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## Civic Outreach Programs: Common Models, Shared Challenges, and Strategic Recommendations

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## Civic Outreach Programs: Common Models, Shared Challenges, and Strategic Recommendations

# CIVIC OUTREACH PROGRAMS: COMMON MODELS, SHARED CHALLENGES, AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

LAURA MCNABB<sup>†</sup>

## ABSTRACT

Civic engagement is the cornerstone of our democracy, yet Americans consistently demonstrate pervasive civic deficits. Such deficits are particularly concerning in light of a growing body of evidence documenting the many benefits that civic education bestows on individual citizens and society at large. Despite these benefits, our national commitment to civic learning within the education system has continued to decline over the past fifty years, pushing civic education to the periphery of an increasingly narrow curriculum.

In response to these three trends—an ongoing civic deficit, declining national support for civic education, and increasing awareness of the benefits of civic literacy—there has been a proliferation of civic outreach programs aimed at increasing civic literacy among American citizens. Because these programs are numerous and diverse, this Essay proposes two models for categorizing civic outreach programs based on what services they offer and to whom these services are provided. Although a wide array of civic outreach programs is desirable, this Essay argues that programs that provide services to actors in K–12 educational institutions are best equipped to offset the current civic deficit. However, such programs face two shared challenges that threaten their ability to effectuate meaningful improvements in civic literacy: (1) identifying and measuring outcomes, and (2) ensuring program sustainability. After exploring the causes of these shared challenges, this Essay offers strategic recommendations.

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## INTRODUCTION

An active, engaged, educated citizenry is essential to the proper functioning of our democracy. Despite the fundamental importance of civically literate citizens to our system of government, Americans consistently demonstrate a concerning civic deficit. Recognizing the dangers posed by this civic deficit, this Essay examines the multitude of civic

outreach programs that have emerged across the country. For purposes of this Essay, “civic outreach programs” are broadly defined as programs providing services that are intended to enhance the civic literacy of a specific population of people. The term “civic literacy” is meant to be an umbrella term, encompassing the types of civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are required for meaningful participation as a citizen. Civic literacy should be understood to subsume other commonly used terms such as “civic health,”<sup>1</sup> “constitutional literacy,”<sup>2</sup> “citizenship education,”<sup>3</sup> “civic learning and engagement,”<sup>4</sup> and “civic education.”<sup>5</sup> This Essay embraces definitions that are intentionally inclusive in order to ensure that the proposed framework for categorizing and describing civic outreach programs is sufficiently broad to apply to the wide range of existing programs.<sup>6</sup> By increasing the academy’s understanding of the common types of civic outreach programs, the shared challenges civic outreach programs face, and the possible solutions to such problems, this Essay will enhance the academy’s ability to develop and support effective civic outreach programs.

Part I of this Essay documents the extent of the civic deficit among various populations of Americans and explores the benefits that civic education confers on individual citizens and on society at large. Although the crisis in civic literacy is well documented and the benefits flowing from civic education are numerous, there has been a continuous decline in America’s overall commitment to civic education over the past fifty years. This Essay argues that these three trends—America’s ongoing civic deficit, declining commitment to civic education in our school system, and increasing awareness of the benefits of civic education—have resulted in the proliferation of geographically and substantively diverse civic outreach programs. Part II of this Essay proposes a framework for categorizing civic outreach programs based on the type of services they offer and to whom these services are provided. Two basic models of civic outreach programs are identified and described: Model 1 refers to programs that direct services to actors in educational institutions, and Model 2 refers to programs that direct services to the general

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1. See NAT’L CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP, CIVIC HEALTH AND UNEMPLOYMENT: CAN ENGAGEMENT STRENGTHEN THE ECONOMY? 3 (2011).

2. See *The Marshall-Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project*, AM. U. WASH. C.L., <http://www.wcl.american.edu/marshallbrennan> (last visited Apr. 12, 2013).

3. EDUC. COMM’N OF THE STATES, *THE PROGRESS OF EDUCATION REFORM: CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION* 1 (2010).

