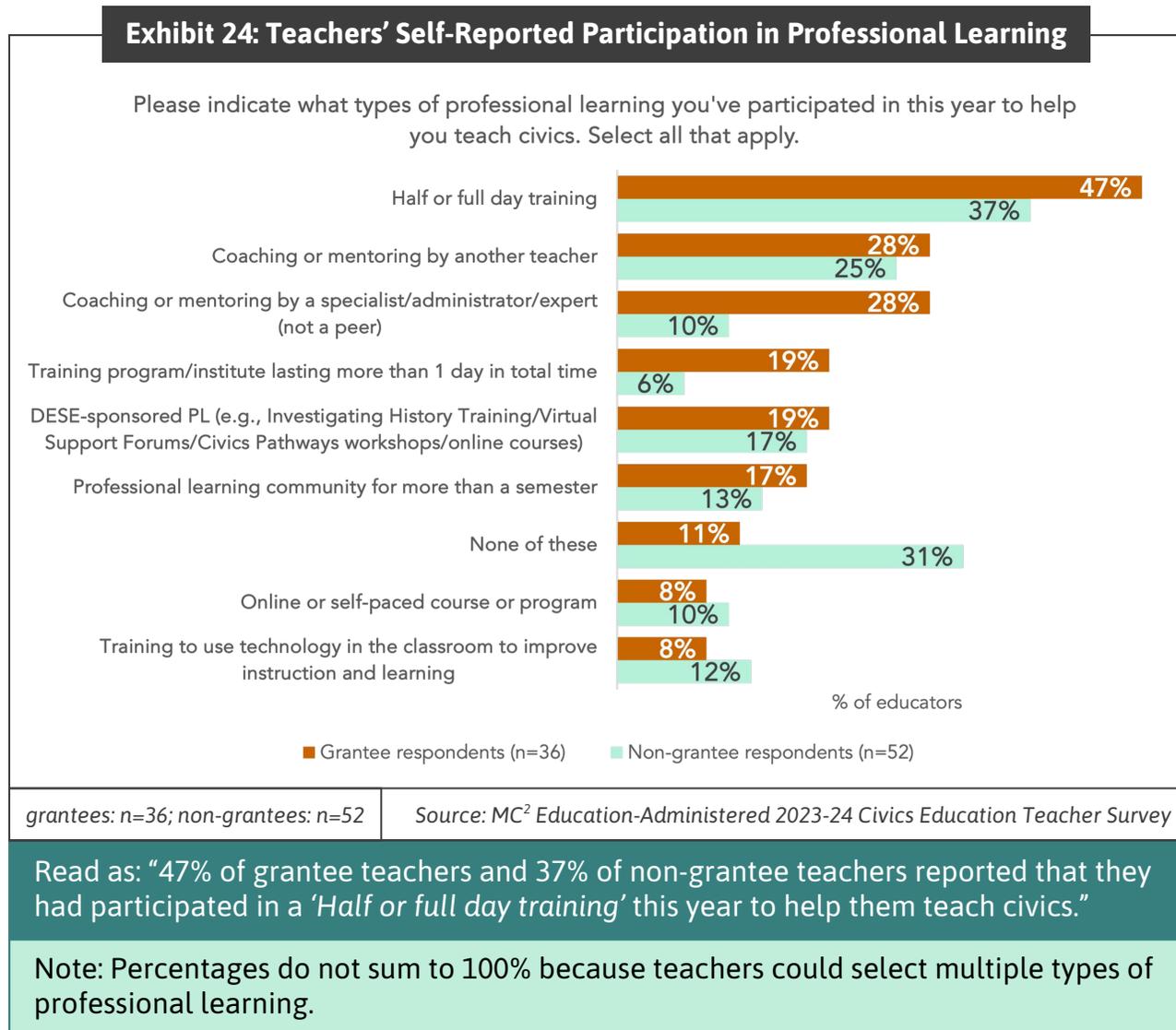
District leaders acknowledged in focus group discussions that they faced some obstacles to engaging teachers in professional development. For example, one non-grantee district leader described challenges teachers experience managing both ongoing teaching and professional development, given insufficient time.

"I've suggested [DESE PD] to many of my teachers. I'm going to make another stab at it next year through the Civic Pathways, which I think is a collaboration between DESE and Harvard. But I think a lot of teachers get to... they're like, it's three o'clock for PD, online PD. And they're like, am I going to prep for my class the next day, or am I going to get online? And they're usually going to prep."

- District Leader, Focus Group

Professional development can take multiple forms, and teachers from grantee districts (n=36) generally reported having participated in more, and more varied

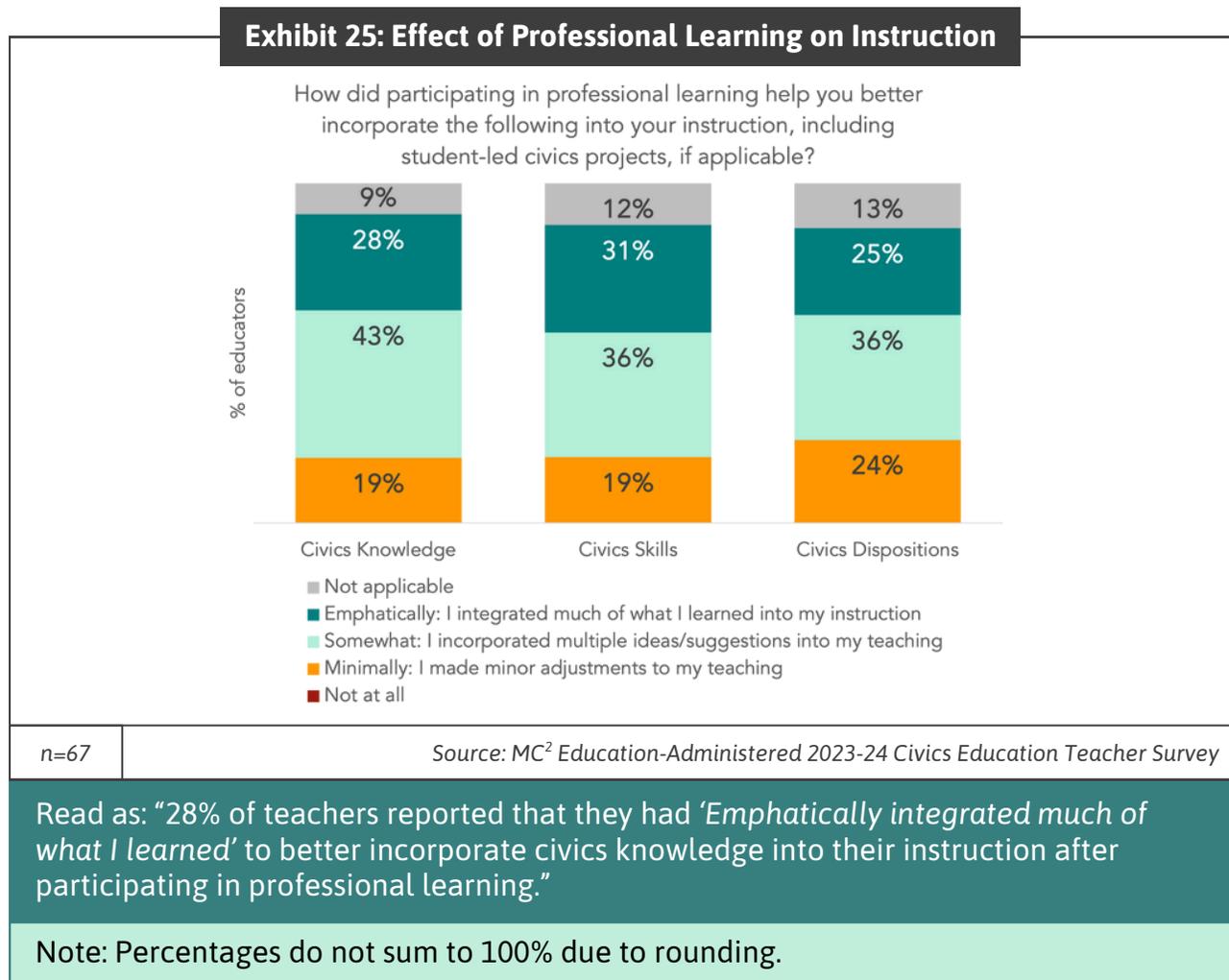
types of professional development sessions than those from non-grantee districts (n=52) (Exhibit 24).



For example, nearly half of teachers from grantee districts reported having participated in half- or full-day training sessions, and about a quarter indicated they had been coached or mentored either by a specialist/expert coach or by another teacher (28% each). Smaller proportions reported having participated in training longer than a full day or in DESE-sponsored professional learning opportunities (19% each). A larger proportion of teachers from non-grantee districts than grantee districts indicated having had no professional development offerings related to civics during the 2023-24 school year (31% and 11%, respectively).

The large majority of teacher respondents (n=67) who took part in civics-related professional development, from both grantee and non-grantee districts, reported

that they had made at least minor adjustments to their teaching of civics knowledge, skills, and dispositions (90%, 86%, and 85%, respectively) (Exhibit 25). The patterns are largely similar when comparing teacher responses from grantee and non-grantee districts for the three civics domains separately (not shown here; see Appendix 3).



Focus groups offered additional insight about district leader and teacher perceptions of the benefits of DESE’s support as it related to professional development, both for grantee and non-grantee districts.

“I’ve used the guidebook to plan out professional development as we’ve onboarded new teachers. So I’ve got, like, an after school one or two-hour, five or six session workshop that’s been funded through the civics grant.”

- District Leader, Focus Group

"...some great educators from across the state that had created some really cool things I could utilize and adapt to my needs."

- Teacher [referring to a DESE-sponsored workshop], Focus Group

Sustainability of Programming Beyond Civics Grant

We draw from focus groups and our mini sustainability survey for district leaders to address questions about sustaining civics education from year to year. However, because grantee district respondents had active grants at the time of data collection, those district leader responses reflect plans to sustain programming rather than what has actually occurred. We also include responses from non-grantee district representatives to provide additional context about what some districts indicate they anticipate doing in the future.



Whether or not districts are grantees, district leaders and teachers consistently reported that they offer civics projects and implement projects creatively, and that grant funding has been helpful and impactful. One grantee district leader described how grant resources have allowed them to provide professional development to their teachers to the point where they reported “we’ve kind of maxed out our learning with our providers at the moment...” Having reached this point, they plan to stay the course and continue to engage their students.

Another grantee district leader described how the grant played an integral role in providing funds for planning time, supplies, and transportation:

"I have a civics day planning committee that met every month to plan the school- and district-based civic days. We've used the grant money for supplies and stuff and transportation."

- District Leader, Focus Group

For those without current grant support, district leaders reported plans to continue to innovate and improve what they are already offering. Among the plans they described are efforts to tighten their timelines, scaffold the civics project across multiple years, create a stand-alone course dedicated to the project, and expand

the online resources available to teachers.

The majority of respondents to the mini survey (13 of 20) reported they expected their districts' plans for the 2025–26 school year to remain about the same as the current (2024–25) year, and about one-third (6) reported that they expect district efforts to expand. One respondent reported having no knowledge of district plans. Respondents provided some information about which approaches they expected their districts to use in the upcoming school year (2025–26), including applying for the grant, offering professional development, seeking other funding, and purchasing curricula. These 20 respondents are not representative of the grantee or non-grantee district population, however, as only those district leaders/teachers who agreed to provide student civics project artifacts were asked to complete a survey, and not all who were asked did so. These results can only provide a glimpse into what a few respondents expect to happen in their respective districts next year. To learn what districts and schools *actually* do once their grant funding ends, we would need to ask former grantee districts about their current activities at a later date. ■





The 2018 History and Social Science Curriculum Framework

The final part of this evaluation focused on understanding the level of implementation of the 2018 Curriculum Framework. Given that several years have passed since implementation began, we present data on current perceptions and understanding of the Framework, and to the extent possible, refer back to findings from the earlier study to assess whether overall knowledge and understanding of the Framework have changed over time.¹⁵ We describe:

- how district leaders reported engaging with teachers about civics learning and about the Framework, specifically;
- whether and how teachers perceive their civics instruction to be aligned with the Framework;
- the professional development offered and taken up to support the Framework; and
- the resources available/used to support the Framework.

Recall that the participating districts are generally representative of the districts across the state, and that the teacher respondents are from a sample that is not representative, as it is based upon district leaders' identification of and outreach to those teachers responsible for teaching civics content, and of those, the teachers who completed surveys.

[Appendix 9](#) provides cross-tabulations of relevant survey data by district type (size, percent low-income students, and percent students of color).

¹⁵ As noted earlier, we shortened the earlier teacher and district surveys considerably, reducing them from 45 to 28 (teacher) and 42 to 26 (district) questions. We changed response options to be more concrete (e.g., from levels of agreement/disagreement to frequency of use in classroom instruction), and we separated bundled questions that combined multiple activities into activity-specific questions. As a result, direct comparisons are limited to a smaller subset of unchanged questions included in both the earlier and current surveys.

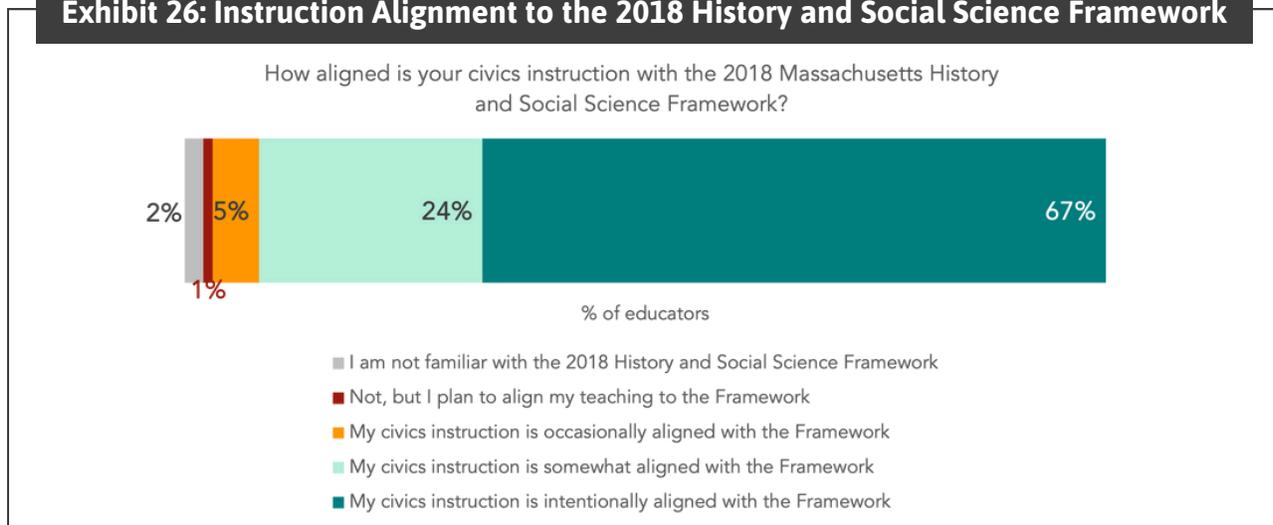
Understanding of and Alignment with Framework

The earlier study found that the overwhelming majority of teachers (96%) were aware of the Framework (Tichnor-Wagner, Kawashima-Ginsberg & Hayat, 2020). The current survey did not ask about familiarity with the Framework per se, and instead asked teachers about the alignment between the Framework and their instruction and for more concrete information about the nature of students’ civics education. Below, we present findings on teachers’ reported understanding of and alignment with the Framework and civics project requirements, and then turn to district leader reports of district-level activities and supports.

Two-thirds of teachers (67%) indicated that their civics instruction is intentionally aligned with the Framework (Exhibit 26), and about one-third indicated either that their instruction was ‘somewhat’ or ‘occasionally’ aligned (24% and 5%, respectively). A very small proportion (2%) reported they are not familiar with the Framework. This is a smaller proportion than the 4% who reported not being familiar with the Framework in the earlier study (Tichnor-Wagner, Kawashima-Ginsberg & Hayat, 2020).



Exhibit 26: Instruction Alignment to the 2018 History and Social Science Framework



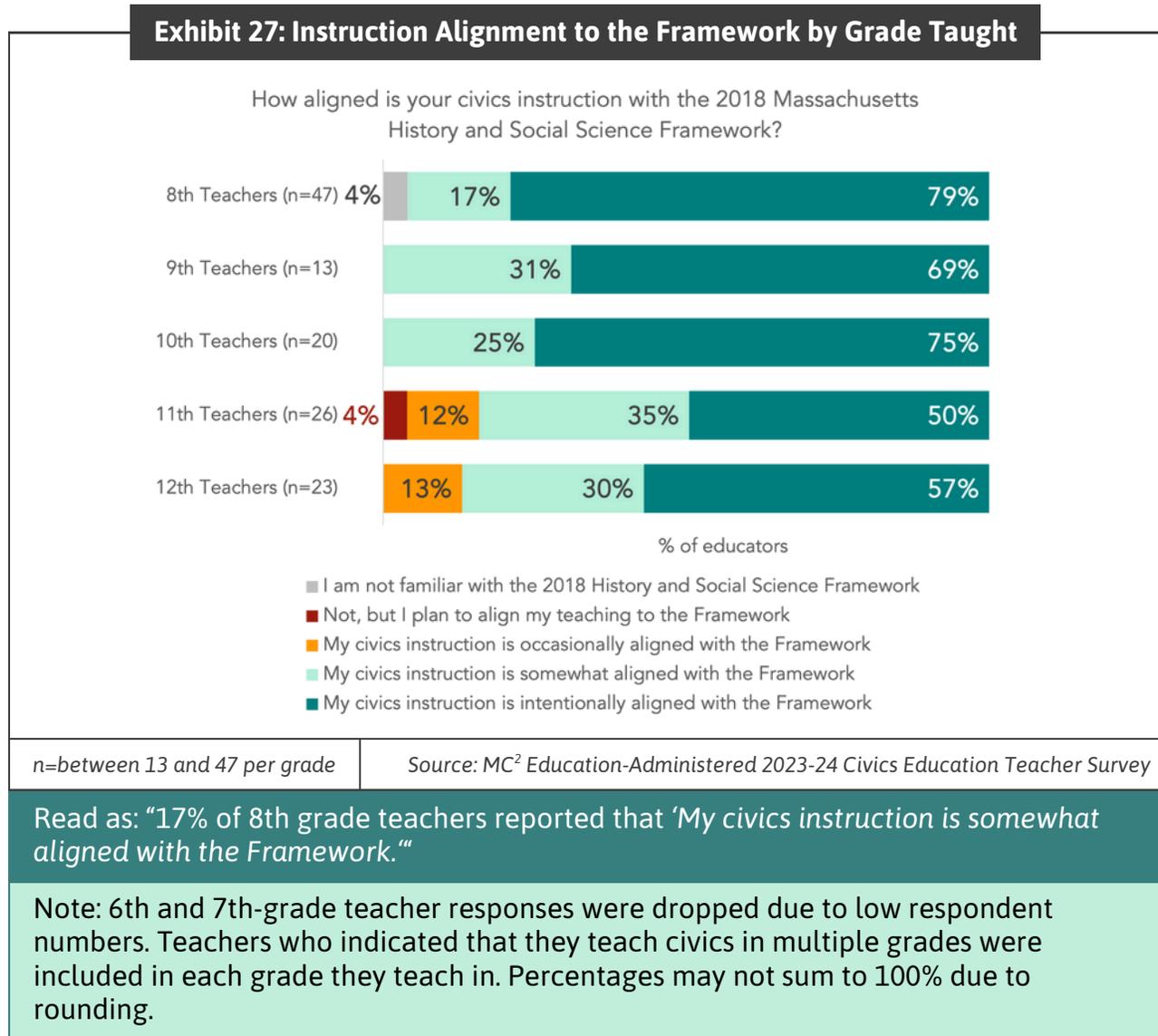
n=83

Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education Teacher Survey

Read as: “Five percent of teachers reported that ‘my civics instruction is occasionally aligned with the 2018 Massachusetts History and Social Science Framework.’”

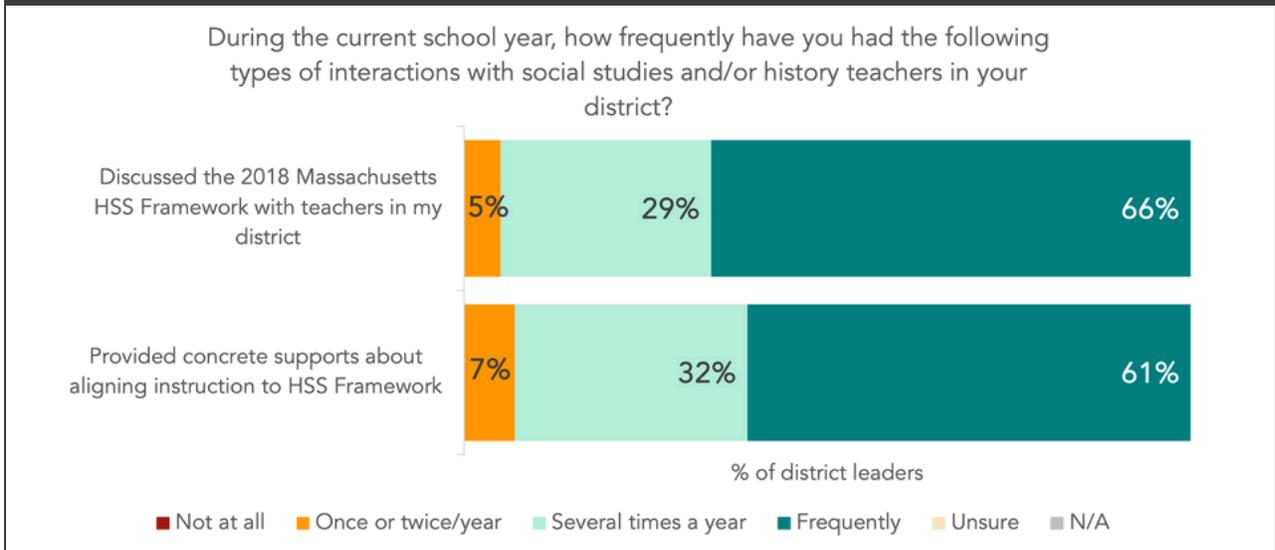
Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

We also examined responses across grade levels taught (**Exhibit 27**); more teachers responsible for teaching 8th, 9th, and 10th grades reported that their civics instruction is intentionally aligned to the Framework (79%, 69%, 75%, respectively) than those who teach 11th and 12th grades (50% and 57%, respectively).



All district respondents who reported that they have primary or sole responsibility over history and social studies in their districts (n=56) indicated that they provide concrete support to teachers about aligning their instruction to the Framework, and that they have discussed the Framework with teachers (**Exhibit 28**). Over 60% indicated that they engage in these activities ‘frequently’ (61% and 66%, respectively), and about one-third (32%, 29%) reported doing so at least several times a year.

Exhibit 28: Communication about the Framework between District Leaders and their Teachers



n=56

Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education District Survey

Read as: “61% of district leaders reported that they frequently ‘Provided concrete supports about aligning instruction to HSS Framework.’”

During focus groups, participants reported they are familiar with the Framework and use it routinely. For some, the Framework is standard or routine, and its adoption is a distant memory. Below, focus group participants provided more specific details about how they use the Framework:

“I literally use the Frameworks, and just ... went line by line, almost like, you get used to it... it starts to repeat a little bit over time, and I can see where I can find those areas. But yeah, literally, this year, I just was kind of going line by line and making sure I covered everything.”

- Teacher, Focus Group

One teacher reflected on how they initially aligned curriculum with the Framework when it came out, and how they continue that effort today:

“We sat with our grade level teams and started to work to unpack the standards and what was similar to the previous standards. I believe they [previous standards] were like [written in] 2003.... And then, since I facilitate a lot of the PD now for social studies, we do tie [the Framework] into our ongoing [curriculum] but it's not as explicit as when it first came out.”

- Teacher, Focus Group

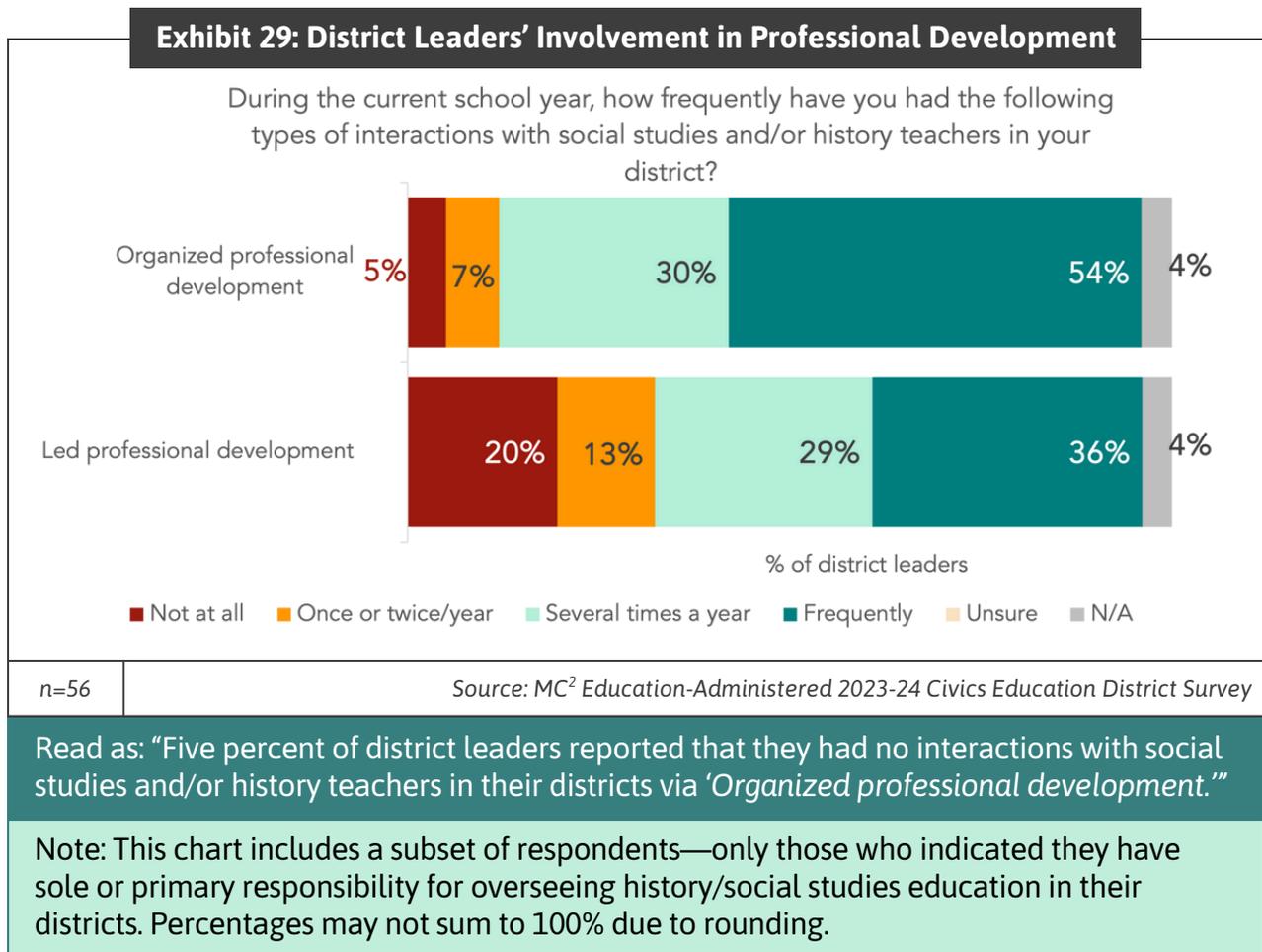


Professional Development to Support Instruction Aligned to the Curriculum Framework

We want to note that professional learning about civics education and alignment of instruction about civics teaching do not occur in a vacuum, but rather occur in a broader context. Because the Framework has been part of the educational landscape for several years, it is more widely known and understood now than was the case at the time the earlier study was conducted. Additionally, professional learning about alignment of instruction to the Framework may not have occurred separately from professional learning about civics in general. Finally, our 2023–24 survey asked teachers to report on professional learning in that school year. It is highly possible that some had previously participated in civics-related professional learning.



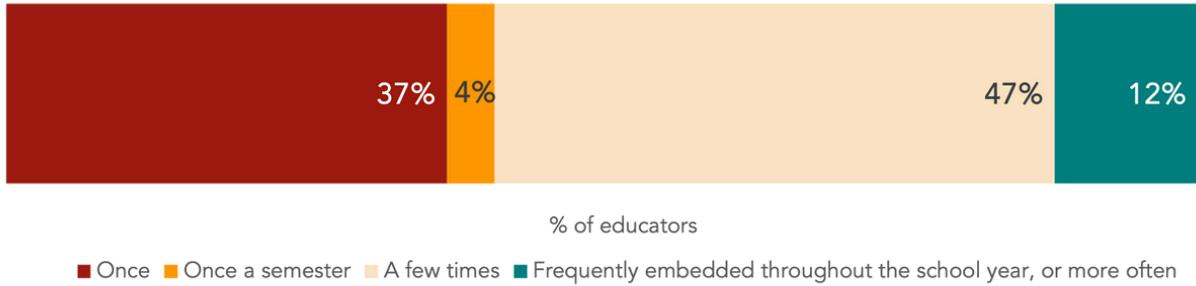
The large majority of those district respondents who oversee history/social studies education in their districts reported having organized or led professional development activities for history and/or social studies teachers (91% and 78%, respectively) (Exhibit 29).



All teachers, whether from grantee or non-grantee districts, reported that their district or school had offered civics-focused professional development at least once, and 59% reported having had such opportunities at least a few times or more frequently (Exhibit 30). This stands in contrast to the findings reported in the earlier study, where 42% of teachers reported having had no civics-related professional development (Tichnor-Wagner, Kawashima-Ginsberg, & Hayat, 2020); note, however, that the prior study was conducted in 2020, when school closures meant that many professional learning opportunities were canceled. Also, we want to emphasize that the teacher sample for the current study is not representative, so this difference should be noted with caution.

Exhibit 30: Teacher Perspective on Professional Learning Offerings from District

This school year (including the rest of the year), how often does your school or district provide you with professional learning opportunities focused on civics teaching and learning?



n=78

Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education Teacher Survey

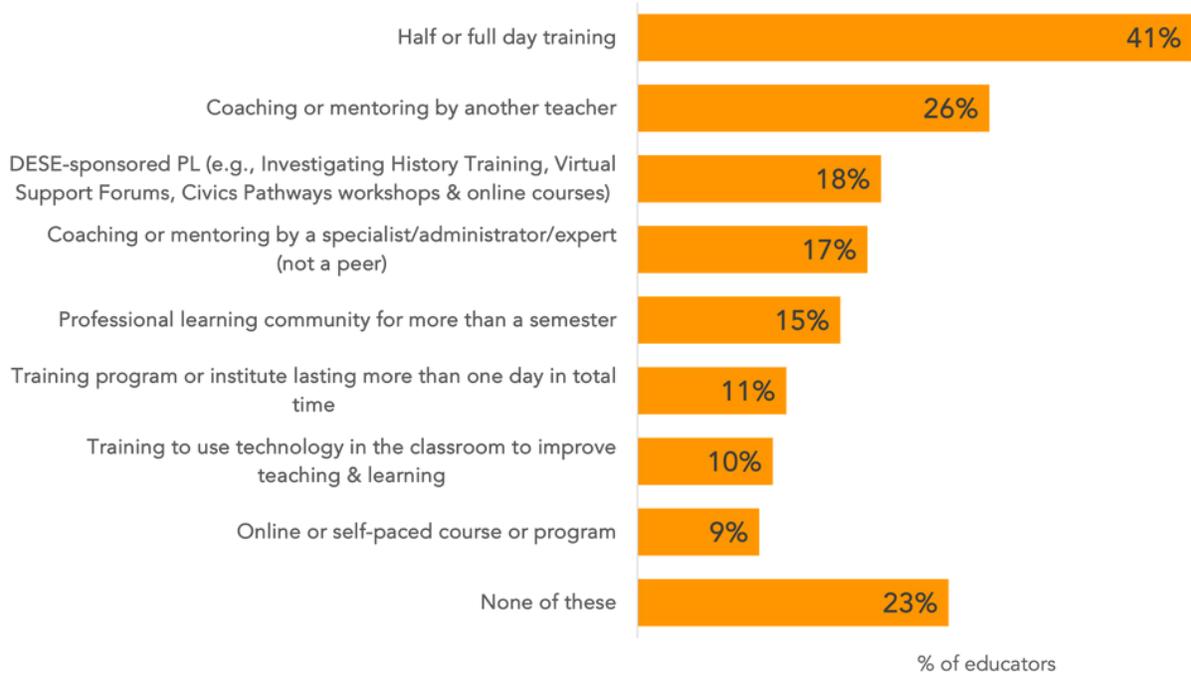
Read as: “37% of teachers reported that their ‘school or district had provided professional learning opportunities focused on civics teaching and learning’ once during the current school year.”



Teachers (n=88) reported having participated in varied civics-related professional development, ranging from ‘Half or full day trainings’ (41%), to ‘coaching or mentoring by another teacher’ (26%), to ‘DESE-sponsored Professional Learning’ (18%) to ‘coaching or mentoring by a specialist/administrator/expert (not a peer)’ (17%) (Exhibit 31).

Exhibit 31: Teacher Participation in Professional Learning

Please indicate what types of professional learning you've participated in this year to help you teach civics. Select all that apply.



n=88

Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education Teacher Survey

Read as: “41% of teachers reported that they had participated in professional learning to help teach civics in a ‘Half or full day training.’”

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% because teachers could select multiple types of professional learning.

Nearly one-quarter of teachers (23%) indicated they had not participated in any of the types of professional development listed, about 20 percentage points fewer than the 42% reported in the earlier study (Tichnor-Wagner, Kawashima-Ginsberg, & Hayat, 2020). This may seem puzzling, given that all teachers indicated that their districts offer civics-related learning opportunities, as shown in Exhibit 30 above. We don’t know why this seeming discrepancy exists, although it could be because the teachers whose districts had reportedly offered various civics-focused professional development options did not necessarily participate themselves, because they had participated in a type of professional development not specified, or they had participated in civics-related professional learning in a prior year.

As mentioned above, during focus groups, both district leaders and teachers reported professional development specifically related to the 2018 Framework as a

distant memory. Looking back, one teacher (who also had experience working as a district leader) described staff development time where they worked with colleagues to “unpack the standards and what was similar to the previous standards.” This teacher continued to explain, tying the Framework into ongoing work, but at this point, “it’s not as explicit as when it first came out.” Another teacher provided a glowing review of the professional development and resources received through iCivics and Primary Source, both purchased through the Civics Teaching & Learning Grant.

One district leader described rolling out the new standards when they came out and how today they “provide professional development for new teacher orientation, where I take people through whether they need it or not, through the 2018 Frameworks, to make sure that they are familiar with it, and make sure that you know it is the core or the foundation of what we do.”

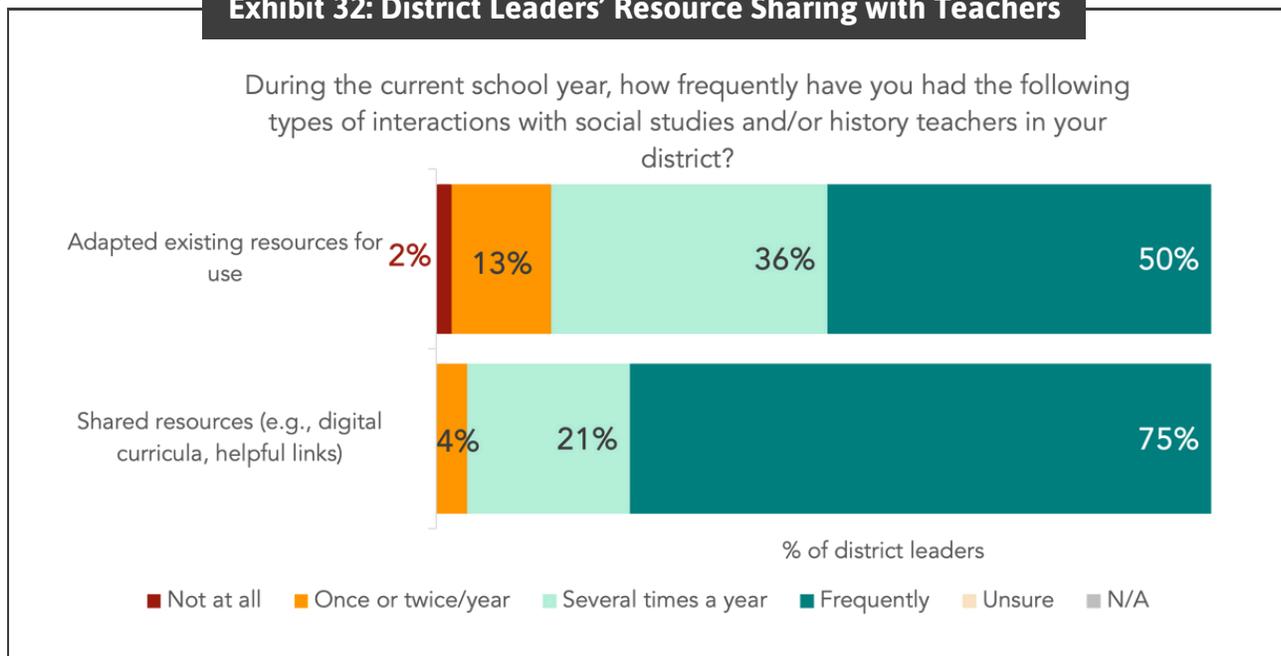


Materials and Curricula Used to Support the Framework

We draw from survey data about the resources districts reported providing to teachers and that teachers reported using to teach civics. The survey questions do not ask directly about district and teacher efforts to develop their own curriculum; rather, they focus on the resources that are available and used at both district and classroom levels. All of the 56 district leaders solely or primarily responsible for overseeing history and social studies reported they interacted with teachers by sharing resources at least once a year, and 75% did so ‘frequently’ (Exhibit 32). Almost all (99%) of those district leaders also indicated that they had interactions focused on adapting existing resources at least once a year, and half (50%) reported that they adapted resources ‘frequently’.



Exhibit 32: District Leaders’ Resource Sharing with Teachers



n=56

Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education District Survey

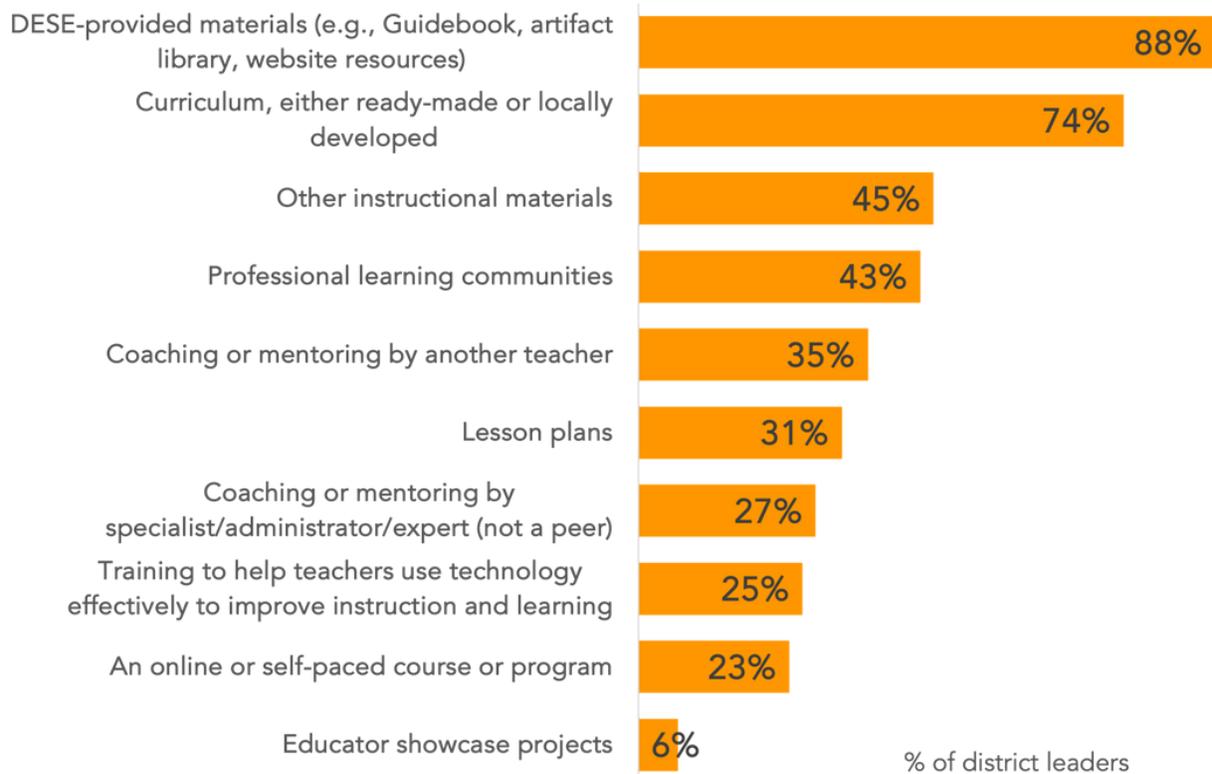
Read as: “13% of district leaders reported that they had interacted with social studies and/or history teachers in their districts, ‘Once or twice/year’ by adapting resources for use.”

Note: This chart includes a subset of respondents—only those who indicated they have sole or primary responsibility for overseeing history/social studies education in their districts. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

District leaders (n=93) reported having provided varied materials and resources to teachers in their districts; the top two reported were DESE-provided materials, such as the Civics Project Guidebook (88%), and varied curricula (74%) (Exhibit 33). The resources provided by districts were largely similar across grade level bands of elementary, middle, and high schools (not shown here; see Appendix 3).