4. NAT’L TASK FORCE ON CIVIC LEARNING & DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT, *A CRUCIBLE MOMENT: COLLEGE LEARNING AND DEMOCRACY’S FUTURE* 58 (2012) [hereinafter NAT’L TASK FORCE].

5. David E. Campbell, *The Civic Side of School Choice: An Empirical Analysis of Civic Education in Public and Private Schools*, 2008 BYU L. REV. 487, 489 (2008).

6. Although extensive research was conducted to develop a framework for categorizing civic outreach programs, due to the huge number of programs and the extensive time required to determine if any one program was still active, this Essay does not purport to offer an exhaustive review of all civic outreach programs nationwide.

public. Part III focuses on programs in Model 1 that provide services in the K–12 context and identifies two challenges shared by these programs: (1) identifying and measuring program outcomes, and (2) ensuring long-term program sustainability. After evaluating the underlying causes of these shared challenges, this Essay provides strategic recommendations. It urges leaders of civic outreach programs to critically evaluate their programs' responsiveness to such challenges and to develop realistic, research-based plans for improvement. If civic outreach programs are to be successful in promoting civic literacy among America's diverse citizens, program leaders must be willing to undertake the same type of critical self-analysis that is required of an active, engaged citizenry.

### I. THREE TRENDS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROLIFERATION OF CIVIC OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Today, there is a plethora of civic outreach programs across the country. Although these programs vary in many important respects, they all work towards a common goal of increasing America's civic literacy. Over the last half-century or so, three trends have contributed to the proliferation of civic outreach programs nationwide. First, deficits in civic literacy have proven significant and pervasive. Second, commitment to civic education within the American school system continues to decline. Third, awareness of the benefits that flow from civic literacy to individual citizens and to society at large continues to increase.

#### *A. Trend 1: Deficits in America's Civic Literacy Are Significant and Pervasive*

The American civic deficit is well documented. Although there is abundant evidence that a general civic deficit exists across groups, young people demonstrate a more significant civic deficit than do adults. Among young people, those who are financially impoverished and non-white demonstrate the largest civic deficit.

##### 1. Evidence of a General Civic Deficit Among America's Citizenry

There is ample evidence of ongoing, systemic deficits in America's civic literacy. In the fall of 2005, the Intercollegiate Studies Institute's (ISI) National Civic Literacy Board tested more than 14,000 freshmen and seniors from fifty colleges and universities across the country to gauge their basic civic knowledge.<sup>7</sup> Of the sixty multiple-choice questions (which included simple questions about history, government, international relations, and economics that were developed by a team of spe-

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7. *Failing Our Students, Failing America: Holding Colleges Accountable for Teaching America's History and Institutions; Summary*, INTERCOLLEGIATE STUD. INST., [http://www.americancivilliteracy.org/2007/summary\\_summary.html](http://www.americancivilliteracy.org/2007/summary_summary.html) (last visited Apr. 12, 2013) [hereinafter *Failing Our Students*].

cialists in each applicable field<sup>8</sup>), the average senior provided fewer than thirty-three correct answers, earning a score of 54.2%.<sup>9</sup> Freshmen fared slightly worse with an average score of 51.4%.<sup>10</sup> These dismal results corroborated the findings of an earlier ISI study of 14,000 college freshmen and seniors conducted in the fall of 2005 in which the average score for college seniors on the same multiple-choice test was 53.2%, and the average score for freshmen was 51.7%.<sup>11</sup>

Eager to understand how college students' knowledge of American history and institutions compared to members of the general public, the ISI conducted a third study in the spring of 2008 using a random sample of 2,508 adults of all backgrounds.<sup>12</sup> This thirty-three-question test, designed to measure the civic knowledge that the ISI deemed necessary for informed and responsible citizenship, contained fifteen questions that were taken directly from the U.S. Department of Education's twelfth-grade test (the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP) and the U.S. Naturalization Test.<sup>13</sup> Over 70% of participants provided fewer than seventeen correct answers, earning a score of 49%.<sup>14</sup> Among the most alarming deficits in knowledge were findings that fewer than 50% of participants could name all three branches of government; nearly 50% of participants did not know that Congress has plenary power to declare war or that Congress shares authority over U.S. foreign policy with the President; and 73% of participants did not know that the Bill of Rights expressly prohibits establishing an official national religion.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, those who attended college did not significantly outperform those who did not attend college; the average score among participants who had earned a bachelor's degree was 57%—just eight points higher than the overall average and still a failing score.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps most

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8. *Failing Our Students, Failing America: Holding Colleges Accountable for Teaching America's History and Institutions; Survey Methods*, INTERCOLLEGIATE STUD. INST., [http://www.americancivilliteracy.org/2007/survey\\_methods.html](http://www.americancivilliteracy.org/2007/survey_methods.html) (last visited Apr. 12, 2013).

9. *Failing Our Students*, *supra* note 7.

10. *Our Fading Heritage: Americans Fail a Basic Test on Their History and Institutions; Summary*, INTERCOLLEGIATE STUD. INST., [http://www.americancivilliteracy.org/2008/summary\\_summary.html](http://www.americancivilliteracy.org/2008/summary_summary.html) (last visited Apr. 12, 2013).

11. *Id.*

12. *Id.*

13. *Our Fading Heritage: Americans Fail a Basic Test on Their History and Institutions; Major Findings, Major Finding 1*, INTERCOLLEGIATE STUD. INST., [http://www.americancivilliteracy.org/2008/major\\_findings\\_finding1.html](http://www.americancivilliteracy.org/2008/major_findings_finding1.html) (last visited Apr. 12, 2013) [hereinafter *Our Fading Heritage*].

14. *Id.*

15. *Id.*

16. *Our Fading Heritage: Americans Fail a Basic Test on Their History and Institutions; Major Findings, Major Finding 3*, INTERCOLLEGIATE STUD. INST., [http://www.americancivilliteracy.org/2008/major\\_findings\\_finding3.html](http://www.americancivilliteracy.org/2008/major_findings_finding3.html) (last visited Apr. 12, 2013).

distressing, this study found that elected officials performed *even worse* than did the general public, earning an average score of 44%.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. Young People Demonstrate Larger Civic Deficits Than Do Adults

Civic illiteracy is prevalent across all age groups, but America's young people are consistently the least knowledgeable.<sup>18</sup> For example, a web-based survey conducted in 2003 as part of the Representative Democracy in America Project found that young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-six were less likely than were older people to possess basic civic knowledge.<sup>19</sup> Among older participants, 72% correctly identified the party of their state's governor, and 61% knew which party controlled the U.S. Congress. In contrast, less than 50% of younger participants knew the party of their state's governor, and even fewer were able to say which party controls Congress.<sup>20</sup> Young participants not only lacked civic knowledge but also were less likely than were earlier generations to exhibit many of the most important characteristics of citizenship.<sup>21</sup> Compared to older participants, the younger participants were less likely to consider paying attention to government and politics, communicating with elected officials, volunteering, donating money to help others, and voting as qualities of a good citizen.<sup>22</sup>

More recent studies of civic knowledge similarly document civic deficits among young Americans. For example, the 2010 NAEP civics assessment revealed that students in the eighth and twelfth grades are not making progress in civics.<sup>23</sup> The test, which is designed to measure "the civics knowledge and skills that are critical to the responsibilities of citizenship in America's constitutional democracy," was given to nationally representative samples of fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders at public and private schools.<sup>24</sup> Although fourth graders did make statistically sig-

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17. *Our Fading Heritage: Americans Fail a Basic Test on Their History and Institutions; Additional Finding*, INTERCOLLEGIATE STUD. INST., [http://www.americancivilliteracy.org/2008/additional\\_finding.html](http://www.americancivilliteracy.org/2008/additional_finding.html) (last visited Apr. 12, 2013).