Exhibit 33: Resources Provided to Teachers by District Leaders

This school year, what resources has your district provided teachers to support civics teaching and learning? Select all that apply.



n=93

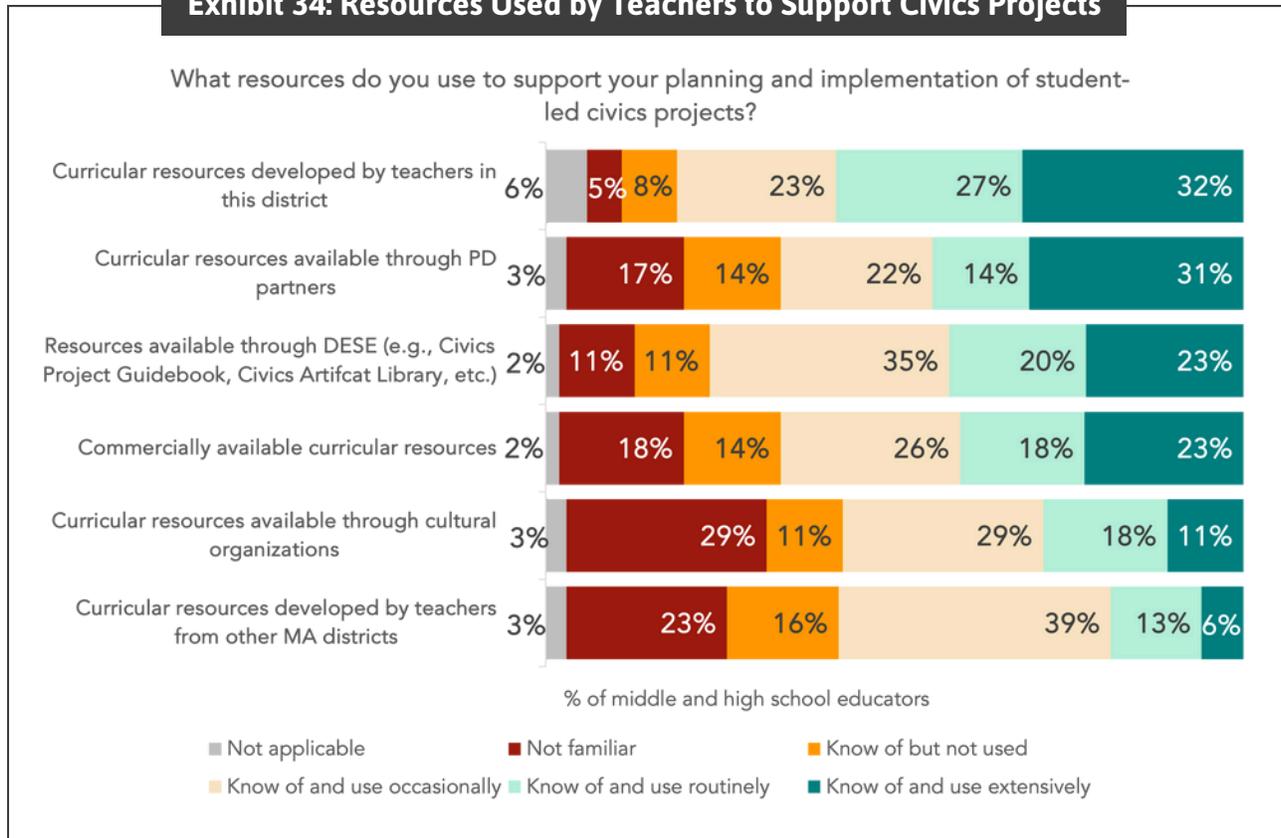
Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education District Survey

Read as: “88% of district leaders reported that they provided ‘DESE-provided materials’ to teachers to support civics teaching and learning.”

Note: This chart includes a subset of respondents—only those who indicated they have sole or primary responsibility for overseeing history/social studies education in their districts. Percentages do not sum to 100% because district leaders could select multiple resources.

Overall, teachers who assign civics projects reported they generally knew of various resources offered by their districts to support planning and implementing civics projects, although they varied in their reported usage of those resources. Most commonly, teachers share curricular resources within districts or use materials provided by organizational partners. For example, roughly a third of the 66 middle and high school teachers who assign civics projects reported extensive use of curricular resources from other teachers in their district (32%) and from professional development partners (31%) (Exhibit 34). A substantial minority reported that they ‘occasionally’ use resources shared by other Massachusetts teachers and resources available through DESE (39% and 35%, respectively).

Exhibit 34: Resources Used by Teachers to Support Civics Projects



n=66

Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education Teacher Survey

Read as: “Eight percent of teachers reported that they know of ‘Curricular resources developed by teachers in this district’ and do not use those resources to support student-led civics projects.”

Note: This chart includes a subset of respondents—only those who indicated they teach any grades 6–12. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Some resources are less well-known and used than others. About one-third or fewer teachers indicated that they were unfamiliar with other available curricular resources ([Exhibit 34](#)), including those from cultural organizations (29% unfamiliar), from teachers in other Massachusetts districts (23% unfamiliar), commercially available sources (18% unfamiliar), and those from professional development partners (17% unfamiliar). About 11% reported they were not familiar with resources available through DESE.

Taken altogether, the data about available resources for teaching civics suggest that there is room for improvement in how information is shared with teachers. In particular, reinforcing the availability and usefulness of resources that might be available from cultural/civic organizations, teacher-developed resources, or other DESE resources (e.g., the [Center for Instructional Support](#) or the periodically updated [Civics Monthly Memo](#)) could increase teachers' awareness of and use of such resources. ■





Summary

This current study provides an update on how civics education is being implemented across the state, several years after the new Framework and the student-led civics project requirement took effect. Overall, we learned that access to civics education is widespread and that students have multiple and varied opportunities to engage in civics learning, including through civics projects. Districts reported using both the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant funding and other resources to support improved civics instruction. Classroom teachers reported that their students are actively engaged in civics learning. Both district and teacher respondents reported familiarity with the Framework and that they had access to professional development, materials, and other resources targeted specifically for civics learning. Students are participating in civics projects that engage them in the kinds of learning experiences intended by the Framework, although there are some aspects that could be strengthened and supported. As a whole, these findings represent an improvement over the results of the earlier study of civics education and provide strong evidence that civics education is firmly established across the state.

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Appendix 1: Detailed Research Methodology

Evaluation Goals and Design

This evaluation is intended to deepen understanding of the implementation and effectiveness of student-led civics project implementation, evaluate the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant, and re-assess the 2018 Framework implementation; these three broad topics represent Scopes A, B, and C of the evaluation contract, respectively. We place a deep emphasis on capturing and understanding variation across schools, teachers, and students. Please note that the italicized questions reflect input from DESE about potential considerations for its resource allocations once the study has shared findings.

Research Questions

Scope A: Student-led Civics Project Implementation Study Research Approach

1. What are the best estimates of the numbers of students who are being offered a high-quality project experience in grade eight and at the high school level? How does quality vary within and across schools and within and across different groups of students (e.g., English learners, grade level of students, district)? *How do student experiences vary both **within** and **across** classrooms, schools, and districts?*
2. What barriers do schools and districts experience to providing access to high-quality civics projects? DESE is interested in understanding if there are particular types of schools and districts where it could better allocate resources to support the equitable implementation of high-quality projects across the Commonwealth. *How/where (figuratively) could DESE potentially adjust its resource allocations to support more equitable and consistent implementation?*
3. What kinds of resources would best support teachers in offering a high-quality civics project experience to students who are not currently receiving that learning opportunity? How, if at all, should these resources differ for different student groups and district types of districts (e.g., urban/suburban, serving high proportions of low-income students)? *How/where (figuratively) could DESE potentially adjust its resource allocations to support more equitable and consistent implementation?*
4. Are there differences in the level of access to high-quality civics projects for historically marginalized students, including but not limited to students of color, low-income students, English Learners, and students with disabilities, compared to their peers? Does this vary by school type? For example, are students with disabilities more likely to have access to high-quality civics projects in suburban districts? *Where (figuratively) could DESE potentially adjust its resource allocations to support more equitable and consistent implementation?*
5. Are there particular educator experiences (e.g. co-teaching, a particular type of PD) that help them to feel better prepared to plan and implement high-quality civics projects? If so, what are those? *Which educator experiences could DESE potentially amplify/support more equitably?*
6. To what extent and in what ways are projects being integrated into the curriculum in both Grade 8 and at the high-school level (e.g., course subject matter, unit, semester)? Across the school year, where and how are districts placing the civics projects in grades 9-12? *Which examples of integration could DESE potentially amplify/support more equitably?*

- 
7. To what extent and in what ways, if at all, have different DESE-offered and supported resources and approaches to professional development supported or failed to support project implementation? *How/where (figuratively) could DESE potentially adjust its resource allocations and approaches to professional development to support more equitable implementation?*

Scope B: Evaluation of the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant Research Approach

1. In what ways did grant recipients use the funding that they received? Specifically, which grant funding priorities were most frequently funded? Least frequently funded?
2. To what extent and in what ways, if at all, did the different approaches to professional development and professional development partnerships support educator comfort with and readiness to implement high-quality civics learning opportunities for students?
3. To what extent and in what ways, if at all, did participating schools develop programming that is sustainable beyond the duration of grant funding through the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant?

Scope C: Re-evaluation of the 2018 Framework Implementation Research Approach

1. What is the current understanding of the Framework and civics project requirements? How does it align with the Framework?
2. To what extent and in what ways, if at all, are districts providing professional development to support implementation of the 2018 Framework? How did the different approaches to professional development and professional development partnerships support educator comfort and readiness for implementing the 2018 Framework?
3. To what extent are districts, including individual teachers, developing their own curriculum to support the implementation of the 2018 Framework versus leveraging existing materials?
4. Which already-developed curricula, and to what extent, are educators using to support the implementation of the 2018 Framework?

Sample

The target population for this evaluation is, broadly, composed of the **districts, schools, teachers, and students** of Massachusetts schools. The study is designed to ensure representation of as many districts across the state as possible so that (1) we understand the landscape of civics education in Massachusetts as fully as possible and (2) we can compare grantee and non-grantee districts while controlling for student demographics, urbanicity, and other relevant characteristics. We worked with DESE to establish a representative sample of districts (plus all grantees) who were then invited to participate in our evaluation. Recognizing that responses to our surveys may be lower amongst non-grantee districts/teachers, we purposely constructed the surveys for non-grantee districts/teachers to be as brief as possible to minimize the burden of participation while asking all districts and teachers to “help us understand Civics Education in Massachusetts by taking this short survey to support our schools’ efforts to help students develop civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions.”

Districts

The specifics of civics education in Massachusetts are largely determined at the district level, and consequently, we expect to find substantial variation across districts. Individual districts also determine



what research can be conducted in their schools and with their teachers and students. Therefore, the focal population for this study is defined at the district level first and foremost.

Scope A: The focal population for Scope A includes **all Scope B Districts (described below) plus a statewide representative sample of districts** (and their schools, teachers, and students) designed to help us understand the breadth of civics education across the Commonwealth. Because districts are required to offer student-led civics projects in grade 8 and once again in high school, the sampling focused more heavily on those districts (and then, teachers) serving secondary grades. The evaluation team and DESE agreed to use a previously selected random and representative statewide sample of districts to increase efficiency and make use of existing relationships of trust between district leaders and the evaluation team. This set of 226 districts, selected randomly from the approximately 400 districts in the state:

- Reasonably represents **geography** both **regionally** (i.e., Greater Boston, Central Massachusetts, Western Massachusetts, Cape and Islands) and in **context** (i.e., rural, urban, suburban, Gateway Cities).
- Reasonably represents a diverse spread of **student demographics** including race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English learners, and students with disabilities or Individual Education Plans (IEPs).
- Includes a wide spread of **teacher and leader experience** as well as the **grade levels taught or supported in civics education**.
- Includes all of the district **size tiers** defined on the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant application.

Scope B: The focal population for Scope B changed from year one of the evaluation to year two. In year one (focused on the 2023-24 school year), it included 50 of the districts (and their schools, teachers, and students) that received grant funding for FY2023 or FY2024.

There were 60 total districts who received grant funding in FY2023 and FY2024. Due to inconsistencies in grantee lists during the sampling process, only 50 of those 60 districts were included in the sample and sent evaluation materials. Grantees in both FY2023 and FY2024 could allocate their grant funds over a two-year period that spanned the spring 2024 survey-based data collection.

In year two (focused on the 2024-25 school year), it included 50 of the 58 districts (and their schools, teachers, and students) that received grant funding for FY2024 or FY2025. Grantees in both FY2024 and FY2025 could allocate their grant funds over a two-year period that spanned the fall 2024 and spring 2025 data collection. In the 2024-25 school year, we convened focus groups of district leaders from both grantee and non-grantee district leaders and teachers, and students only from grantee districts.

Scope C: The focal population for Scope C is the **same as the focal population for Scope A**.

Schools/Teachers

The schools and teachers included in the study are determined by whether their respective **districts** agreed to participate. After district approval, all schools were contacted, and teachers had the option to opt-in or opt-out of the study based on district policy.

Students

The students included in the study are determined by whether their **district** had agreed to participate, including student participation specifically. Student representation both in focus groups and student project analysis is **one component of Scope A**. Additionally, only those students whose relevant social



studies/history **teacher** had volunteered to coordinate a focus group were invited to participate in focus groups.

Eighty-six student civic projects were collected for student project analysis to ensure as wide a representation of student projects as possible, rather than only collecting exemplars. The evaluation team sent requests to ~230 district leaders to then distribute to those teachers in their respective districts responsible for teaching civics in grades 8 through 12. The requests asked teachers to “*select the 3rd, 8th, and 13th student on the classroom roster of the class with civics projects*” and if a selected student had participated in a group project, then we asked teachers to submit/upload the entire group project. To protect individual student confidentiality, we asked teachers to remove student names and other identifying information from each project before submitting to ensure that no such information appeared in any submissions.

Finally, we asked teachers to upload, through a secure portal, any instructions or guidance they had provided to students for completing their civics projects (e.g., initial assignment, project overview, instructions or worksheets for particular steps, rubrics), including any hyperlinks or slides and documents for the instructional materials used to support students’ civics projects. Our initial goal was to enlist enough teachers to yield a sample of 100 projects; ultimately, teachers uploaded 86 projects. Each teacher received a \$49.99 gift card to acknowledge the time and effort required, in compliance with DESE standards for incentives.

Data Collection Approach

This evaluation uses a mixed methods design that combines descriptive and comparative analyses of quantitative survey data with thematic analysis of qualitative data, including focus groups and open-ended survey responses (Exhibit 1A). Survey data captures information from both districts who are grant recipients and those who are not to deepen our collective understanding of the state of civics education in Massachusetts both within the context of the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant and outside of it.

Exhibit 1: Data Collection Summary

Method	Participants	Icons	2023-24	2024-25
Surveys	• District Leaders		✓	
	• Teachers		✓	
Focus Groups	• District Leaders		✓	✓
	• Teachers		✓	✓
	• Students			✓
Student Project Analysis	• Students & Teachers			✓
Mini Sustainability Survey	• District Leaders who were sent invitation to Student Project Analysis			✓

Read as: “District leaders (shown as an icon of a computer survey with the word ‘district’) and teachers (shown as an icon of a computer survey with the word ‘teacher’) participated in surveys in 2023-24.”

Note: We indicate in the results sections below which data sources contribute to each section by presenting the icons listed above.

Instruments

Surveys

The MC² Study Team administered two primary surveys, one for district leaders in charge of history/social studies in their respective districts, and one for the teachers those district leaders identified as responsible for teaching civics content. DESE asked the MC² Study Team to use the surveys from the earlier study to

provide as much continuity as possible,¹⁶ recognizing that the broad evaluation questions—and therefore specific survey questions—would differ for the two studies [see below for an overview of similarities/differences between the earlier and current studies]. Given DESE’s guidance, we eliminated some questions, retained some questions, revised/simplified others to reduce cognitive demand and ambiguity, adapted scales from agreement levels to frequency, and ultimately reduced the number of questions from 45 to 28 (teachers) and 42 to 26 (district leaders), which effectively shortened the estimated completion time from 30-45 minutes to 12-15 minutes.

Compared to the earlier study, this evaluation aims to:

- *Deepen understanding of the implementation and effectiveness of student-led civics project implementation.*
- *Evaluate the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant.*
- *Re-assess the 2018 Framework implementation.*

The prior surveys were changed as follows:

- *shortened from 42 to 26 questions for district leaders, and 45 to 28 questions for teachers;*
- *added topics on civics offerings, professional development supports and resources, teacher knowledge and efficacy, and implementation of civics projects; and*
- *added DESE grantee survey questions connected to grantee priorities.*

The district leader and teacher surveys contained similar questions; the former focused on district-level while the latter addressed classroom-level implementation (copies of the surveys are in Appendices 2 & 3). The district survey asked about district efforts to offer civics education, grades served, professional development, supports/resources, and plans for sustainability; grantee districts were also asked questions about how grant funds were used. The teacher survey included those same general topics plus questions about civics-related professional development experiences, teacher knowledge and efficacy, and how they implement civics projects.

The district leader survey was sent to all districts in our sample. Once district leaders had completed the survey, we provided them with information about and links to our teacher survey. Additionally, we requested that district leaders forward the teacher survey link to any K-12 teacher in their respective districts responsible for teaching civics content.

In early spring 2025, we asked district leaders to help us obtain artifacts from completed student civics projects—which meant projects that had been completed in the 2023-24 school year, as most 2024-25 projects were in progress at that time. We also asked district contacts to complete a very brief survey. The six-question mini sustainability survey asked about efforts to sustain civics education efforts in their districts, timing of student projects, and whether/ when district showcases occurred.

¹⁶ The earlier study was conducted by a team of researchers from CIRCLE/Tufts University and Wheelock College/Boston University. The full report, including all instruments, is available at: https://circle.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/2021-01/MA_DESE_civics_full_report.pdf



Focus Group Protocols

In the spring and fall of 2024, the MC² Study Team conducted focus groups with both district leaders and teachers. Study staff used interview protocols designed to capture district leaders' experiences about helping their teachers implement and support civics education, and teacher experiences about teaching civics and how they implement student-led civics projects. The question topics included resources accessible and useful, resources needed, challenges faced, and experience implementing and using the 2018 Framework.

We used the same recruitment strategies as described above for the survey and student project analysis, by initially inviting district leaders to participate, whom we then asked to forward invitations to their teachers. Fall 2024 focus group recruitment included a \$49.99 incentive for all teachers who participated in focus groups.

Between the spring and fall focus groups, the MC² Study Team updated the protocols for both district leaders and teachers to better align with the evaluation questions. Each protocol can be found in Appendices 4a, 4b, 5a, and 5b. Analysis of these two sets were therefore conducted separately, since questions differed. Protocols were initially developed by the MC² Study Team, followed by several rounds of feedback and input from DESE.

Student focus groups (Appendix 6) were conducted in early 2025. The sample was derived from the survey sample, then reduced to a representative sample of 11 school districts. The student focus group protocol was initially developed by the MC² Study Team, followed by several rounds of feedback and input from DESE.

Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative

Quantitative

Our quantitative data analyses are largely descriptive, providing metrics that help the reader understand the range of civics education offerings and whether/how offerings vary across district and teacher characteristics. We primarily used univariate and bivariate descriptive analyses to answer key research questions. We began all quantitative analyses by becoming familiar with data structure, variable values, and ranges. Next, we cleaned the data to ensure they were in a usable format for answering our research questions. Then, we generated marginal frequencies (or relative frequencies across each row/column of data) and explored variations in the data using simple crosstabs. For example, cross-tabs allowed us to examine whether there was variation in question responses based on the grade-level(s) taught by teachers.

Qualitative

Our qualitative data analysis, for both open-ended survey responses and focus group transcripts, identifies themes using inductive thematic analysis to help the reader understand the types of civics education being offered and the extent to which programmatic offerings vary. We began by cleaning the data, for the open-ended survey questions this involved removing blank responses and organizing the remaining data by item/question. Next, we familiarized ourselves with the data by reading and re-reading the responses to each open-ended question. Then, we generated codes for the responses of each question. Following the initial coding, we collated responses into groups of similarity, and next defined themes. We then reviewed the themes by checking them against all responses. Next, we defined and named the themes to refine the specifics and identified representative quotes. Finally, we compared findings across close-ended and open-ended survey questions, and where appropriate, we provide illustrative quotes to describe respondent

perceptions. The focus groups used the same inductive thematic analysis approach to systematically identify, code for, summarize, and choose illustrative examples of the themes in our data; we analyzed focus group data according to specific research questions.