18. Robert L. Dudley & Alan R. Gitelson, *Political Literacy, Civic Education, and Civic Engagement: A Return to Political Socialization?*, 6 APPLIED DEVELOPMENTAL SCI. 175, 176 (2002) ("One consistent theme emerging from studies of citizens' knowledge is that young people are the least knowledgeable.")

19. KARL T. KURTZ ET AL., NAT'L CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES, *CITIZENSHIP: A CHALLENGE FOR ALL GENERATIONS* 1, 5-6 (2003).

20. *Id.* at 7.

21. *Id.* at 1 (explaining that many young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four do not understand the principles of citizenship, are disengaged from the political process, lack the knowledge necessary for effective government, and have limited appreciation of American democracy); see also Constance Flanagan & Peter Levine, *Civic Engagement and the Transition to Adulthood*, FUTURE CHILDREN, Spring 2010, at 159, 159 (noting that today's young adults are less likely than are earlier generations to exhibit many important characteristics of citizenship).

22. KURTZ ET AL., *supra* note 19, at 3.

23. U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *CIVICS 2010: NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS AT GRADES 4, 8, AND 12*, at 1 (2011).

24. *Id.* at 1, 5.



nificant progress in civics, neither eighth nor twelfth graders' performance had improved since the previous civics assessment in 2006.<sup>25</sup> For eighth graders, this meant that only 22% of test takers were performing at or above proficient—a rate that has remained stable since the 1998 assessment.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, performance for twelfth graders has remained relatively constant since the 1998 assessment, with only 24% of test takers performing at or above proficient.<sup>27</sup>

Studies of college students further demonstrate the magnitude of the civic literacy crisis among young Americans. A study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education and conducted by the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement found that “the longer . . . students stay in college, the wider the gap becomes between their endorsement of social responsibility as a goal of college and their assessment of whether the institution provides opportunities for growth in this area.”<sup>28</sup> The Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts similarly found that post-secondary education does not increase civic literacy.<sup>29</sup> According to the study, during four years of college more than 50% of students either decline or show no growth in how they value diversity and political or social involvement.<sup>30</sup>

### 3. Low-Income, Non-white Young People Demonstrate the Largest Civic Deficits

Although young Americans demonstrate civic deficits across the board, non-white and financially impoverished young people fare the worst. Frequently cited as an authority on civic education, Meira Levinson<sup>31</sup> has shown that young people (and adults) who are poor, non-white, or of an immigrant population have considerably lower levels of civic and political knowledge, skills, and participation than do their wealthier, white, or native-born counterparts.<sup>32</sup> Such disparities between young people “appear as early as fourth grade and remain consistent through middle and high school.”<sup>33</sup> Professor Levinson also found that adult civic engagement and sense of civic efficacy increases as personal income increases.<sup>34</sup>

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25. *Id.* at 1–2.

26. *Id.* at 21.

27. *Id.* at 35.

28. NAT'L TASK FORCE, *supra* note 4, at 5.

29. U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *ADVANCING CIVIC LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT IN DEMOCRACY: A ROAD MAP AND CALL TO ACTION* 13 (2012).

30. *Id.*

31. Meira Levinson is an associate professor of education at Harvard Graduate School of Education.

32. Meira Levinson, *The Civic Achievement Gap* 5–6 (Ctr. for Info. & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, Working Paper No. 51, 2007).

33. MEIRA LEVINSON, *NO CITIZEN LEFT BEHIND* 32 (2012).

34. Levinson, *supra* note 32, at 5–7; see also Joseph Kahne & Ellen Middaugh, *Democracy for Some: The Civic Opportunity Gap in High School* 3 (Ctr. for Info. & Research on Civic Learning

Importantly, scores on the 2010 NAEP civics assessment evidence a similar relationship between income and civic literacy for young Americans. Among fourth graders, those not eligible for reduced-price or free lunch scored seventeen points higher than did those eligible for reduced-price lunch and twenty-eight points higher than did those eligible for free lunch.<sup>35</sup> This trend was strikingly similar among eighth-grade students, as those not eligible for reduced-price or free lunch scored fifteen points higher than did those eligible for reduced-price lunch and thirty points higher than did those eligible for free lunch.<sup>36</sup> These scores corroborate Levinson's conclusion that "poverty is the clearest predictor of lack of [civic] participation."<sup>37</sup> A 2011 report produced by the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools affirms Levinson's findings, explaining that "[r]ecent research shows that low income, African-American, Hispanic, and rural students score lower on tests of civic knowledge and have less optimistic views of their civic potential than [do] their more privileged counterparts."<sup>38</sup>

In addition to these well-documented differences in civic literacy among young people who are poor or minorities, there is evidence that students from these marginalized groups are least likely to have opportunities to engage in civic learning.<sup>39</sup> A series of three studies of high school civics opportunities conducted from 2005 to 2007 revealed that "a student's race and academic track, and a school's average socioeconomic status (SES) determine[] the availability of school-based civic learning opportunities that promote voting and broader forms of civic engagement."<sup>40</sup> These findings led the authors of the study to conclude that schools exacerbate the civic achievement gap by perpetuating a civic opportunity gap.<sup>41</sup>

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& Engagement, Working Paper No. 59, 2008) (citing a study by Larry Bartels that found that policy preferences of the wealthiest third of constituents received 50% more weight than did the preferences of those in the middle third, and that the poorest third of constituents received no weight at all); *Our Fading Heritage*, *supra* note 13 (suggesting that income predicts civic efficacy and civic knowledge because Americans who earned an annual income between \$30,000 and \$50,000 scored an average of 46% on the 2008 ISI test, whereas Americans who earned over \$100,000 scored an average of 55%).

35. U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *supra* note 23, at 11.

36. *Id.* at 24.

37. *Closing the Civic Achievement Gap: An Interview with Harvard Researcher Meira Levinson*, LEARNING FIRST ALLIANCE, <http://www.learningfirst.org/node/2098> (last visited Apr. 12, 2013) [hereinafter *Closing the Achievement Gap*] (alteration in original).

38. CAMPAIGN FOR THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCH., *GUARDIAN OF DEMOCRACY: THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCHOOLS* 13 (2011).

39. Kahne & Middaugh, *supra* note 34, at 10.

40. *Id.* at 3. The conclusions reached in this paper were backed by data from three distinct studies. Although two of the studies relied on data from California high schools, the third study utilized a data set from a nationally representative sample of ninth graders.

41. *Id.* at 5.

*B. Trend 2: National Commitment to Civic Education Is Declining*

Despite the mountain of evidence that young Americans—particularly those who are poor or minorities—are lacking by way of civic literacy, financial commitment to civic education within our school system has continued to decline since the 1960s.<sup>42</sup> As the McCormick Foundation noted in its 2007 report, *Civic Disengagement in Our Democracy*, the quality and quantity of civic education has declined to the point where “[y]oung Americans are simply not getting civic socialization in the home, schools, curriculum or extracurricular activities.”<sup>43</sup> In 2008, then-Senator Barack Obama observed that “[t]he loss of quality civic education from so many of our classrooms has left too many young Americans without the most basic knowledge of who our forefathers are, or what they did, or the significance of the founding documents that bear their names.”<sup>44</sup> The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement has similarly observed “the erosion of the national investment in civic learning and democratic engagement.”<sup>45</sup>

Among the reasons for the ongoing decline in civic education is the competitiveness movement, which has resulted in the proliferation of high-stakes testing and shifted the national focus to core (i.e., tested) subjects like math and science.<sup>46</sup> As a consequence of this narrowed curriculum, civics education has been pushed to the periphery and treated as a second-tier subject.<sup>47</sup> In 2010, former U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O’Connor lamented that half of the states no longer require civics education for high school graduation, describing it as “a remarkable withdrawal from” the purpose of public education.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, in her most recent book, *No Citizen Left Behind*, Meira Levinson ob-