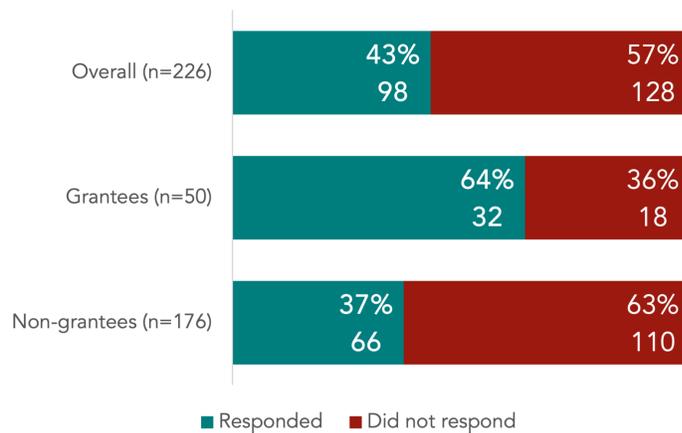
Response Rates and Respondent Characteristics

As described above, the district survey was sent to our representative sample of 226 district leaders, including 50 grantee districts and 176 non-grantee districts. Whether or not the district leaders responded, we also provided them the link to the teacher survey to send along it to those educators in their district who incorporate civics education into their teaching.

District Survey Respondents

Overall, we heard from 43% of sampled districts (98 individual districts responded). That included 64% of grantee districts and 37% of non-grantee districts (Exhibit 1B). This was not unexpected, as grantee district leaders may be more invested in improving civics education offerings and/or responding to a DESE-sponsored study survey. These numbers represent the districts from whom we received responses, not the number of responses. Some districts responded more than once, perhaps because different individuals within a district may oversee different grade levels.

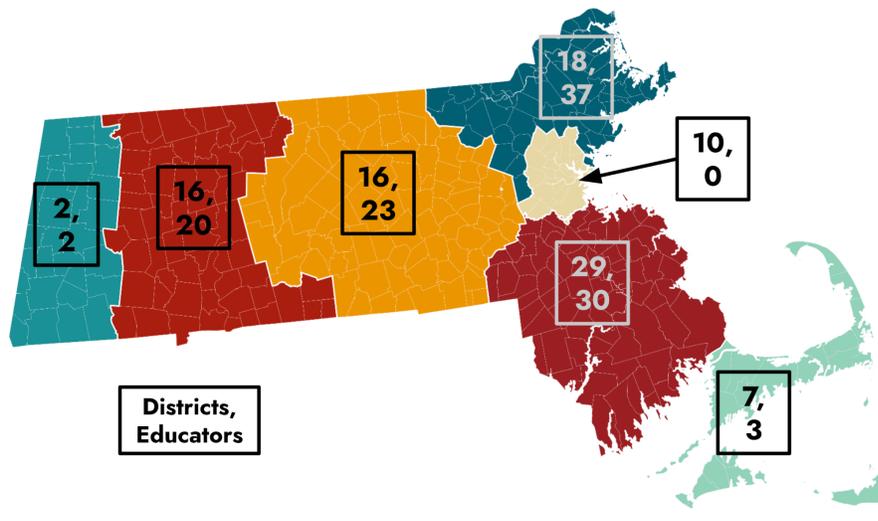
Exhibit 1B: Overall Survey Response Rates, and by Grantee Status



Read as: “Of the 226 districts invited to complete surveys, 128 (57%) responded and 98 (43%) did not respond.”
Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education District Survey

In the end, 114 leaders from 98 districts, and 115 classroom-level teachers from 40 districts and 62 schools responded to our surveys. These respondents were spread across the state (Exhibit 1C), although no teachers from the Greater Boston region responded.

Exhibit 1C: Geographic Spread of Survey Respondents (n=98 districts; 115 educators)



Read as: “Two responses to the district leader survey and two responses to the educator survey came from the westernmost area of Massachusetts.”

Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education District & Teacher Surveys

To ensure that we can generalize findings from our district leader respondent group to the state as a whole, we must first confirm that the two groups are similar on key characteristics. As a group, district survey respondents were generally similar to eligible (n=393) districts across the state—that is, districts enrolling K-12 students that could have been included in our random sample. Exhibit 1D shows that both our respondent group and eligible groups were mostly traditional public school districts with comparable Title 1 status. A slightly smaller proportion of respondents than eligible districts were from small districts (<1000 students). Respondents were also similar to the eligible group across locale and urbanicity, proportion of low income students, teacher retention rates, and average expenditures per pupil.

Exhibit 1D: Comparability of 2023-24 Survey Respondents to Statewide Eligible Districts

OTHER CHARACTERISTICS AND CATEGORIES		% of Eligible Districts (n=393)	% of Respondents (n=114)
District Type	Public School District	81	85
	Charter District	19	15
Number of Students	< 1000	38	28
	1000-6000	55	59
	> 6000	7	13
DESE-Defined Region	Coastal	64	67
	West/Central	36	32
	Strategic Transformation	1	2
Title 1 Status	Title 1 District	96	96
	Non-Title 1 District	4	4
Locale / Urbanicity	Rural	16	14
	Suburban	74	77
	Urban	12	10
Proportion of Low Income Students*	0-30%	43	33
	31-60%	38	44
	61-90%	19	23
Teacher Retention Rates**	41-60%	6	5
	61-80%	20	20
	81-100%	74	74
Expenditure per Pupil	\$10,000 - \$20,000	63	71
	\$20,001 - \$30,000	34	26
	> \$30,000	2	3

Read as: "81% of eligible districts and 85% of responding districts are public school districts."

Source: MC² Education-Administered Sampling Frame and District Survey

Note: *Note that <1% of eligible and <1% of respondent districts had 91-100% low income students.

Note: **Note that <1% of eligible and <1% of respondent districts had less than 40% teacher retention rates.

Because of the similarity between our respondents and the eligible districts across the state, we are confident that our district survey sample is indeed representative, and that our results likely tell us about the entire population the sample represents.

When we group our respondents by their grantee status, we do not expect them to remain so similar. This is because grantees are a self-selected group who applied for the grant, and were then chosen by DESE. Indeed, our grantee and non-grantee respondents were generally similar, but there were a few differences between them. Grantees were slightly more likely to be charter districts, and a higher proportion of grantees (23%) than non-grantees (8%) were large districts with more than 6000 students. More grantees (21%) are in urban locales than non-grantees (3%).

Perhaps most importantly, grantee and non-grantee districts had different distributions of low income students; in general grantee districts had higher proportions of low income students than non-grantee districts (Exhibit 1E).

Exhibit 1E: Comparability of 2023-2024 Grantee (n=39) and Non-Grantee (n=75) Respondents

OTHER CHARACTERISTICS AND CATEGORIES		% of Grantees (n=39)	% of Non-Grantees (n=75)
District Type	Public School District	79	88
	Charter District	21	12
Number of Students	< 1000	23	31
	1000-6000	54	61
	> 6000	23	8
DESE-Defined Region	Coastal	67	67
	West/Central	28	33
	Strategic Transformation	5	5
Locale / Urbanicity	Rural	14	13
	Suburban	66	83
	Urban	21	3
Proportion of Low Income Students*	0-30%	19	42
	31-60%	38	46
	61-90%	43	12
Teacher Retention Rates**	41-60%	5	4
	61-80%	28	8
	81-100%	65	80
Expenditure per Pupil	\$10,000 - \$20,000	77	68
	\$20,001 - \$30,000	23	28
	> \$30,000	0	4

Read as: "79% of grantee districts and 88% of non-grantee districts are public school districts."

Source: DESE District Profiles and NCES Locale Lookup Tool

Note: *Note that 0% of eligible and respondent districts had 91-100% low income students.

Note: **Note that 0% of eligible and respondent districts had less than 40% teacher retention rates.

Teacher Survey Respondents

On the other hand, our sample of teacher respondents is not representative. Those who responded are from 29% of the 98 responding districts, plus an additional 12 districts with educator participation only. As such, we heard from a smaller range of teachers (from a smaller set of districts and schools) than we did from district leaders. Teachers responded from 62 schools, with an average of 1.9 responses from each school (range: 1-7). On average, each of the 40 districts with teacher participation had 3.0 responses (range 1-15). We do not have information about teacher respondents' specific schools within districts—just about districts—so we don't know the size of respondents' schools or whether those teachers who responded are more civics-minded than those who did not. We urge caution in interpreting these teacher survey data, both because the self-selected sample is not representative of the full population and the respondents are more likely to 1) be actively engaged in Civics education and 2) more likely to respond to an optional survey. Over two-thirds of teachers reported having four-plus years of experience (Exhibit 1F). More of the 119 educator respondents were women than men, and the majority of those who self-reported their race were white.

Exhibit 1F: 2023-24 Teacher Survey Respondent Characteristics

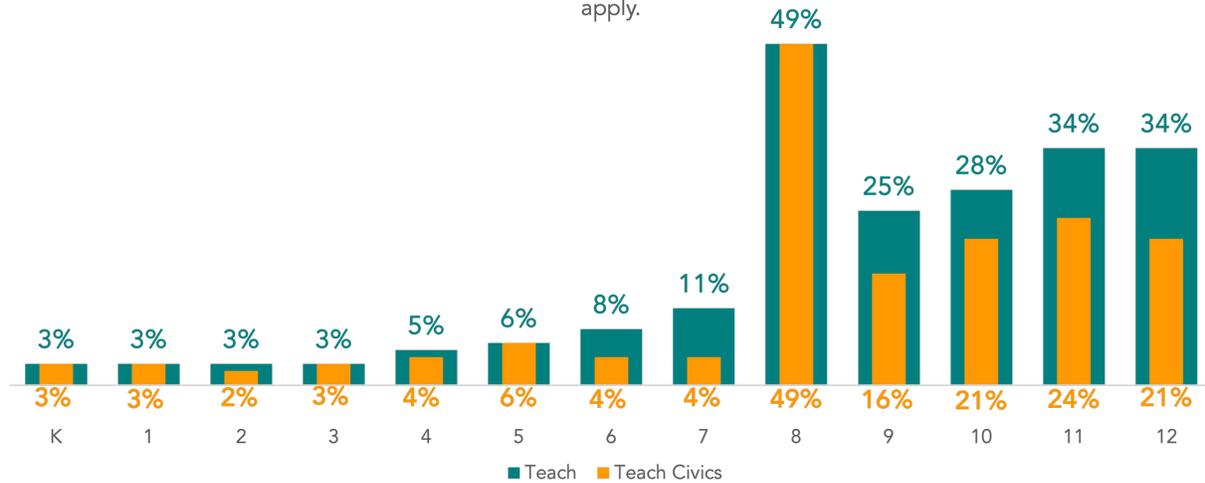
TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS AND CATEGORIES		% of Teachers
Years in Role (n=77)	1-3	37
	4-9	21
	10-19	21
	20+	21
Gender (n=119)	Cis woman	33
	Cis man	26
	Prefer not to answer	7
	Did not answer	34
Race / Ethnicity [select all that apply] (n=119)	White	59
	Latino or Hispanic	3
	Black or African American	0
	Asian	0
	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0
	Middle Eastern or North African	0
	American Indian / Alaska Native	0
	Prefer not to answer	7
Did not answer	34	

Read as: “37% of the 2023-24 Teacher Survey respondents have between 1 and 3 years of experience in their current role.”
Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Teacher Survey

About half of responding teachers (n=119) teach 8th grade, and between one-quarter to one-third teach 9th through 12th grades (Exhibit 1G); within these grades, about two-thirds reported they teach civics content. Recall that district leaders were asked to send the teacher survey to teachers who incorporate civics education in their instruction, so this sample reflects district leaders’ identification of which teachers in their districts are responsible for teaching civics. Note that the Framework itself refers to teaching civics content in all grades, K-12, and it is possible that teacher survey invitations were sent to a subset of teachers known by district leaders to be responsible for teaching civics content rather than all K-12 teachers who teach social studies/history. Due to very low response rates from teachers (Exhibit 1G) who teach K-5 grades (each of which had fewer than 10 respondents), information on K-5 civics education is not included in this report.

Exhibit 1G: Grades Taught by Teacher Survey Respondents (Select all that apply) (n=119)

Which grade level(s) do you teach? Which grade level(s) do you teach Civics? Select all that apply.



Read as: “Three percent of teacher respondents indicated that they teach Kindergarten, and 3% indicated they teach civics in kindergarten.”

Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education Teacher Survey

Note: Nine teacher survey respondents reported that they did teach civics in 8th grade, and that they did not teach 8th grade. After reviewing their responses carefully for any further anomalies, these 9 respondents were re-coded as ‘yes’ for teaching 8th grade.

Focus Group Participants

We invited district leaders from 52 districts to participate in focus groups themselves and to distribute email invitations to teachers responsible for teaching civics content in grades 8 through 12 to augment survey data with information from open-ended questions. Focus groups took place in both the spring and fall of 2024.

In the spring, we conducted two focus groups that included representatives from nine districts: one for teachers and one for district leaders. Focus group participants (n=9) varied somewhat in terms of locale, and the district size tier (Exhibit 1H); the large majority of participants (8 of 9) are from districts that had received Civics Teaching and Learning Grant funding. In the fall, using the same sample for recruitment as in the spring, we conducted four focus groups that included representatives from 14 districts: two each for teachers and for district leaders. Four participants who were unable to attend the focus groups in real time responded to focus group questions in writing.

Exhibit 1H: District Leader & Teacher Focus Group Participant Characteristics (n=23)

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS AND CATEGORIES		Number of Participants, Spring 2024 (n=9)	Number of Participants, Fall 2024 (n=14)
Role	District Leader	4	6
	Teacher	5	8
District Title 1 Status	Title 1 District	9	14
	Non-Title 1 District	0	0
District Type	Traditional Public	8	14
	Charter	1	0
Civics Teaching & Learning Grantee (Fund Code 589)	Yes	8	6
	No	1	8
Locale / Urbanicity	21, Suburb Large	7	8
	42, Rural Distant	0	2
	12, City Midsize	1	1
	13, City Small	0	1
	31, Town Fringe	0	1
	23, Suburb Small	1	0
	41, Rural Fringe	0	1
District Size Tier (Number of Students)	<1000	2	1
	1001-6000	5	8
	>6000	2	5

Read as: "Four of the focus group participants in Spring 2024 were district leaders."

Source: DESE District Profiles and NCES Locale Lookup Tool

Sample of Student Artifacts

Over the first quarter of 2025, 29 teachers from 25 districts uploaded their students' civic projects for use in our evaluation. The districts represented reflect statewide characteristics relatively well (Exhibit 1I).

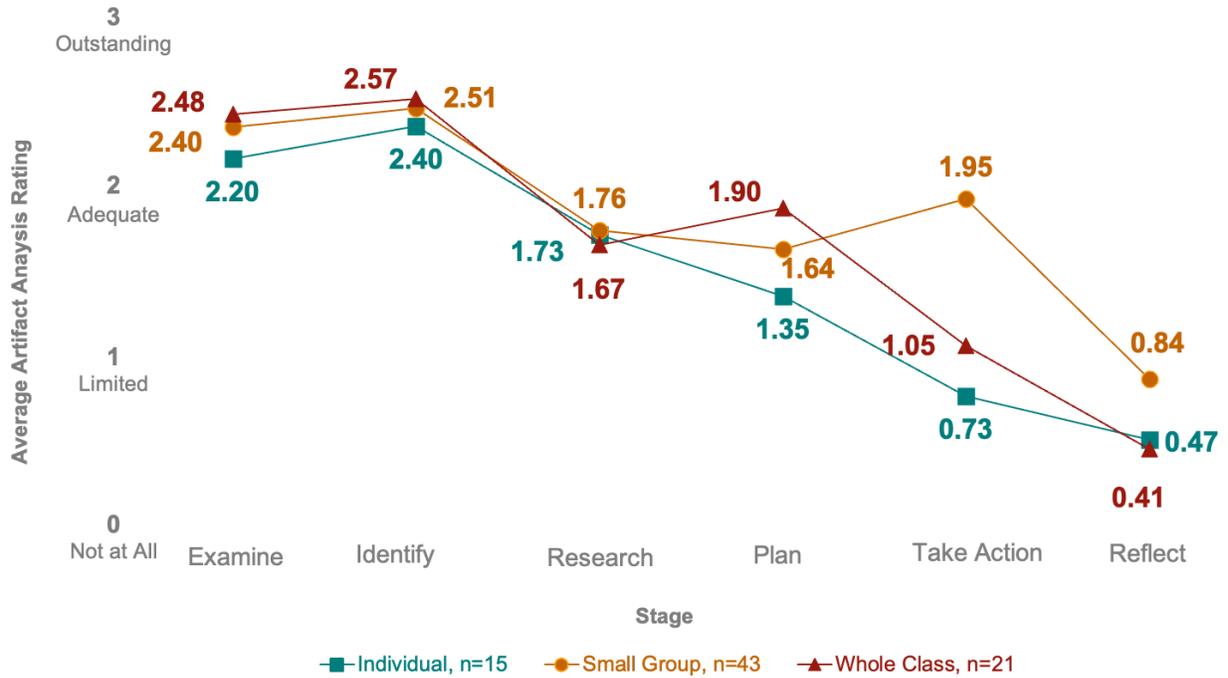
Exhibit 1I: 2024-2025 Characteristics of Uploading Teachers' Districts Compared to Districts Statewide

CHARACTERISTICS AND CATEGORIES		% of Eligible Districts Statewide (n=307)	% of Uploaders (n=29)
District Type	Public School District	84	97
	Charter District	16	3
DESE-Defined Region	Coastal	65	72
	West/Central	34	21
	Strategic Transformation	1	7
Title 1 Status	Title 1 District	97	100
	Non-Title 1 District	3	0
Locale / Urbanicity	Rural	11	17
	Suburban	79	79
	Urban	12	10
Number of Students	< 1000	23	10
	1000-6000	67	55
	> 6000	9	34
Grantee	Yes	20	55
	No	80	45

Read as: "84% of eligible districts statewide and 97% of uploaders are public school districts."
 Source: DESE District Profiles and NCES Locale Lookup Tool

Appendix 2: Additional Visuals

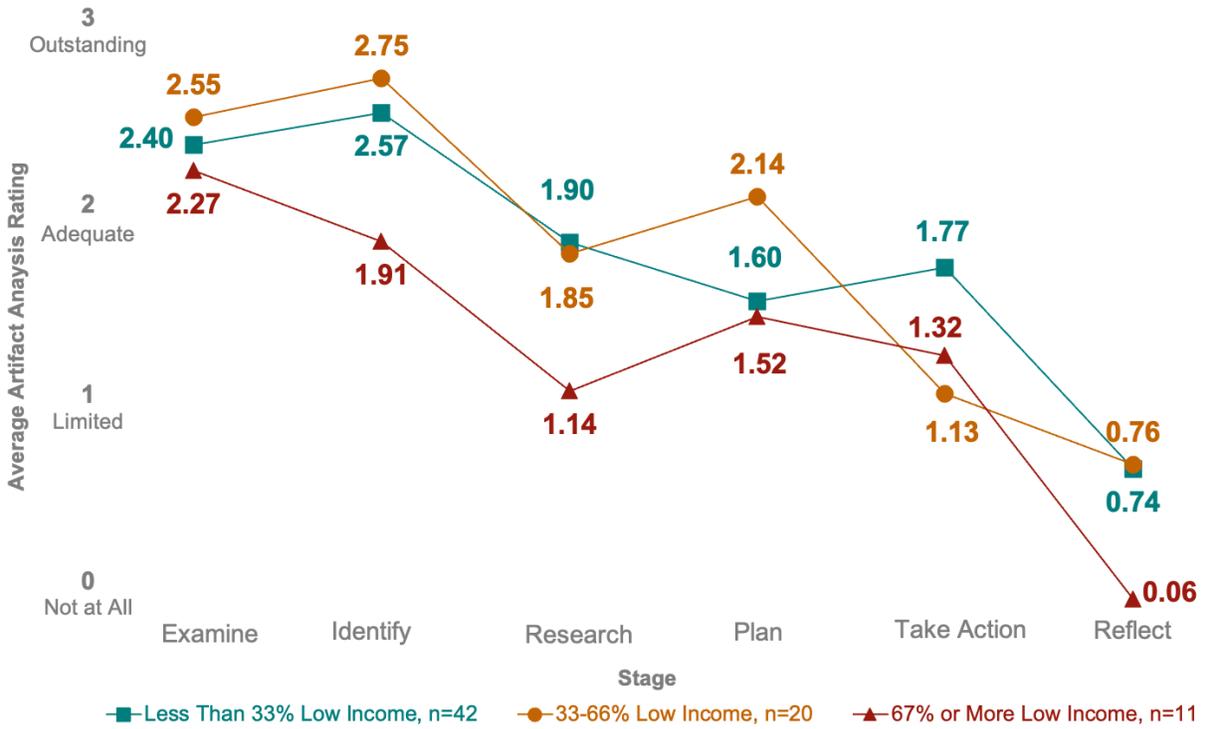
Appendix Exhibit 2A: Project Ratings by Stage and Group Size (n=79)



Read as: “Civic project artifacts were rated an average of 2.20 for students working individually, an average of 2.40 for students working in a small group, and an average of 2.48 for students working as a whole class for Stage 1 (Examine self and community) on a scale ranging from 0 to 3.”

Source: MC² Education Artifact Analysis Upload Data collected during 2024-25

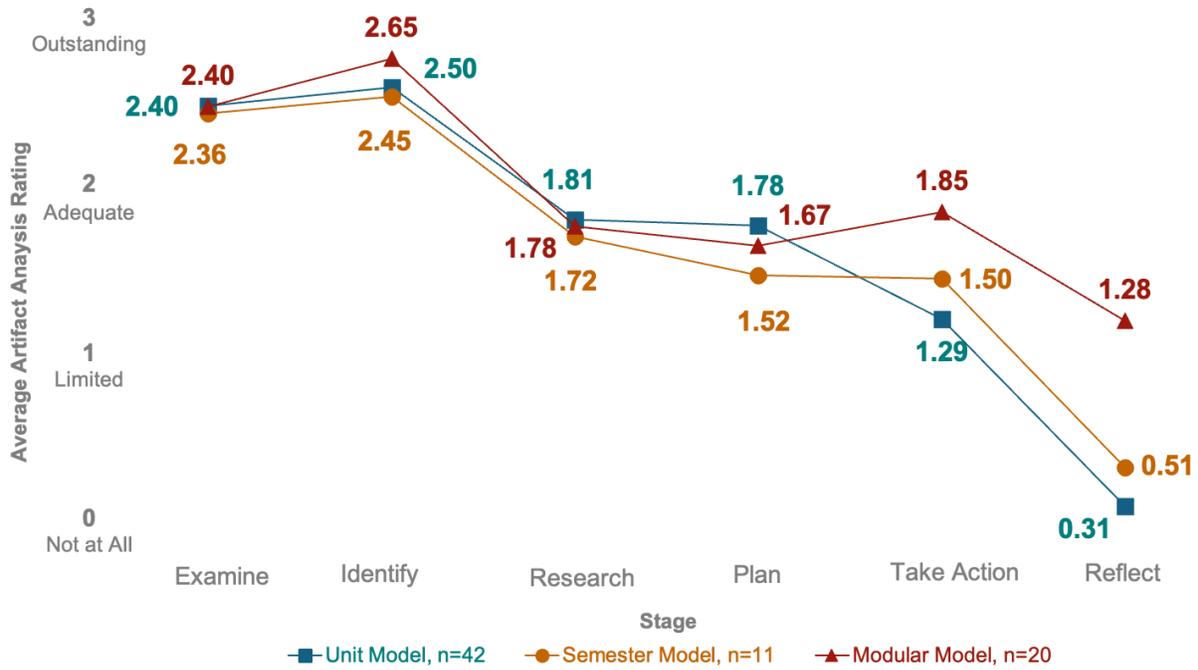
Appendix Exhibit 2B: Project Ratings by Stage and District Socio-Economic Status (n=73)



Read as: "Civic project artifacts were rated an average of 2.40 for students in districts comprised of less than 33% low income students, an average of 2.55 for students in districts comprised of between 33 and 66% low income students, and an average of 2.27 for students in districts comprised of 67% or more low income students for Stage 1 (Examine self and community) on a scale ranging from 0 to 3."

Source: MC² Education Artifact Analysis Upload Data collected during 2024-25

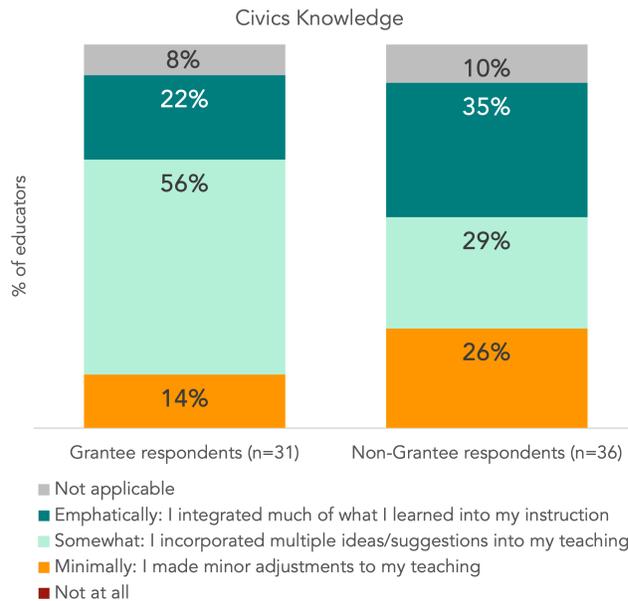
Appendix Exhibit 2C: Project Ratings by Stage and Project Length (n=73)



Read as: “Civic project artifacts were rated an average of 2.40 for students in classrooms that taught the civics project over the course of a unit, an average of 2.36 for students in classrooms that taught the civics project over the course of a semester, and an average of 2.40 for students in classrooms that taught the civics project using a modular model for Stage 1 (Examine self and community) on a scale ranging from 0 to 3.”

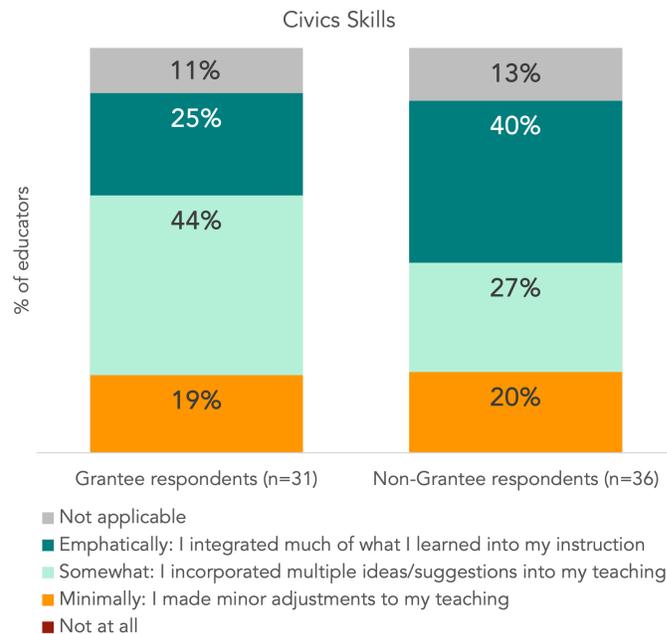
Source: MC² Education Artifact Analysis Upload Data collected during 2024-25

Appendix Exhibit 2D: Effect of Professional Learning on Incorporating Civics Knowledge Instruction, by Grantee Status (n=67)



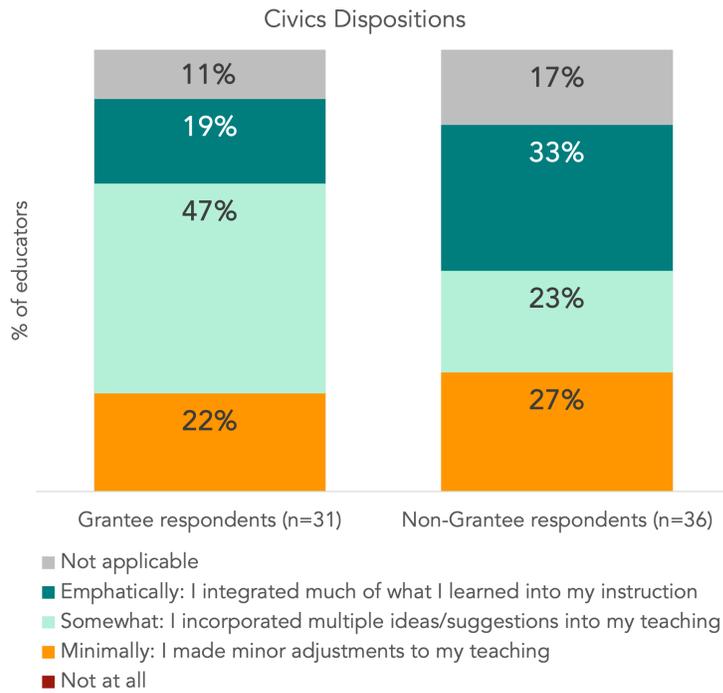
Read as: “22% of grantee respondent educators reported that they had ‘*Emphatically integrated much of what I learned*’ to better incorporate civics knowledge into their instruction after participating in professional learning.”
 Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education Teacher Survey

Appendix Exhibit 2E: Effect of Professional Learning on Incorporating Civics Skills Instruction, by Grantee Status (n=67)



Read as: “25% of grantee respondent educators reported that they had ‘*Emphatically integrated much of what I learned*’ to better incorporate civics skills into their instruction after participating in professional learning.”
 Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education Teacher Survey
 Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Appendix Exhibit 2F: Effect of Professional Learning on Incorporating Civics Dispositions Instruction, by Grantee Status (n=67)



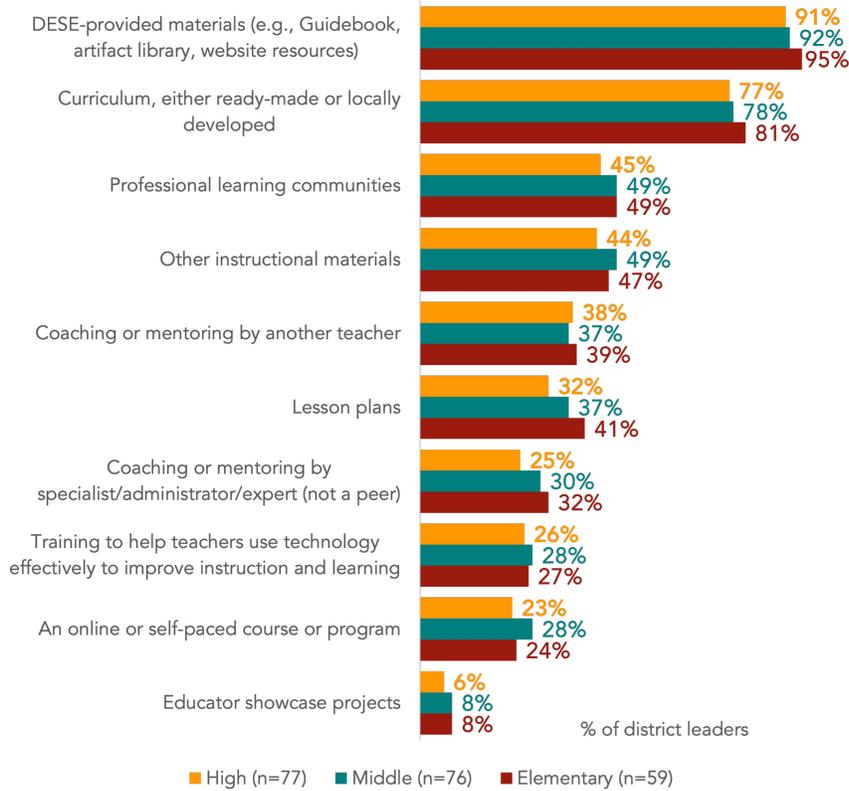
Read as: “19% of grantee respondent educators reported that they had ‘*Emphatically integrated much of what I learned*’ to better incorporate civics dispositions into their instruction after participating in professional learning.”

Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education Teacher Survey

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Appendix Exhibit 2G: Resources Provided by School District to Support Civics Teaching and Learning in High School (n=77), Middle School (n=76), and Elementary School (n=59)

This school year, what resources has your district provided teachers to support civics teaching and learning? Select all that apply.



Read as: “91% of district leaders reported that they had provided ‘DESE-provided materials’ to high school teachers to support civics teaching and learning, 92% of district leaders to middle school teachers, and 95% to elementary school teachers.”

Source: MC² Education-Administered 2023-24 Civics Education District Survey

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% because district leaders could select multiple resources.

Appendix 3: Student Civics Project Coding Rubric

STUDENT CIVICS PROJECT ARTIFACT ANALYSIS RUBRIC

PROJECT ID: _____

If not otherwise specified:

0 = Evidence of component is absent.

1= Component is present but incomplete. It is not explained and no example is given.

2 = Component is present and an explanation or example is provided.

3 = Component is present and a detailed explanation or fully illustrative example is provided.

Internal instructions: Choose a score (0-3) for each component based on the categories above. Provide evidence or reasoning for your score in the relevant box. Leave other boxes in that row blank.

PROJECT IS UNCODABLE (add description of why below)

Reason for Uncodable.

Dimension	Component	Not at all (0)	Limited (1)	Adequate (2)	Outstanding (3)	Evidence/ Notes
1. Examine self and community	Effectively explains why the issue matters to the students/group doing the project, and/or to their specific community					
	Effectively explains why the issue matters to others/how it relates to a need in their/a community					
2. Identify an issue	Clearly describes the selected problem or issue					
3. Conduct research and investigate	Draws on multiple sources of data (0 sources = not at all; 1-2 = limited; 3-4 = adequate; 5+ = outstanding)					
	Draws on multiple kinds of data (e.g. case studies, community interviews, personal narrative (from the student or from a source), statistics, academic journals, newspapers, reports, books, articles, social media, observations, surveys, organization websites, etc.) (One kind = 0; Two kinds = 1; Three kinds = 2; Four or more kinds = 3) <i>*Here we are talking about the kinds of data and not the number of sources or types of sources. Example: Students could use one source and extract three kinds of data from it (e.g. testimony, video, stats) and count as adequate.</i>					
	Uses credible and valid sources					
	Sources are clearly and consistently cited (0=no sources given, 1=sources are referred to but not identified, 2=the majority of sources are identified (whether through link or title), 3=all sources are identified (whether through link, title, or full citation)					
	Clear evidence of exploration of multiple points of view and engagement in dialogue to get multiple perspectives (0 = no engagement with other views; 1 = unclear or vague reference to a different point of view or recognition that different perspectives are possible; 2 =					



Dimension	Component	Not at all (0)	Limited (1)	Adequate (2)	Outstanding (3)	Evidence/ Notes
	<i>explicit recognition or discussion of a different viewpoint or perspective; 3 = explicit recognition or discussion of multiple perspectives or viewpoints)</i>					
	Identifies systems-level root causes of the problem or issue					
4. Develop an action plan	Considers a variety of actions to address the problem or issue. [Proposal-Based] <i>(0 = no possible alternative actions considered; 1 = names at least two possible actions (inclusive of their chosen action); 2 = describes at least two possible actions; 3 = describes at least three possible actions)</i>					
	Articulates a detailed action plan outside of initial research activities [Proposal-Based]					
	Presents evidence or rationale to support the action plan itself [Proposal-Based] <i>(0 = no; 1 = vague evidence or reasoning about why the action plan makes sense; 2 = at least one clear piece of evidence or explicit reason provided to explain why/how the action plan is an effective way to address the problem; 3 = two or more explicit reasons and/or evidence provided to justify the action plan)</i>					
	Action plan clearly addresses the systems-level root cause(s) [Proposal-Based] <i>(0 = no root causes identified [if 3F = 0 then this component = 0]; 1 = root causes ID'd but no obvious connection w/action plan; 2 = vague connection; 3 = clearly inferrable and/or well-described connection)</i>					
	Level of intervention or action plan matches the level of the issue [Proposal-Based]					
	Action plan includes tactics for achieving goal [Action plan for accomplishing proposal] <i>(0 = No tactics for achieving goal are present; 1 = one tactic listed; 2 = one tactic listed and explained or two tactics named; 3 = at least two tactics named and explained)</i>					
	Identifies key influencers and decision makers who can influence systems change about the issue [Proposal-Based OR Action plan for accomplishing proposal] <i>(0 = no; 1 = names one key influencer or decision-maker; 2 = names at least two key influencers/decision-makers; 3 = identifies at least two key influencers/decision-makers and explicitly describes how they will be leveraged/influenced/engaged in the action plan)</i>					
5. Take action	There is evidence that students took action (there might be evidence of this in either the action plan or reflection)					
	Supplies a variety of evidence for the civic actions (e.g., photos, letters, hearing agendas, conversation notes, articles, interviews) (there might be evidence of this in either the action plan or reflection) <i>(no evidence = 0; a brief statement = 1; one direct piece of evidence of action = 2; two or more direct pieces of evidence of action = 3)</i>					



Dimension	Component	Not at all (0)	Limited (1)	Adequate (2)	Outstanding (3)	Evidence/Notes
6. Reflect and showcase what students have learned	Identifies the extent to which their action plan was effective					
	Describes and evaluates areas of success and growth					
	Articulates what they learned from the project as well as how they will apply what they learned outside of class.					

1. Is the project **partisan** according to DESE's definition? A project is partisan, according to DESE, if it takes a "side in party politics and party competitions" or supports a specific electoral candidate. Student projects may "be directed at ballot propositions, involve student communication with legislators in support of a specific bill, and have political viewpoints that reflect the student's political perspective." These activities are considered non-partisan. It is only if a student project tries to support a specific electoral candidate or political party that it counts as "partisan."
2. Did instructional materials from the teacher include any guidance that supports **culturally and linguistically sustaining** practices ("supports students to thrive by creating affirming environments where students feel seen, engage in deeper learning, and are held to high expectations")?
3. **What was the action plan?** E.g. recommending/enacting a school policy change, raising awareness through a public campaign, carrying out a community event, etc.

[Optional] Reflections: Add any reflections you might have about the project, coding it, or the rubric.

Appendix 4: District Survey (2023-24)

For complete response frequencies, click on any question to access frequency tables. 'Other (specify)' responses are quantified but not included in full for frequency tables. District names are not included in frequency tables to protect the anonymity of survey respondents.

Introduction

Welcome to the Civics Education Evaluation Survey for District Leaders. This survey is part of a study commissioned by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), which has contracted with MC² Education, LLC, a third-party, independent research organization. **The study is designed to learn about civics education (e.g., Any learning that centers civic themes, civic-related content, and/or supports the development of students' civic identities.) from the perspectives of Massachusetts school and district staff** who are knowledgeable about history and social studies education in their districts.

As you may know, Massachusetts adopted its current History and Social Studies Framework in 2018, and this survey asks about your district's social studies/history education offerings that address civics education, including student-led civics projects, to understand more about civics education offered by districts across the Commonwealth and what additional supports districts like yours might need.

This survey builds on the 2020 Massachusetts Civics Evaluation Study Teacher survey originally developed by CIRCLE at Tufts University; it uses many of the same questions while revising and/or dropping others to address DESE's current priorities. No individual survey results will be identified or shared with anyone outside the study team; all data shared publicly will only be presented in the aggregate.

Your participation is voluntary, and we hope you will complete this survey to help us learn more about your district's experience with civics education. There are no right or wrong answers, and your candid responses will help DESE to provide support districts like yours might need. Thank you!

If you believe that you can answer questions regarding the implementation and state of civics education in your school district, please complete this survey. **If you believe that you are not a good fit to answer this survey, please forward this survey to the individual(s) in your district responsible for social studies/history education.**

Background Information

1. *Please select your school district.
2. [Please select your current role.](#) Select all that apply.
 - a. District Curriculum Coordinator or Director
 - b. Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent
 - c. School Leader
 - d. Instructional Coach
 - e. Teacher
 - f. Other (Please specify): _____
3. [Which of the following best describes your responsibility for overseeing history/social studies in your district?](#)
 - a. Sole responsibility
 - b. Primary responsibility, with occasional input/oversight from others
 - c. Shared responsibility, with other district leaders
 - d. Limited responsibility, with direction/oversight from others



- e. Other (Please specify): _____
- 4. [Including this year, how many years have you been in your current role, and how many years have you been in this district?](#) Please enter whole numbers only.
- 5. [With which grade levels do you work?](#) Select all that apply.
 - a. K
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3
 - e. 4
 - f. 5
 - g. 6
 - h. 7
 - i. 8
 - j. 9
 - k. 10
 - l. 11
 - m. 12
 - n. Other (please specify)

Civic Policy Knowledge

- 6. [During the current school year, how frequently have you had the following types of interactions with social studies and/or history teachers in your district?](#) [Not at all // Once or twice/year // Several times a year // Frequently // Unsure // N/A]
 - a. Discussed the 2018 Massachusetts History and Social Science (HSS) Framework with teachers in my district (e.g., mentioned through email, mentioned at a staff meeting).
 - b. Provided concrete supports about aligning instruction to HSS Framework.
 - c. Shared resources (e.g., digital curricula, helpful links).
 - d. Adapted existing resources for use.
 - e. Led professional development.
 - f. Organized professional development.

Civics Pedagogy and Practice

- 7. [What are the general approaches to developing students' civics knowledge, skills, and dispositions](#) (e.g., Any learning that centers civic themes, civic-related content, and/or supports the development of students' civic identities.) in your district? Select all that apply for the relevant grade levels.

	Elem (K-5)	Middle (6-8)	High (9-12)
Stand-alone courses			
Integrated throughout social studies courses			
Integrated throughout multiple subject areas			
Interdisciplinary/culminating projects (e.g. student-led civics projects)			
Extracurricular activities (e.g., student council, debate)			
School-wide events (e.g., citizenship awards, day of service)			



School-wide theme			
Other [Please describe briefly]			

8. [During the current school year, how often are students offered the following types of civics learning opportunities?](#) Please complete for each of the following grade levels: Elem (K-5), Middle (6-8), High (9-12). [Not at all // Once or twice/year // Several times/year // Frequently // Unsure]

	Elem (K-5)	Middle (6-8)	High (9-12)
Lessons that incorporate subject-specific civics content			
Discussions of controversial issues that incorporate multiple points of view			
Researching issues of concern to civic life in ways that involve examining and evaluating multiple sources			
Learning based on exploration of issues and themes through inquiry			
Conducting student-led civics projects			
Sharing work with authentic audiences (e.g., community members, policymakers)			

9. [This school year, how similar/different are schools' approaches to student-led civics projects across your district?](#)

- All schools use the same approach
- Majority of schools use the same approach
- About half the schools use the same approach
- Less than half the schools use the same approach
- Each school chooses its own approach
- Don't know

10. [This school year, who is generally responsible for selecting how to implement student-led civics projects?](#)

- District leadership
- District social studies/history team
- School history/social studies department
- Individual teachers
- Varies within schools
- Don't know
- Not applicable

11. [This school year, who is responsible for implementing student-led civics projects?](#) Check all that apply.