42. Eric Lane, *Are We Still Americans?*, 36 HOFSTRA L. REV. 13, 15 (2007) (“[F]rom the 1960s onward civic education has been declining and by the 1980s [it] had nearly vanished.”); see also Sandra Day O’Connor, *The Democratic Purpose of Education: From the Founders to Horace Mann to Today*, in TEACHING AMERICA: THE CASE FOR CIVIC EDUCATION 3, 6 (David Feith ed., 2011) [hereinafter TEACHING AMERICA] (noting that the decline in civic education has occurred despite the fact that forty state constitutions explicitly mention the importance of students’ civic literacy and thirteen state constitutions acknowledge civic education as the primary purpose of schools).

43. MCCORMICK FOUND., CIVIC DISENGAGEMENT IN OUR DEMOCRACY 7 (2008).

44. Transcript of Barack Obama’s Speech in Independence, Mo., N.Y. TIMES (June, 30 2008), [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/30/us/politics/30text-obama.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/30/us/politics/30text-obama.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

45. NAT’L TASK FORCE, *supra* note 4, at 29.

46. CAMPAIGN FOR THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCH., *supra* note 38, at 14; see also O’Connor, *supra* note 42 (noting that education initiatives that assess schools mainly by students’ performance in math and science have unintentionally contributed to the decline in civic education by pressuring teachers to focus too heavily on testable subjects).

47. CAMPAIGN FOR THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCH., *supra* note 38, at 14; Kahne & Middaugh, *supra* note 34, at 21 (noting that as a result of high-stakes testing and narrowing of the curriculum, social studies is most frequently cited as the place where reductions occur); see also LEVINSON, *supra* note 33, at 258 (noting that there is little evidence that high-stakes testing improves instructional practices); Joel Westheimer & Joseph Kahne, *What Kind of Citizen?: The Politics of Educating for Democracy*, 41 AM. EDUC. RES. J. 237, 263 (2004) (noting that “the current narrow emphasis on test scores crowd[s] out” opportunities for civic learning).

48. NAT’L TASK FORCE, *supra* note 4, at 6 (internal quotation mark omitted).

served an ongoing “decline in the number, range, and frequency of civics courses offered” in America’s public schools.<sup>49</sup> A U.S. Department of Education report from January 2012 affirmed the status of civic learning and democratic engagement as “add-ons,” which are frequently pushed to the side by schools that “mistakenly treat[] education for citizenship as a distraction from preparing students for . . . other core subjects.”<sup>50</sup>

### *C. Trend 3: Awareness of the Benefits of Civic Literacy Is Increasing*

Although our national commitment to civic literacy continues to decline, a growing body of evidence demonstrates the many benefits that flow from civic education to individual citizens and to society at large.<sup>51</sup> For individual citizens, civic education increases civic participation, improves academic performance, and teaches important job skills. In addition to the benefits enjoyed by individual citizens, civic education benefits society at large because it is correlated with economic resilience and governmental stability.<sup>52</sup>

#### 1. Civic Literacy Confers Benefits on Individual Citizens

Research conducted by the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools shows that students who receive effective civic education are more likely to vote, discuss politics at home, volunteer to work on community issues, and be confident in their ability to speak publicly.<sup>53</sup> A study of Chicago high school students found that civic learning had a sizeable impact on students’ commitment to civic participation and desire to vote even after controlling for variables such as prior civic commitments, demographic factors, academic factors, the degree to which students spoke with their parents about politics, and the students’ level of social capital (i.e., the number of beneficial social connections the students possessed within their social networks).<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, healthy levels of civic engagement potentially provide personal and psychological benefits to youth by fulfilling “the human need to belong and to feel that life has a purpose beyond the pursuit of individual gain.”<sup>55</sup>

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49. LEVINSON, *supra* note 33, at 52.

50. U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC., *supra* note 29, at 1.

51. Flanagan & Levine, *supra* note 21, at 173 (“Civic engagement of young adults is important both for the functioning of a democratic society and for individual development.”); NAT’L TASK FORCE, *supra* note 4, at 25 (explaining that in addition to improving the civic deficit, civic education replenishes our country’s civic capital—a “self-renewing resource for strengthening [our] democracy”).

52. *See generally* CAMPAIGN FOR THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCH., *supra* note 38; Flanagan & Levine, *supra* note 21, at 160; LEVINSON, *supra* note 33, at 48; MCCORMICK FOUND., *supra* note 43; NAT’L CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP, *supra* note 1.

53. CAMPAIGN FOR THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCH., *supra* note 38, at 6.

54. Kahne & Middaugh, *supra* note 34, at 10.

55. Flanagan & Levine, *supra* note 21, at 160.

Importantly, many studies have noted that effective civic education provides youths with career skills that are highly valued by employers.<sup>56</sup> According to the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), civic education not only reduces risky behavior, increases success in school, and leads to greater civic participation later in life but also enables young people to gain work experience and to learn responsibility.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, the U.S. Department of Education has emphasized benefits of civic learning that go beyond promoting civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions, such as building valuable twenty-first-century competencies that are necessary for students' long-term career success.<sup>58</sup> The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement likewise concluded that "[a] high-quality education, workforce preparation, and civic engagement are inextricably linked."<sup>59</sup>

## 2. Civic Literacy Confers Benefits on Society at Large

In addition to the benefits of civic education that are bestowed upon the individual citizen, there are numerous ways that civic literacy among American citizens benefits our society as a whole.<sup>60</sup> For example, a study released in 2011 found that a state or locality's civic health can improve its economic resilience.<sup>61</sup> Using data derived from the U.S. Census Bureau's *Current Population Survey*, the study found strong positive correlations between certain forms of civic engagement—volunteering, attending public meetings, helping neighbors, voting, and registering to vote—and resilience against unemployment following the 2006 recession.<sup>62</sup> In other words, "[s]tates and localities with more civic engagement in 2006 saw less growth in unemployment between 2006 and 2010."<sup>63</sup>

Beyond the potential for civic literacy to yield concrete economic benefits, an engaged and informed citizenry is an essential characteristic

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56. See generally NAT'L TASK FORCE, *supra* note 4, at 28; U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *supra* note 29, at 4; see also CTR. FOR THE STUDY OF SOC. POLICY, RESULTS-BASED PUBLIC POLICY STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT 3 (2011).

57. CTR. FOR THE STUDY OF SOC. POLICY, *supra* note 56, at 2.

58. U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *supra* note 29, at 4 ("A growing body of evidence . . . indicates that high-quality civic learning and democratic engagement is a win-win proposition in higher education and career preparation."); see also *id.* ("Civic learning is not only compatible with career preparation and improved graduation rates, but also is a core skill in preparing students to succeed as employees and citizens.")

59. NAT'L TASK FORCE, *supra* note 4, at 22.

60. LEVINSON, *supra* note 33, at 51 ("If we care about political stability, democratic legitimacy, and civic equality, then we must care about what is taught and what is learned in [our] schools—not just for the students' sakes, but for our own."); O'Connor, *supra* note 42, at 11 ("Today, as the schools are not meeting their founding promise of educating the next generation of active and informed citizens, reinvigorating the civic mission of public education should be a top priority for anyone concerned about the future health of our government and our society.")

61. NAT'L CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP, *supra* note 1, at 6.

62. *Id.* at 3.