- All general education classroom teachers
- All social studies teachers
- 8th grade social studies/history teachers
- 9th grade social studies/history teachers
- 10th grade social studies/history teachers
- 11th grade social studies/history teachers

- g. 12th grade social studies/history teachers
- h. Grade-specific team of teachers in a school
- i. Interdisciplinary team of educators within a school; please describe roles of participating educators (e.g., ELA and HSS, HSS and librarian, etc.)
- j. Other: (Please specify) _____
- k. Don't know

12. [This school year, which instructional activities listed below does your district encourage related to civics teaching and learning?](#) [Not at all // Once or twice/year // Several times/year // Frequently // Unsure]

- a. Incorporate subject-specific civics content
- b. Facilitate discussion of controversial issues that incorporates multiple points of view
- c. Help students select and read a variety of texts
- d. Help students synthesize information across texts
- e. Helps students identify potential biases in texts
- f. Help students research issues by examining and evaluating multiple sources
- g. Plan, implement, and evaluate inquiry cycles
- h. Provide opportunities for students to share work with authentic audiences (e.g., community members, policymakers)
- i. Provide students with choice about issues to study
- j. Facilitating student-led civics projects grounded in the six stages from the Civics Project Guidebook (*asking students to examine self and civic identity, identify an issue, research & investigate, develop an action plan, take action, and reflect & showcase*)
- k. Facilitating student-led civics projects grounded in the key components from the Civics Project Guidebook (*student-led, project-based, real-world, rooted in an understanding of systems impact, goal-driven, inquiry-based, non-partisan, process-focused*)
- l. Use culturally and linguistically appropriate approaches

Support for Educators

13. [This school year, how often has your district provided teachers professional learning opportunities run by the district focused on civics teaching and learning?](#)

	Elem (K-5)	Middle (6-8)	High (9-12)
None so far			
Planned for later this school year			
Once a year			
Once a semester			
Summer workshop			
Twice a semester			
Embedded throughout the year			

[This school year, how often has your district provided teachers professional learning opportunities run by an outside entity focused on civics teaching and learning?](#)

	Elem (K-5)	Middle (6-8)	High (9-12)
None so far			



	Elem (K-5)	Middle (6-8)	High (9-12)
Planned for later this school year			
Once a year			
Once a semester			
Summer workshop			
Twice a semester			
Embedded throughout the year			

14. [This school year, has your district encouraged or required teachers across grade levels/subject areas to engage in professional learning related to civics?](#) Please check one category for each row.

[Encouraged // Required // Neither // Don't know]

- a. Social studies teachers
- b. Civics/government teachers
- c. Non-social studies/civics teachers
- d. Elementary school teachers (K-5)
- e. Middle school teachers (6-8)
- f. High school teachers (9-12)
- g. Instructional coaches
- h. Special education teachers
- i. Other (Please specify): _____

15. [This school year, what resources has your district provided teachers to support civics teaching and learning?](#) Select all that apply.

- a. Curriculum (including core, supplemental, either ready-made or locally developed)
- b. DESE-provided materials (e.g., Civics Project Guidebook, Civics Project Artifact Library, resources accessed from DESE website, etc.)
- c. Lesson plans
- d. Other instructional materials
- e. An online or self-paced course or program
- f. Training to help teachers use technology effectively to improve instruction and learning
- g. Professional learning communities
- h. Educator showcase projects
- i. Coaching or mentoring by another teacher
- j. Coaching or mentoring by specialist, administrator, or expert (not a peer)
- k. Other (Please specify): _____

16. [This school year, which of the following resources have you used to help teachers integrate civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions into their civics teaching?](#) Select all that apply.

- a. Information provided by from DESE
- b. Information provided by professional associations
- c. Attending professional development or trainings focused on civic education
- d. Prior experience as a social studies or civics teacher
- e. Background knowledge in civics (e.g., history or government major in college)
- f. The alignment of civic outcomes to the district mission
- g. Funding and resources from the district or state that directly supports civic education
- h. Partnering with organizations that provide curriculum for students and/or professional development for teachers



- i. Other (Please specify): _____
 - j. None of the above
17. [Which of the following, if any, represent barriers to your district's capacity to implement civics instruction aligned to the 2018 Massachusetts History and Social Science Framework and Civics Project Legislation and Guidebook?](#) [Not a barrier // Occasional barrier // Persistent barrier]
- a. Time for planning
 - b. Time for instruction
 - c. Confidence in my capacity to support teachers implementing civic education
 - d. Knowledge of 2018 MA HSS Framework
 - e. Knowledge of Civics Project legislation
 - f. Knowledge of Civics Education Guidebook
 - g. Support from district administration
 - h. Support from parents and community members
 - i. District resources
 - j. State-provided resources
 - k. Alignment with district priorities
 - l. Access to information
 - m. Civics expertise
18. [Please select any resources you've used to offer civics education.](#) Please check all that apply.
- a. Civics Teaching and Learning Grant (Fund Code 589)
 - b. Other grant funding
 - c. Other district operating funds
 - d. Federal funds
 - e. Other [Please Specify]
19. [*Did your district receive or apply for a Civics Teaching & Learning Grant, Fund Code 589, offered by DESE in either of the following school years?](#)
- a. Yes, received a grant in 2022-2023 > *Go to Connection to Grant Priorities*
 - b. Yes, received a grant in 2023-2024 > *Go to Connection to Grant Priorities*
 - c. Yes, received in a different year > *Go to Connection to Grant Priorities*
 - d. No > *Skip to Demographics*
20. Is there anything else that you feel is important about civics education in your district that we have not yet asked you about? Please tell us more here.

Connection to Grant Priorities

Equity: Civics is a core purpose of public education, and as such, all students should have access to high-quality, culturally and linguistically sustaining civics learning experiences. Grant-funded projects should create or deepen civics learning opportunities that are accessible to all students in a school, grade, or district – as opposed to opportunities that are optional or inequitably available.

Deeper Learning: Grant-funded projects should help students master civic knowledge, skills and dispositions, appropriate to grade-level standards, through agency and opportunities to actively “do civics.” Civics action should be student-led and meaningful to students as individuals, with relevance to their identities and lived experiences. Civics learning should be an integral part of the larger curriculum, not isolated experiences, lessons, or units.

Sustainability: Grant-funded projects should take steps towards long-term enhancements to civics teaching and learning. Investments such as professional development for educators or acquisition of needed instructional materials can provide benefits long past the period of this grant, as opposed to “one-off” activities.

21. [How influential has the grant been in facilitating opportunities for culturally and linguistically sustaining student-led civics education in the following experiences?](#) [Not at all influential // Occasionally influential // Somewhat influential // Substantially influential // Not relevant because our district already provides this // Not applicable]

- a. Stand-alone courses
- b. Integrated throughout social studies courses
- c. Integrated throughout multiple subject areas
- d. Interdisciplinary/culminating projects (e.g., student-led civics projects)
- e. School-wide events (e.g., citizenship awards, day of service)
- f. School-wide theme
- g. Experiential learning outside of school settings
- h. Other [Please describe]

22. Please explain your response above, share best practices, or request specific kinds of support here, if applicable.

23. [Please rate the following items in terms of priority.](#) [Not applicable // Occasional priority // Medium priority // High priority // Required for all eligible students]

- a. At this point in the grant implementation process, your grant activities ensure all students can equitably access civics instruction.
- b. Differentiating civics curricula, materials and/or student-led project facilitation to ensure all students have equitable access to civics instruction.
- c. Supporting teachers in differentiating civics instruction and/or implementing student-led civics projects.
- d. Ensuring all students have equitable access to experiential learning opportunities (e.g. civics project showcase).

24. Please explain your response above.

Demographics

25. [Please indicate your race/ethnicity.](#) Select all that apply.

- a. American Indian or Alaska Native
- b. Asian
- c. Black or African American
- d. Latino or Hispanic
- e. Middle Eastern or North African
- f. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- g. White
- h. Other (Please specify): _____
- i. Prefer not to answer

26. [What is your gender?](#) Cis means that your gender is the same as the sex that was assigned to you at birth.

- a. Cis man
- b. Cis woman
- c. Non-binary
- d. Trans man
- e. Trans woman
- f. Other (Please specify): _____
- g. Prefer not to answer



We appreciate you for taking the time to complete the survey!

Appendix 5: Teacher Survey (2023-24)

For complete response frequencies, click on any question to access frequency tables. 'Other (specify)' responses are quantified but not included in full for frequency tables. District and school names are not included in frequency tables to protect the anonymity of survey respondents.

Introduction

Welcome to the Civics Education Evaluation Survey for Educators. This survey is part of a study commissioned by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), which has contracted with MC² Education, LLC, a third-party, independent research organization. The study is designed to learn about civics education (e.g., Learning about civic themes, civic-related content, and/or supports the development of students' civic identities.) from the perspectives of Massachusetts school and district staff who are knowledgeable about history and social studies education in their districts.

As you may know, Massachusetts adopted its current History and Social Studies Framework in 2018, and this survey asks about your social studies/history education offerings that address civics education, including student-led civics projects, to understand more about civics education offered by districts across the Commonwealth and what additional supports districts like yours might need. For additional information about this study, please contact us at civicsedstudy@mc2educationllc.com.

We estimate that this survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Your participation is voluntary, and we hope you will complete this survey to help us learn more about your district's experience with civics education. There are no right or wrong answers, and your candid responses will help DESE to provide support districts like yours might need. Thank you!

This survey builds on the 2020 Massachusetts Civics Evaluation Study Teacher survey originally developed by CIRCLE at Tufts University; it uses many of the same questions while revising and/or dropping others to address DESE's current priorities. No individual survey results will be identified or shared with anyone outside the study team; all data shared publicly will only be presented in the aggregate.

Background Information

1. * Please select your school district.
2. * Please enter the name of your school. Please avoid using abbreviations or nicknames if possible.
3. Which grade level(s) do you teach? Select all that apply.
 - a. K
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3
 - e. 4
 - f. 5
 - g. 6
 - h. 7
 - i. 8
 - j. 9
 - k. 10
 - l. 11

-
- m. 12
 - n. Other (please specify)
4. Which grade level(s) do you teach civics (e.g., *Learning about civic themes, civic-related content, and/or supports the development of students' civic identities.*)? Select all that apply.
- a. K
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3
 - e. 4
 - f. 5
 - g. 6
 - h. 7
 - i. 8
 - j. 9
 - k. 10
 - l. 11
 - m. 12
 - n. Other (please specify)

[Elementary Teachers] Civics Pedagogy and Practice

5. This school year (including the rest of the year), how do you address the following topics in your classroom instruction? [Not part of what I teach // Address in 2-3 lessons // Address within a unit over multiple days/weeks // Address as an entire unit // Address by integrating across the semester]
- a. Respect and tolerance for people of diverse backgrounds
 - b. Major themes in Massachusetts history, including Indigenous peoples
 - c. Major themes in the history of the United States
 - d. Citizenship in a democracy
 - e. Citizens' rights and responsibilities, including those of youth
 - f. Structures of national government at local, state, and federal levels
 - g. Forms of democratic participation in a democracy
 - h. The roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people's lives
 - i. How people use and challenge local, state, national, and international laws to address a variety of public issues
6. This school year (including the rest of the year), how do you integrate civics learning into your classroom instruction? Select all that apply.
- a. Incorporate into Literacy/English Language Arts instruction
 - b. Through facilitating student-led civics projects
 - c. As a theme or topic of instruction in Social Studies/History units
 - d. As an interdisciplinary unit
 - e. Integrate in students' everyday experiences (e.g., discussions about being a responsible classmate)
 - f. None of the above. I do not incorporate civics content into my teaching.
 - g. Other (Please specify): _____
7. This school year (including the rest of the year), how frequently do you engage in the following when you teach civics concepts? Please select one per row. [Not at all // Not yet but I plan to // Occasionally (1-3 times) // Once/month // Once/week // More than once per week]
- a. Encourage students to discuss issues about which people can disagree
 - b. Encourage students to express their own opinions
 - c. Assign student to investigate causes/solutions to social problems

- d. Assign students projects examining issues about elections
 - e. Assign students projects that address local community issues
 - f. Assess students through multiple modalities (e.g., projects, writing, presentations, performances)
 - g. Provide students opportunities to connect learning in my classroom to their own experiences, identities and cultures
 - h. Provide students opportunities to lead discussions
 - i. Provide students opportunities to make decisions in groups
 - j. Provide students opportunities to explore different methods for learning (e.g., debate, discussions, voting, negotiating, seeking expert advice)
 - k. Provide students opportunities to differentiate between fact and opinion (e.g., through reviewing different sources)
 - l. Provide students opportunities to present to authentic audiences (e.g., community members, policy makers, politicians)
8. [This school year \(including the rest of the year\), how, if at all, do you use DESE-created resources](#) (e.g., Civics Project Guidebook, Civics Project Artifact Library, etc.) **for supporting high-quality civics learning opportunities?** Select all that apply.
- a. Use DESE materials directly
 - b. Incorporate portions of DESE materials into my curriculum
 - c. Do not use any DESE materials
 - d. I do not know what DESE materials are available
9. * Do you also teach any 6th-12th grade civics?
- a. Yes > go to *Middle and High Teachers - Civics Pedagogy and Practice*
 - b. No > go to *Civics Education Teaching & Learning*

[Middle and High Teachers] Civics Pedagogy and Practice

10. [This school year \(including the rest of the year\), how do you address the following topics in your classroom instruction?](#) [Not part of what I teach // Address in 2-3 lessons // Address within a unity over multiple days/weeks // Address as an entire unit // Address by integrating across the semester]
- a. Respect and tolerance for people of diverse backgrounds
 - b. Major themes in Massachusetts history, including Indigenous peoples
 - c. Major themes in the history of the United States
 - d. Citizenship in a democracy
 - e. Citizens' rights and responsibilities, including those of students
 - f. Understanding how students and other individuals can participate in local government
 - g. Structures of government at local, state, and federal levels
 - h. The powers and limitations of federal, state, and local governments
 - i. Ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic
 - j. The relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs
 - k. How and why the Constitution has evolved over time
 - l. How everyday people affect policy (including voting, lobbying, running for/holding public office, etc.)
11. [This school year \(including the rest of the year\), how frequently do students in your classes do the following?](#) Please select one per row. [Not at all // Occasionally (1-3 times) // Once/month // Once/week // More than once per week]
- a. Lead discussions about topics related to civics, government, and/or history.
 - b. Critically analyze news coverage (e.g., media bias, the difference between news and opinion, how to choose a news source).
 - c. Investigate root causes and solutions to social problems.

- d. Research issues related to elections, politics, public policy, and/or social issues.
- e. Debate issues related to elections, politics, public policy, and/or social issues.
- f. Write about issues related to elections, politics, public policy, and/or social issues.
- g. Research issues affecting people in the local community and identify root causes and possible solutions.
- h. Debate issues affecting people in the local community.
- i. Write about issues affecting people in the local community.
- j. Explore and analyze systems-level causes of social problems.
- k. Analyze public policy (at any level, including school rules) with a goal of proposing changes.
- l. Use data and research from multiple sources to understand and analyze issues.
- m. Present solutions to authentic audiences (e.g., community members, policymakers).
- n. Take civic action together.

12. How aligned is your civics instruction with the 2018 Massachusetts History and Social Science Framework?

- a. I am not familiar with the 2018 History and Social Science Framework.
- b. Not, but I plan to align my teaching to the Framework.
- c. My civics instruction is occasionally aligned with the Framework
- d. My civics instruction is somewhat aligned with the Framework
- e. My civics instruction is intentionally aligned with the Framework

Next, we are going to ask you a series of questions about **student-led civics projects** at your school.

13. * This school year (including the rest of the year), did you or will you assign students an opportunity to lead a civics project?

- a. No, I do not assign students a student-led civics project this year. > go to *Civics Education Teaching & Learning*
- b. Yes, but I haven't yet assigned students a student-led civics project this year.
- c. Yes, I already assigned students a student-led civics project this year.

14. How long in scope are the student-led civics projects assigned this year (whether completed or planned)?

- a. A week or less
- b. 2 or 3 weeks
- c. A month or more
- d. The entire semester
- e. Other (specify)

15. This school year (including the rest of the year), how do students work on their civics projects?

- a. Students as individuals
- b. Students in groups I assign
- c. Students in groups they select
- d. Whole-class
- e. Other (specify)

16. Which priorities are reflected in the student-led civics project topics your students have selected this school year? The student-led civics projects are... [Not applicable // Occasional priority // Medium priority // High priority // Required for all projects/students]

- a. Project-based
- b. Real-world
- c. Rooted in understanding systems impact
- d. Goal-driven
- e. Inquiry-based

-
- f. Non-partisan
 - g. Process focused
 - h. Action-based
17. [For which of the following are students required to submit documentation of that step in the process?](#) *[As classwork // As part of their final civics project]*
- a. Examine self and community
 - b. Identify an issue
 - c. Conduct research and investigate
 - d. Develop an action plan
 - e. Take action
 - f. Reflect and showcase what students have learned
18. [Please select the options that best describe the scope or scale of topics that your students' student-led civics projects have examined/will examine this year.](#) Select all that apply.
- a. Classroom level
 - b. School level
 - c. Community- or neighborhood-level
 - d. City/town level
 - e. State level
 - f. National level
 - g. Global level
 - h. Other (specify)
19. [Please select the options that best describe the focus of topics that student-led projects have examined/will examine this year?](#) Select all that apply.
- a. Health
 - b. Education
 - c. Housing
 - d. Environment/climate
 - e. Civic participation
 - f. Equity
 - g. Justice
 - h. Other (specify)
20. [What resources do you use to support your planning and implementation of student-led civics projects?](#) *[Not familiar // Know of but not used // Know of and use occasionally // Know of and use routinely // Know of and use extensively // Not applicable]*
- a. Curricular resources developed by teachers in this district
 - b. Curricular resources developed by teachers from other MA districts
 - c. Resources available through DESE (e.g., Civics Project Guidebook, Civics Artifact Library, etc.)
 - d. Commercially available curricular resources
 - e. Curricular resources available through professional development partners
 - f. Curricular resources available through cultural organizations
 - g. Other (specify)

Civics Education Teaching & Learning

21. [How representative are the following statements of your civics instruction?](#) *[Not representative // Occasionally representative // More representative than not // Completely representative]*
- a. I know how to help students learn how to *respond* to their peers' contributions during a discussion.



- b. I know how to help students learn how to *learn from* their peers' contributions during a discussion.
- c. I create learning experiences in which my students depend on each other (e.g., collaborative learning).
- d. I know how to help students understand the connection between the levels of government and policies that impact their community.
- e. I know how to help students understand the connection between the levels of government and their rights and responsibilities.
- f. I know how to teach my students to sort fact from fiction in the digital age.
- g. I know how to teach my students to consume and create credible information.
- h. I know how to teach students to develop an authentic and compelling question.
- i. I know how to choose the right discussion strategy for the specific objective of a current issue discussion (e.g., building consensus and identifying different opinions).
- j. I teach civic content effectively.
- k. I plan and facilitate controversial issue discussions.
- l. I support learning through ongoing inquiries.

22. This school year (including the rest of the year), how often does your school or district provide you with professional learning opportunities focused on civics teaching and learning?

- a. Always
- b. Once
- c. Once a semester
- d. A few times
- e. Frequently embedded throughout the school year

23. * Please indicate what types of professional learning you've participated in this year to help you teach civics. Select all that apply.

- a. Half or full day training
- b. Training program or institute lasting more than one day in total time
- c. Coaching or mentoring by another teacher
- d. Coaching or mentoring by a specialist, administrator, or expert (not a peer)
- e. Online or self-paced course or program
- f. Training to use technology in the classroom to improve instruction and learning
- g. Professional learning community for more than a semester
- h. DESE-sponsored professional learning (e.g., Investigating History Training, Virtual Support Forums, Civics Pathways workshops and online courses)
- i. None of the above

24. This school year (including the rest of the year), how frequently do you face the following limitations or barriers when teaching civics? [Not at all // Once or twice // Several times // Frequently]

- a. Time for planning
- b. Time for instruction
- c. Confidence in implementing civic education
- d. Support from my school administration
- e. Support from fellow teachers in my grade
- f. Support from fellow teachers in my department
- g. Support from parents and community members
- h. District resources
- i. State-provided resources
- j. Access to information
- k. Civics expertise
- l. Motivating students to get interested in civics
- m. Pressure to teach other subjects or content



n. Access to professional learning to develop relevant knowledge/skills

25. *[If selected any of a to h items in Q23]* [How did participating in professional learning help you better incorporate the following into your instruction, including student-led civics projects, if applicable?](#)
[Not at all // Minimally: I made minor (one or two) adjustments to my teaching // Somewhat: I incorporated multiple ideas/suggestions into my teaching // Emphatically: I integrated much of what I learned into my instruction // Not applicable]
- a. Civics knowledge
 - a. Civics skills
 - b. Civics dispositions

Demographics

26. [Please indicate your race/ethnicity.](#) Select all that apply.

- a. American Indian or Alaska Native
- b. Asian
- c. Black or African American
- d. Latino or Hispanic
- e. Middle Eastern or North African
- f. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- g. White
- h. Prefer not to answer
- i. Other (specify)

27. [What is your gender?](#) *Cis means that your gender is the same as the sex that was assigned to you at birth.*

- a. Cis man
- b. Cis woman
- c. Non-binary
- d. Trans man
- e. Trans woman
- f. Prefer not to answer
- g. Other (specify)

28. [Including this year, how many years have you been in your current role, and how many years have you been in this district?](#) Please insert whole numbers only.

Years in current role	Years in this district

29. Is there anything else that you would like to share about civics education in your school that we have not yet asked you about?

We appreciate your time and want to thank you for taking the time to complete the survey!

Appendix 6a: Teacher Focus Group Protocol (Spring 2024)

Introductions

My name is [NAME] and this is my colleague [NAME]. We work for a research company called MC² Education. We were hired by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education to learn from district staff, educators, and students what civics education looks like in their districts and schools, and what you think about your experiences with implementing civics education.

As you probably know, in 2018, the state enacted new standards that required every district to offer civics education, including civics knowledge, skills, and dispositions across K-12, and providing students with opportunities to engage in student-led projects, in the service of helping them learn how to become informed and active citizens.

The purpose of this focus group conversation is to hear about your experiences as you teach civics (e.g., Any learning that centers civic themes, civic-related content, and/or supports the development of students' civic identities.) to your students, and how you implement student-led civics projects too. We want to understand what works well, what is challenging, what resources you use, what resources you would like to have, and other related topics.

Your feedback is really important because it will help us improve civics education for educators and students across the state of Massachusetts.

Welcome/Approach

Discussing specific experiences within your own district may sometimes be awkward, and we want you to feel comfortable sharing your perspective. If there is a question that comes up and you would prefer to share in a private chat with me or my colleague [NAME], you can send us a private note in the Zoom chat.

We have a few norms for the group that we want to make sure everyone understands. The focus group is informal, so you do not have to raise your hand to speak. However, we just ask that you please speak one at a time so that we can make sure that we hear what everyone has to say. Another very important norm for this group is everything that is shared in the group stays in the group. Please do not share anything that is talked about in this group after our conversation is over.

However, if you know of other educators like you who have had similar experiences you can let us know. For example, you can say something like "a challenge for some other teachers was" This helps to keep the pressure off sharing something about you specifically and keeps the focus on educators' perspectives specifically.

All of the information you share during the focus group will be kept confidential by the study team. This means that any report we write summarizing what we learn today will not include your name or anything that could directly identify you. Your participation is voluntary. You can decide not to answer a question or stop participating in the focus group at any time.

In Massachusetts, civics education is required by the state legislature, including providing opportunities for students to lead their own civics projects in 8th and 9-12th grades. State legislation also requires a grade 8 civics education course.. Your feedback as a teacher is incredibly important because we want to know what works, or doesn't work for you, and how we can improve civics education from the perspective of classroom educators.

Does anyone have any questions before we begin? You can also send a private message through the zoom chat if you have any questions.

Ice Breaker: Please say your first name only and one word that describes how you're feeling today. We only have 2 minutes for introductions, so if you could please do this quickly then popcorn to someone else in the focus group, that would be great!

Focus group questions:

1. What are your goals in teaching civics? Where do these goals come from?
2. What resources do you draw on in teaching civics? Where do these come from?
 - DESE-provided resources
 - Commercially available resources
 - District developed or provided resources
 - Resources from other sources (e.g. DKP, Generation Citizen, Primary Source)
 - Materials you develop yourselves or with other teachers
3. How do DESE-offered resources (such as the Framework, Civics artifact library, other) facilitate and/or hinder teaching civics to your students?
 - Which resources do you use most often and why?
 - Which resources are less useful and why?
4. What barriers do you experience as you implement civics education? As a reminder, civics education is any learning that centers civic themes, civic-related content, and/or supports the development of students' civic identities.
 - What barriers if any have you experienced at the district level?
 - At the school and classroom level?

Now I'd like to turn to student-led civics projects in particular.

5. How, if at all, are you integrating student-led civics projects into your courses?
 - What guidance do you provide to students?
 - What supports have you received to provide guidance to students on student-led civics projects?
 - How long do students spend on the projects?
 - Do you encourage them to work in groups? If so, how are the groups formed?
 - Who chooses what topics or issues the students work on? Are there topics or issues you discourage or disallow?
 - How far do students tend to get in their projects before the end of the year? For example, do they plan action? Do they take action?
6. How do you feel about the student-led civics projects in general?
 - What excites you or do you feel really good about?
 - What frustrates or worries you?
7. If there was one thing you would want DESE to know about the civics projects, what would it be?
8. What resources are helpful as you implement civics learning and student projects?
 - Curricular resources?
 - Professional development you have participated in?



- Community partner organizations?
 - Other?
9. What resources *would* be helpful (that you don't have right now)?
10. What influenced your approaches to implementing student-led civics projects?
- District philosophy?
 - Local champion(s)?
 - Your own approach to teaching/learning?
11. What tells you students are engaged in indicators tell you that your students are experiencing a high-quality civics education learning experience?
- What factors facilitate students' learning experiences?
 - What factors impede students' learning experiences?
 - How similar/different are student experiences for different grade levels, if applicable?
12. The 2018 legislation specifies that student-led projects are supposed to help students learn about state and national history and become informed and active citizens. How well do you feel your student-led projects meet the legislation's stated objectives?
- To help them learn about state and national history
 - To help them become informed and active citizens
 - Other?
13. Anything else you'd like to share that we didn't already talk about?

We greatly appreciate taking the time to talk today! We wish you a great rest of your school year and a wonderful summer! Take care.

Appendix 6b: Teacher Focus Group Protocol (Fall 2024)

Introductions

My name is [NAME] and this is my colleague [NAME]. We work for a research company called MC² Education. We were hired by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education to learn from district staff, educators, and students what civics education looks like in their districts and schools, and what you think about your experiences with implementing civics education.

As you know, in 2018, two new state policies were enacted in Massachusetts. The first, the [2018 History and Social Science Framework](#), includes a new 8th Grade civics course as well as standards with ‘an increased focus on developing students’ civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions across grades. The second policy requires that students be provided with the opportunity to lead a non-partisan civic action project once while in 8th grade and once in high school.

The purpose of this focus group conversation is to hear about your experiences as you teach civics to your students, and how you implement student-led civics projects too. We want to understand what works well, what is challenging, what resources you use, what resources you would like to have, your experience using the 2018 Framework, and other related topics.

Your feedback is really important because it will help us improve civics education for educators and students across the state of Massachusetts.

Welcome/Approach

We understand that discussing the specific experiences within your own district may sometimes be awkward, and we want you to feel comfortable sharing your perspective. If there is a question that comes up and you would prefer to share in a private chat with me or my colleague [NAME], you can send us a private note in the Zoom chat.

We have a few norms for the group that we want to make sure everyone understands. The focus group is informal, so you do not have to raise your hand to speak. However, we just ask that you please speak one at a time so that we can make sure that we hear what everyone has to say. Another very important norm for this group is everything that is shared in the group stays in the group. Please do not share anything that is talked about in this group after our conversation is over.

If you know of other districts similar to yours that have had similar experiences you can let us know. For example, you can say something like “a challenge for some other districts was” This helps to keep the pressure off sharing something about you specifically and keeps the focus on district perspectives specifically.

All of the information you share during the focus group will be kept confidential by the study team. This means that any report we write summarizing what we learn today will not include your name or anything that could directly identify you. Your participation is voluntary. You can decide not to answer a question or stop participating in the focus group at any time.

During the focus group we will take notes and, with your permission, we would also like to record the conversation to supplement our notes, recordings will be transcribed using otter.ai. Is it ok if we audio-record our conversation? Confirm

Does anyone have any questions before we begin? You can also send a private message through the zoom chat if you have any questions.

Ice Breaker: Please say your first name, what grades you teach and which classes, and how many years you've been teaching. We only have 2 minutes for introductions, so if you could please do this quickly then popcorn to someone else in the focus group, that would be great!

Focus group questions:

We'll start off with Civic Education integration in your classes. We're going to start off on the high level and discuss the 2018 Framework:

1. Please share your familiarity with the 2018 History and Social Science Framework? Which curricula do you use? Are you developing your own curricula, or are you utilizing existing resources?
2. Did you receive any professional development or resources specifically related to the 2018 Framework? If so, please share how this helped you or did not help you implement the Framework.

Now onto the civics projects and civics education more generally:

3. What kinds of resources do you use to help implement civics education and civic projects? How do these resources support you and influence student learning? Remember, these resources might be incorporated into your overall history/social studies curriculum.
 - Do you find that different resources support different students within your class? For example, are there resources that are especially helpful when working with English Language Learners.
 - If you need a list of resources below are examples:
 - o DESE-provided resources
 - o Commercially available resources
 - o District developed or provided resources
 - o Resources from other sources (e.g. DKP, Generation Citizen, Primary Source)
 - o Developed by history/social studies teachers/coordinators
4. How prepared do you feel to teach civics education and student-led civics projects? What supports, resources, and/or experiences have made you feel prepared? And if you do not feel prepared, what would you need to feel more confident?
5. For those of you who have taught the student-led civics projects, how, if at all, are you integrating the civics projects into your courses?
 - a. What guidance do you provide to students?
 - i. What supports have you received to provide guidance to students on student-led civics projects?
 - b. How long do students spend on the projects?
 - c. Do you encourage them to work in groups? If so, how are the groups formed?
 - d. Who chooses what topics or issues the students work on? Are there topics or issues you discourage or disallow?
 - e. How far do students tend to get in their projects before the end of the year? For example, do they plan action? Do they take action?

If not shared yet,

6. Please describe your experience in particular with using DESE provided resources, including DESE provided professional development. Which resources and/or experiences have been most helpful

and least helpful in the implementation of civics education in your classroom? Some examples of DESE resources are: Civics Project Guidebook, DESE Civics Pathways, or preparation resources for the Massachusetts Civics Project Showcases.

- a. If you have challenges/issues with the DESE provided resources (including PD), please share more. (Access to, insufficient or quality of resources)

Now let's get into some of the barriers you face in your district.

7. What barriers do you face in your classroom as you implement civics education courses and the student-led civics projects? As a reminder, civics education is any learning that centers civic themes, civic-related content, and/or supports the development of students' civic identities.
 - a. What barriers do you observe at the district level?
 - b. At the school/classroom level?

8. Do you see any variation in student experiences in civics education across student groups within your class? If so, please describe the variation and your thoughts as to why it exists.

9. Please share an example or two when you've seen students having a meaningful civics education learning experience.
 - What makes it easier for students to learn about civics education?
 - What makes it harder for students to learn about civics education?
 - Are there specific groups of students who experience more or less challenges when learning about civics education?
 - How similar/different are student experiences for 8th graders vs high school students? [depends on FG participants]

10. Anything else you'd like to share that we didn't already talk about?

We greatly appreciate taking the time to talk today! We wish you a great rest of your school year! Take care.

Appendix 7a: District Focus Group Protocol (Spring 2024)

Introductions

My name is [NAME] and this is my colleague [NAME]. We work for a research company called MC² Education. We were hired by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education to learn from district staff, educators, and students what civics education looks like in their districts and schools, and what you think about your experiences with implementing civics education.

As you know, in 2018, the state enacted new standards that required every district to offer civics education, including civics knowledge, skills, and dispositions across K-12, and providing 8th and 9-12th grade students with opportunities to engage in student-led projects, in the service of helping them learn how to become informed and active citizens.

The purpose of this focus group conversation is to hear about your experiences helping your district implement and support civics education (e.g., Any learning that centers civic themes, civic-related content, and/or supports the development of students' civic identities.). We want to understand what works well, what is challenging, what resources you use, what resources you would like to have, and other related topics.

Your feedback is really important because it will help us improve civics education for educators and students across the state of Massachusetts.

Welcome/Approach

Discussing the specific experiences within your own district may sometimes be awkward, and we want you to feel comfortable sharing your perspective. If there is a question that comes up and you would prefer to share in a private chat with me or my colleague [NAME], you can send us a private note in the Zoom chat.

We have a few norms for the group that we want to make sure everyone understands. The focus group is informal, so you do not have to raise your hand to speak. However, we just ask that you please speak one at a time so that we can make sure that we hear what everyone has to say. Another very important norm for this group is everything that is shared in the group stays in the group. Please do not share anything that is talked about in this group after our conversation is over.

However, if you know of other districts similar to yours that have had similar experiences you can let us know. For example, you can say something like "a challenge for some other districts was" This helps to keep the pressure off sharing something about you specifically and keeps the focus on district perspectives specifically.

All of the information you share during the focus group will be kept confidential by the study team. This means that any report we write summarizing what we learn today will not include your name or anything that could directly identify you. Your participation is voluntary. You can decide not to answer a question or stop participating in the focus group at any time.

In Massachusetts, civics education is required by the state legislature, including providing opportunities for students to lead their own civics projects in 8th and 9-12th grades. State legislation also requires a grade 8 civics education course. Your feedback as a district representative is incredibly important because we want to know what works, or doesn't work for you, and how we can improve civics education from the perspective of district staff who support educators and schools.



To supplement our notes we'd like to auto transcribe the session with your permission. Please feel free to chat me privately if you do not agree to the auto transcription.

Does anyone have any questions before we begin? You can also send a private message through the zoom chat if you have any questions.

Ice Breaker: Please say your first name only and one word that describes how you're feeling today. We only have 2 minutes for introductions, so if you could please do this quickly then popcorn to someone else in the focus group, that would be great!

Focus group questions:

1. How do you feel about how civics education is going in your district?
2. What kinds of resources does your district use to help implement civics education?
 - DESE-provided resources
 - Commercially available resources
 - District developed or provided resources
 - Resources from other sources (e.g. DKP, Generation Citizen, Primary Source)
 - Developed by history/social studies teachers/coordinators
3. Which existing resources does your district use to support the implementation of the 2018 History & Social Science framework specifically?
 - DESE-provided resources
 - Commercially available resources
 - District developed or provided resources
 - Resources from other sources (e.g. DKP, Generation Citizen, Primary Source)
 - Developed by history/social studies teachers/coordinators
4. What barriers do you experience as you implement civics education courses? As a reminder, civics education is any learning that centers civic themes, civic-related content, and/or supports the development of students' civic identities.
 - What barriers do you observe at the district level?
 - At the school/classroom level?
5. What barriers do you experience as you implement student-led civics projects (8th & high school grades)?
 - What barriers do you observe at the district level?
 - At the school/classroom level?
6. How are you integrating civics projects into 8th and other high school grade levels?
 - What differs, if anything, between 8th grade and high school grades?
 - If high school, which specific grades?
 - What guidance do you provide to educators?
7. How do DESE-offered resources facilitate/hinder project implementation?
 - Which resources do you use most often and why?
 - Which resources are less useful and why?
8. What influenced your district's approaches to implementing student-led civics projects?
 - Legislative or DESE guidance?
 - District philosophy?
 - Local champion(s)?



9. What indicators tell you that students are experiencing a high-quality civics education learning experience?
 - What factors facilitate students' learning experiences?
 - What factors impede students' learning experiences?
 - How similar/different are student experiences for 8th graders vs high school students?

10. The 2018 legislation specifies that student-led projects are supposed to help students learn about state and national history and become informed and active citizens. How well do student-led projects meet the legislation's stated objectives?
 - To help them learn about state and national history
 - To help them become informed and active citizens
 - Other

11. Anything else you'd like to share that we didn't already talk about?

We greatly appreciate taking the time to talk today! We wish you a great rest of your school year and a wonderful summer! Take care.

Appendix 7b: District Focus Group Protocol (Fall 2024)

Introductions

My name is [NAME] and this is my colleague [NAME]. We work for a research company called MC² Education. We were hired by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education to learn from district staff, educators, and students what civics education looks like in their districts and schools, and what you think about your experiences with implementing civics education.

As you know, in 2018, two new state policies were enacted in Massachusetts. The first, the [2018 History and Social Science Framework](#), includes a new 8th Grade civics course as well as standards with ‘an increased focus on developing students’ civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions across grades.’ The second policy requires that students be provided with the opportunity to lead a non-partisan civic action project once while in 8th grade and once in high school.

The purpose of this focus group conversation is to hear about your experiences helping your district implement and support civics education (e.g., Any learning that centers civic themes, civic-related content, and/or supports the development of students’ civic identities.). We want to understand what works well, what is challenging, what resources you use, what resources you would like to have, your experience implementing the 2018 Framework and other related topics.

Your feedback is really important because it will help us improve civics education for educators and students across the state of Massachusetts.

Welcome/Approach

Discussing the specific experiences within your own district may sometimes be awkward, and we want you to feel comfortable sharing your perspective. If there is a question that comes up and you would prefer to share in a private chat with me or my colleague [NAME], you can send us a private note in the Zoom chat.

We have a few norms for the group that we want to make sure everyone understands. The focus group is informal, so you do not have to raise your hand to speak. However, we just ask that you please speak one at a time so that we can make sure that we hear what everyone has to say. Another very important norm for this group is everything that is shared in the group stays in the group. Please do not share anything that is talked about in this group after our conversation is over.

However, if you know of other districts similar to yours that have had similar experiences you can let us know. For example, you can say something like “a challenge for some other districts was” This helps to keep the pressure off sharing something about you specifically and keeps the focus on district perspectives specifically.

All of the information you share during the focus group will be kept confidential by the study team. This means that any report we write summarizing what we learn today will not include your name or anything that could directly identify you. Your participation is voluntary. You can decide not to answer a question or stop participating in the focus group at any time.

During the focus group we will take notes and, with your permission, we would also like to record the conversation to supplement our notes, recordings will be transcribed using otter.ai. Is it ok if we audio-record our conversation? Confirm

Does anyone have any questions before we begin? You can also send a private message through the zoom chat if you have any questions.

Ice Breaker: Please say your first name, role We only have 2 minutes for introductions, so if you could please do this quickly then popcorn to someone else in the focus group, that would be great!

Focus group questions:

We'll start off with talking about the integration of civics education in your districts and which resources you're using. We're going to start off on the high level and discuss the 2018 Framework:

1. Please share your familiarity with the 2018 History and Social Science Framework. As a district staff member, how are you supporting the implementation of the Framework?
 - a. Which curricula do you use for implementation? Are you or your teachers developing their own curricula, or are they utilizing existing resources?

Now, a specific question for those of you who received the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant.

2. How did your district use the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant funds? What would you say were your districts' priorities?

Now onto the civics projects and civics education more generally:

3. How are you integrating civics projects into 8th and other high school grade levels?
 - a. What differs, if anything, between 8th grade and high school grades?
 - i. If high school, which specific grades?
 - b. What guidance do you provide to educators?
4. What kinds of resources does your district use to help implement civics education and civic projects? How do these resources support you, your teachers and student learning?
 - If you need a list of resources below are examples:
 - o DESE-provided resources
 - o Commercially available resources
 - o District developed or provided resources
 - o Resources from other sources (e.g. DKP, Generation Citizen, Primary Source)
 - o Developed by history/social studies teachers/coordinators

If not shared yet,

5. Please describe your experience in particular with using DESE provided resources, including DESE provided professional development. Which resources and/or experiences have been most helpful and least helpful in the implementation of civics education in your district?
 - a. If you have challenges/issues with the DESE provided resources (including PD), please share more. (Access to, insufficient or quality of resources)

Now let's get into some of the barriers you face in your district.

-
6. What barriers do you face in your district as you implement civics education courses and the student-led civics projects? As a reminder, civics education is any learning that centers civic themes, civic-related content, and/or supports the development of students' civic identities.
 - a. What barriers do you observe at the district level?
 - b. At the school/classroom level?

 7. Do you see any variation across your district in civics education? This could be variation amongst certain groups of students such as English Language Learners, variation across different grades, or schools within your district. If so, please describe the variation and your thoughts as to why it exists.

 8. Please share an example or two when you've seen students having a meaningful civics education learning experience.
 - What makes it easier for students to learn about civics education?
 - What makes it harder for students to learn about civics education?
 - Are there specific groups of students who experience more or less challenges when learning about civics education?
 - How similar/different are student experiences for 8th graders vs high school students?

 9. Please share your plans for Civics Education in the future in your district.
 - If you used the Civics Teaching and Learning Grant, what do you think will change after the grant is over?

 10. Anything else you'd like to share that we didn't already talk about?

We greatly appreciate taking the time to talk today! We wish you a great rest of your school year! Take care.

Appendix 8: Student Focus Group Protocol (Spring 2025)

Introductions

My name is [NAME] and this is my colleague [NAME]. We work for a research company called MC² Education. We were hired by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education to learn from students and teachers what civics education looks like in your schools and what you think about your experiences, especially the civic action projects you participated in last year.

The purpose of this focus group conversation is to hear about your experiences in working on your civic action project last year. We want to understand what you liked, what made it easier, more interesting and/or exciting to do your project, and what, if anything, made it hard or challenging.

Your feedback is really important because it will help us improve the civic action project experience for other students in Massachusetts.

Welcome/Approach

We have a few norms for the group that we want to make sure everyone understands. The focus group is informal, so you do not have to raise your hand to speak. We just ask that you please speak one at a time so that we can make sure that we hear what everyone has to say. Another very important norm for this group is everything that is shared in the group stays in the group. Please do not share anything that is talked about in this group after our conversation is over.

You might have ideas or experiences that you want to share privately. We want you to feel comfortable sharing your experiences. If there is a question that comes up and you would prefer not to answer in front of others, you do not have to, please feel free to pull one of us aside after the focus group to share privately.

Alternatively, if you know other students like you that have had similar experiences you can say something like “a challenge for some students in our class was...” This helps to keep the pressure off sharing something about you specifically and keeps the focus on experiences of students in general.

All of the information you share during the focus group will be kept confidential by the study team. This means any report we write or presentation we give summarizing what we learn today will not include your name or anything that could directly identify you. Your participation is voluntary. You can decide not to answer a question or stop participating in the focus group at any time.

During the focus group we will take notes and, with your permission, we would also like to record the conversation to supplement our notes, recordings will be transcribed using otter.ai. Is it ok if we audio-record our conversation?

Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

Ice Breaker: Please say your first name only and one favorite food. We only have 2 minutes for introductions, so if you could please do this quickly so we'll go around the room so everyone has a chance.

Focus group questions:

Assuming all participating students have done a civics project...

1. Describe what your civics project was about, about how long you worked on it, and whether you worked on the project on your own, or in a group/whole class.

2. **Please describe how you chose a topic.**

- a. Did you have a topic you knew you wanted to focus on going into the experience? Was it chosen/selected? If not, how did that change (if at all) how you felt doing the project moving forward?

3. We're going to take about 5 minutes now for you to think and write about your experience working on your civics project.

- a. Everyone should be logged into a Padlet already. Please respond to the three questions listed. We'll all come back in 5 minutes, if anyone wants to volunteer to share more about what you wrote, please go ahead. Here are the prompts:
 - i. "What was the most interesting part of your civics project last year?"
 - ii. "What was something you learned or you were excited about?"
 - iii. "What were some of the challenges you faced during your civics project?"

4. What was most meaningful to you about the project?

- a. What did you learn throughout the process? Did anything surprise you?
- b. Have you continued working on anything related to your project?

I'm curious how you felt about the length of the project:

5. How did the amount of time for the project influence what you were able to accomplish?
6. What, if anything, have you done differently in your everyday life since working on your project?
7. What would you want the people who are trying to improve the student-led civics projects to know?
 - What advice would you give to other teachers who are trying to do student-led work like the civics projects in their class? What would you want them to know?
 - What advice would you give to students who are about to start their projects? What would you like them to know?

Appendix 9: Cross-Tabulation Data Tables

Categories for all Cross-tabulation Data Tables:

Tier 1 (<1000 Students) (%)	Tier 2 (1000-60 00 Students) (%)	Tier 3 (>6000 Students) (%)	0-33% Low Income Students (%)	33.1-66% Low Income Students (%)	66.1-100 % Low Income Students (%)	0-33% Students of Color (%)	33.1-66 % Students of Color (%)	66.1-100 % Students of Color (%)
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DISTRICT SURVEY

District Survey Q8: During the current school year, how often are students offered the following types of civics learning opportunities?										
	Tier 1 (%)	Tier 2 (%)	Tier 3 (%)	0 - 33% LIS (%)	33.1 - 66% LIS (%)	66.1 - 100% LIS (%)	0 - 33% SOC (%)	33.1 - 66% SOC (%)	66.1 - 100% SOC (%)	
Lessons that incorporate subject-specific civics content										
Several times a year + Frequently [Middle School]	100	96	90	97	94	100	95	96	100	
Several times a year + Frequently [High School]	94	95	100	91	97	100	93	96	100	
Discussions of controversial issues that incorporate multiple points of view										
Several times a year + Frequently [Middle School]	100	92	100	94	94	100	93	96	100	
Several times a year + Frequently [High School]	100	98	100	100	97	100	98	100	100	
Researching issues of concern to civic life in ways that involve examining and evaluating multiple sources										
Several times a year + Frequently [Middle School]	84	85	100	91	79	92	85	92	82	
Several times a year + Frequently [High School]	100	84	100	83	92	100	86	92	93	
Learning based on exploration of issues and themes through inquiry										
Several times a year + Frequently [Middle School]	100	87	100	91	88	100	87	96	94	
Several times a year + Frequently [High School]	94	82	82	80	83	100	84	84	86	
Conducting student-led civics projects										
Several times a year + Frequently [Middle School]	22	29	22	26	24	33	15	39	35	
Several times a year + Frequently [High School]	47	26	64	23	33	42	21	29	57	

Sharing work with authentic audiences (e.g., community members, policymakers)									
Several times a year + Frequently [Middle School]	29	20	22	24	13	42	11	32	35
Several times a year + Frequently [High School]	12	42	14	20	15	42	9	29	43

District Survey Q10: This school year, who is generally responsible for selecting how to implement student-led civics projects? *middle and high school									
	Tier 1 (%)	Tier 2 (%)	Tier 3 (%)	0 - 33% LIS (%)	33.1 - 66% LIS (%)	66.1 - 100% LIS (%)	0 - 33% SOC (%)	33.1 - 66% SOC (%)	66.1 - 100% SOC (%)
District leadership	7	5	8	0	5	25	2	4	21
District social studies/history team	15	23	25	24	19	19	19	22	26
School history/social studies department	37	43	50	41	44	38	44	41	37
Individual teachers	37	20	17	32	19	19	30	22	11
Varies within schools	0	8	0	2	9	0	4	7	5
Don't know	0	2	0	0	2	0	2	0	0
Not applicable	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	0

District Survey Q17: Which of the following, if any, represent barriers to your district's capacity to implement civics instruction aligned to the 2018 Massachusetts History and Social Science Framework and Civics Project Legislation and Guidebook?									
	Tier 1 (%)	Tier 2 (%)	Tier 3 (%)	0 - 33% LIS (%)	33.1 - 66% LIS (%)	66.1 - 100% LIS (%)	0 - 33% SOC (%)	33.1 - 66% SOC (%)	66.1 - 100% SOC (%)
Support from district administration									
Not a barrier	85	73	60	75	76	73	88	54	72
Occasional barrier	15	27	40	25	24	27	12	46	28
Persistent barrier	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Knowledge of 2018 MA HSS Framework									
Not a barrier	70	82	90	86	71	87	80	81	78
Occasional barrier	26	18	10	14	26	13	20	15	22
Persistent barrier	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	0
Support from parents and community members									
Not a barrier	67	61	80	57	64	87	56	62	94
Occasional barrier	30	37	20	38	36	13	42	35	6

Persistent barrier	4	2	0	5	0	0	2	4	0
Civics expertise									
Not a barrier	62	61	70	65	59	67	57	73	61
Occasional barrier	31	39	30	35	39	27	41	27	33
Persistent barrier	8	0	0	0	2	7	2	0	6
Confidence in my capacity to support teachers implementing civic education									
Not a barrier	65	71	60	78	63	60	73	65	56
Occasional barrier	23	29	40	22	29	40	22	27	44
Persistent barrier	12	0	0	0	7	0	4	4	0
Knowledge of Civics Project legislation									
Not a barrier	63	79	80	81	69	73	71	85	67
Occasional barrier	30	21	10	19	26	20	27	12	28
Persistent barrier	7	0	10	0	5	7	2	4	6
Knowledge of Civics Education Guidebook									
Not a barrier	59	76	70	78	68	60	69	84	56
Occasional barrier	33	24	20	22	27	33	29	12	39
Persistent barrier	7	0	10	0	5	7	2	4	6
Alignment with district priorities									
Not a barrier	59	75	90	78	64	80	68	84	72
Occasional barrier	37	21	10	16	33	20	26	20	28
Persistent barrier	4	4	0	5	2	0	6	0	0
Access to information									
Not a barrier	59	80	100	86	60	100	71	81	83
Occasional barrier	37	16	0	11	36	0	22	19	17
Persistent barrier	4	4	0	3	5	0	6	0	0
State-provided resources									
Not a barrier	56	63	64	57	60	73	54	73	61
Occasional barrier	30	32	27	32	31	27	34	27	28
Persistent barrier	15	5	9	11	10	0	12	0	11
District resources									
Not a barrier	52	33	36	33	36	60	40	35	39
Occasional barrier	37	53	55	46	55	40	42	58	56
Persistent barrier	11	14	9	21	10	0	17	8	6

Time for instruction									
Not a barrier	41	21	36	13	36	39	22	23	56
Occasional barrier	37	54	18	66	31	28	55	42	22
Persistent barrier	22	25	45	21	33	17	24	35	22
Time for planning									
Not a barrier	33	17	36	10	24	60	21	15	44
Occasional barrier	30	48	36	59	31	27	52	31	28
Persistent barrier	37	34	27	31	45	13	27	54	28

EDUCATOR SURVEY

Educator Survey Q4: This school year (including the rest of the year), how do you address the following topics in your classroom instruction? *middle and high school									
	Tier 1 (%)	Tier 2 (%)	Tier 3 (%)	0 - 33% LIS (%)	33.1 - 66% LIS (%)	66.1 - 100% LIS (%)	0 - 33% SOC (%)	33.1 - 66% SOC (%)	66.1 - 100% SOC (%)
Respect and tolerance for people of diverse backgrounds									
Not part of what I teach	0	2	6	3	0	6	2	0	10
Address in 2-3 lessons	10	9	0	6	13	0	11	4	0
Address within a unit over multiple days/weeks	20	11	12	6	19	12	7	25	0
Address as an entire unit	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	4	0
Address by integrating across the semester	70	76	82	85	66	82	80	68	90
Major themes in Massachusetts history, including Indigenous peoples									
Not part of what I teach	10	20	18	27	9	18	23	14	10
Address in 2-3 lessons	30	24	41	15	31	47	20	32	50
Address within a unit over multiple days/weeks	40	29	24	24	38	24	23	43	20
Address as an entire unit	10	5	0	6	6	0	9	0	0
Address by integrating across the semester	10	22	18	27	16	12	25	11	20
Major themes in the history of the United States									
Not part of what I teach	0	11	6	15	3	6	13	5	0
Address in 2-3 lessons	0	8	6	3	10	6	5	12	0
Address within a unit over multiple days/weeks	10	13	18	15	10	18	9	20	10
Address as an entire unit	30	2	0	0	13	0	11	3	0

Address by integrating across the semester	60	66	71	67	63	71	62	59	90
Citizenship in a democracy									
Not part of what I teach	0	4	0	3	3	0	5	0	0
Address in 2-3 lessons	0	7	0	6	6	0	7	4	0
Address within a unit over multiple days/weeks	30	11	6	6	19	12	7	18	20
Address as an entire unit	20	13	24	3	26	24	16	11	30
Address by integrating across the semester	50	65	71	82	45	65	65	68	50
Citizens' rights and responsibilities, including those of youth									
Not part of what I teach	0	4	0	3	3	0	5	0	0
Address in 2-3 lessons	0	7	0	9	3	0	9	0	0
Address within a unit over multiple days/weeks	30	17	0	9	26	6	7	29	10
Address as an entire unit	10	24	12	12	32	12	21	21	10
Address by integrating across the semester	60	48	88	67	35	82	58	50	80
Understanding how students and other individuals can participate in local government									
Not part of what I teach	10	7	0	9	6	0	12	0	0
Address in 2-3 lessons	10	13	18	9	13	24	7	14	40
Address within a unit over multiple days/weeks	20	19	0	6	32	0	16	18	0
Address as an entire unit	10	33	29	39	19	29	26	36	30
Address by integrating across the semester	50	28	53	36	29	47	40	32	30
Structures of national government at local, state, and federal levels									
Not part of what I teach	0	9	0	9	6	0	12	0	0
Address in 2-3 lessons	0	6	6	3	6	6	2	11	0
Address within a unit over multiple days/weeks	20	17	6	6	26	12	10	21	20
Address as an entire unit	30	36	53	44	26	53	33	39	60
Address by integrating across the semester	50	32	35	38	35	29	43	29	20
The powers and limitations of federal, state, and local governments									
Not part of what I teach	0	9	0	12	3	0	9	4	0
Address in 2-3 lessons	0	6	13	3	5	13	2	11	11

Address within a unit over multiple days/weeks	10	15	6	9	15	6	9	19	11
Address as an entire unit	40	38	56	33	30	63	35	41	78
Address by integrating across the semester	50	32	25	42	48	19	44	26	0
Ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic									
Not part of what I teach	0	2	0	3	0	0	2	0	0
Address in 2-3 lessons	0	9	0	6	10	0	7	7	0
Address within a unit over multiple days/weeks	20	11	12	6	20	12	9	19	10
Address as an entire unit	20	28	18	18	33	24	30	15	30
Address by integrating across the semester	60	49	71	67	37	65	51	59	60
The relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs									
Not part of what I teach	10	13	25	15	6	31	12	11	40
Address in 2-3 lessons	20	22	6	15	29	6	19	26	0
Address within a unit over multiple days/weeks	0	11	13	6	13	13	5	19	10
Address as an entire unit	10	11	25	15	6	25	12	19	10
Address by integrating across the semester	60	43	31	48	45	25	53	26	40
How and why the Constitution has evolved over time									
Not part of what I teach	0	13	6	9	13	6	10	14	0
Address in 2-3 lessons	0	4	18	6	0	18	5	7	10
Address within a unit over multiple days/weeks	10	13	12	3	19	18	7	18	20
Address as an entire unit	20	25	29	28	19	29	21	29	30
Address by integrating across the semester	70	45	35	53	48	29	57	32	40
How everyday people affect policy (including voting, lobbying, running for/holding public office, etc.)									
Not part of what I teach	0	7	0	9	3	0	9	0	0
Address in 2-3 lessons	10	6	12	6	3	18	7	4	20
Address within a unit over multiple days/weeks	30	24	12	12	39	12	16	32	20
Address as an entire unit	0	20	18	21	13	18	19	14	20
Address by integrating across the semester	60	43	59	52	42	53	49	50	40

Educator Survey Q10: This school year (including the rest of the year), how frequently do students in your classes do the following? Please select one per row. *middle and high school									
	Tier 1 (%)	Tier 2 (%)	Tier 3 (%)	0 - 33% LIS (%)	33.1 - 66% LIS (%)	66.1 - 100% LIS (%)	0 - 33% SOC (%)	33.1 - 66% SOC (%)	66.1 - 100% SOC (%)
Take civic action together.									
Not at all	10	17	12	12	16	18	12	14	30
Occasionally (1-3 times)	40	65	88	67	58	82	63	71	70
Once/month	30	6	0	9	10	0	9	7	0
Once/week	10	6	0	3	10	0	7	4	0
More than once per week	10	7	0	9	6	0	9	4	0
Present solutions to authentic audiences (e.g., community members, policymakers).									
Not at all	20	17	12	16	19	12	21	7	20
Occasionally (1-3 times)	20	57	76	53	48	76	42	74	70
Once/month	30	17	6	19	19	6	21	15	0
Once/week	20	6	0	6	10	0	9	4	0
More than once per week	10	4	6	6	3	6	7	0	10
Write about issues affecting people in the local community.									
Not at all	0	9	0	6	10	6	10	4	10
Occasionally (1-3 times)	50	51	75	50	52	71	48	61	70
Once/month	30	30	19	38	23	18	31	29	10
Once/week	20	9	0	6	16	0	12	7	0
More than once per week	0	0	6	0	0	6	0	0	10
Debate issues affecting people in the local community.									
Not at all	10	7	24	6	12	24	9	4	40
Occasionally (1-3 times)	40	54	47	48	64	53	49	57	40
Once/month	20	26	18	33	24	12	28	21	10
Once/week	30	11	6	12	20	6	12	18	0
More than once per week	0	2	6	0	4	6	2	0	10
Research issues affecting people in the local community and identify root causes and possible solutions.									
Not at all	0	9	0	9	6	0	9	4	0
Occasionally (1-3 times)	44	52	71	52	52	69	49	61	67
Once/month	0	26	18	27	16	19	23	21	11
Once/week	44	9	6	6	23	6	14	11	11

More than once per week	11	4	6	6	3	6	5	4	11
Explore and analyze systems-level causes of social problems.									
Not at all	10	8	0	6	10	0	7	7	0
Occasionally (1-3 times)	20	49	71	52	40	65	42	59	60
Once/month	50	23	6	21	30	12	26	22	10
Once/week	20	11	12	12	13	12	14	11	10
More than once per week	0	9	12	9	7	12	12	0	20
Analyze public policy (at any level, including school rules) with a goal of proposing changes.									
Not at all	0	9	0	3	13	0	5	11	0
Occasionally (1-3 times)	30	43	65	42	39	65	40	50	60
Once/month	40	24	18	30	23	18	33	14	20
Once/week	10	13	18	12	13	18	7	21	20
More than once per week	20	11	0	12	13	0	16	4	0
Write about issues related to elections, politics, public policy, and/or social issues.									
Not at all	10	7	6	6	6	12	9	0	20
Occasionally (1-3 times)	0	36	47	30	31	47	25	50	30
Once/month	50	33	24	33	41	18	34	39	10
Once/week	40	15	18	15	22	18	20	11	30
More than once per week	0	9	6	15	0	6	11	0	10
Debate issues related to elections, politics, public policy, and/or social issues.									
Not at all	10	6	18	6	3	24	7	0	40
Occasionally (1-3 times)	30	34	24	22	45	24	26	46	10
Once/month	20	30	29	34	23	29	31	32	10
Once/week	40	19	24	22	26	18	26	14	30
More than once per week	60	2	0	16	3	6	10	7	10
Research issues related to elections, politics, public policy, and/or social issues.									
Not at all	0	6	6	6	3	6	7	0	10
Occasionally (1-3 times)	20	31	41	21	35	47	20	44	50
Once/month	40	30	12	33	29	12	32	30	0
Once/week	40	26	18	30	29	12	32	19	20
More than once per week	0	7	24	9	3	24	9	7	20
Lead discussions about topics related to civics, government, and/or history.									
Not at all	0	4	12	3	3	12	5	0	20

Occasionally (1-3 times)	40	27	18	30	28	18	27	29	20
Once/month	20	18	18	15	22	18	23	18	0
Once/week	20	22	18	21	25	12	20	25	10
More than once per week	20	29	35	30	22	41	25	29	50
Investigate root causes and solutions to social problems.									
Not at all	0	4	0	3	3	0	5	0	0
Occasionally (1-3 times)	22	27	35	24	29	35	26	32	30
Once/month	33	35	18	30	35	24	28	36	30
Once/week	22	24	18	24	26	12	23	21	20
More than once per week	22	11	29	18	6	29	19	11	20

Educator Survey Q13: How long in scope are the student-led civics projects assigned this year (whether completed or planned)? *middle and high school									
	Tier 1 (%)	Tier 2 (%)	Tier 3 (%)	0 - 33% LIS (%)	33.1 - 66% LIS (%)	66.1 - 100% LIS (%)	0 - 33% SOC (%)	33.1 - 66% SOC (%)	66.1 - 100% SOC (%)
A week or less	0	0	7	0	0	7	0	0	13
2 or 3 weeks	42	38	7	28	45	14	30	43	13
A month or more	33	48	79	52	41	71	49	52	63
The entire semester	25	10	7	16	10	7	16	4	13

Educator Survey Q14: This school year (including the rest of the year), how do students work on their civics projects? *middle and high school									
	Tier 1 (%)	Tier 2 (%)	Tier 3 (%)	0 - 33% LIS (%)	33.1 - 66% LIS (%)	66.1 - 100% LIS (%)	0 - 33% SOC (%)	33.1 - 66% SOC (%)	66.1 - 100% SOC (%)
Students as individuals	17	20	7	20	21	7	22	22	0
Students in groups I assign	8	3	21	0	4	29	0	6	50
Students in groups they select	50	35	29	36	43	21	33	56	25
Whole-class	0	23	21	20	14	21	19	22	13
A mix of the above	25	20	14	24	18	14	25	22	0
All of the above	0	0	7	0	0	7	0	0	13

Educator Survey Q18: Please select the options that best describe the focus of topics that student-led projects have examined/will examine this year? Select all that apply.									
	Tier 1 (%)	Tier 2 (%)	Tier 3 (%)	0 - 33%	33.1 - 66%	66.1 - 100%	0 - 33%	33.1 - 66%	66.1 - 100%



				LIS (%)	LIS (%)	LIS (%)	SOC (%)	SOC (%)	SOC (%)
Health	17	11	28	15	20	30	15	24	29
Environment/climate	17	18	13	17	19	14	19	17	10
Education	17	16	13	17	16	14	16	17	14
Civic participation	12	15	5	17	12	5	17	10	0
Equity	9	14	10	17	8	11	13	11	10
Housing	16	10	10	9	14	11	11	12	14
Justice	12	16	21	9	11	16	9	11	24