63. *Id.*

of a healthy democratic government.<sup>64</sup> William Lyons and Julie Drew, authors of *Punishing Schools: Fear and Citizenship in American Public Education*, explain that a democratic government can only function properly when it is “built on informed, thoughtful, cooperative, prudent, and innovative forms of citizenship.”<sup>65</sup> The importance of building an informed and engaged citizenry is even greater given America’s racial and ethnic diversity.<sup>66</sup> According to the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, widespread civic education strengthens our heterogeneous society by establishing and promoting a shared set of American values and by providing an avenue for counteracting social inequality.<sup>67</sup>

Civically literate citizens are integral to our democracy because they have the power to legitimize and stabilize our government. As the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools noted in its 2011 report, effective citizens have the ability to advocate for their interests and thereby prevent narrower interests from achieving disproportionate power.<sup>68</sup> Preserving the balance of power is essential because governments that serve broad societal interests enjoy more stability over time. Such governments not only inspire loyalty among citizens but also benefit from improved decision making because they are able to draw on society’s aggregate wisdom.<sup>69</sup> Importantly, civic engagement among young people has a

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64. MCCORMICK FOUND., *supra* note 43, at 4 (“We believe civic health is not only essential to building the real power of society, it is the foundation.”); *see also* Jon Kyl, *Safeguarding American Exceptionalism: An Uninformed Citizenry Risks Ceding Excessive Power to Government*, in TEACHING AMERICA, *supra* note 42, at 33, 36 (“If Americans cease to understand who they are as citizens, our country risks losing the qualities that make it exceptional.”).

65. WILLIAM LYONS & JULIE DREW, *PUNISHING SCHOOLS: FEAR AND CITIZENSHIP IN AMERICAN PUBLIC EDUCATION* 11 (2006) (arguing that, because governments require informed citizens to operate properly, investing in civic education is the inevitable starting point for cultivating effective citizens).

66. CAMPAIGN FOR THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCH., *supra* note 38, at 10 (“America as a new nation was not created out of devotion to a motherland, a royal family, or a national religion. Americans are instead defined by our fidelity to certain ideals, expressed in the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights and subsequent amendments. . . . If Americans are not bound together by common values, we will become fragmented and turn on one another.”); NAT’L TASK FORCE, *supra* note 4, at 4 (explaining that our diverse society requires us to take affirmative steps to foster shared values and ideals among our heterogeneous citizenry).

67. Kahne & Middaugh, *supra* note 34, at 22; *see also* CAMPAIGN FOR THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCH., *supra* note 38, at 6 (explaining that civic learning inherently promotes the ideal of civic equality and that by providing civic education to traditionally marginalized groups, such efforts can facilitate movement towards greater civic equality); STEPHEN MACEDO, *DIVERSITY AND DISTRUST: CIVIC EDUCATION IN A MULTICULTURAL DEMOCRACY* 42–43 (2000) (noting that the health of our system depends on shared democratic norms).

68. CAMPAIGN FOR THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCH., *supra* note 38, at 12; *see also* MCCORMICK FOUND., *supra* note 43, at 6 (“The decline in citizen political involvement has serious civic consequences. On one level, the nation is profoundly poorer for the diminished civic involvement; on another level, the more voting rates decline the more American politics become dominated by those with special interests—who seek specific policy outcomes—and the zealous—who are militant on specific issues. Consequently, government in the common interest suffers, and American politics become increasingly polarized.”).

69. LEVINSON, *supra* note 33, at 48–49.

unique role in preserving the long-term health of government.<sup>70</sup> First, youth civic engagement stabilizes society by “directing . . . discontent into constructive channels.”<sup>71</sup> Second, youth engagement, a wellspring for fresh perspectives and solutions, can facilitate problem solving and political change.<sup>72</sup> The capacity for young people to protect our government through civic engagement explains why the CSSP has urged policy makers to think about preparing youth for a successful transition to adulthood as an important societal investment.<sup>73</sup>

Ongoing deficits in citizens’ civic literacy, coupled with a declining national commitment to civic education and a growing body of evidence documenting the benefits of civic education, have resulted in the proliferation of civic outreach programs that are designed to promote and facilitate civic literacy.<sup>74</sup> Part II of this Essay explores the types of civic outreach programs that are currently working to enhance civic literacy across the nation.

## II. COMMON MODELS OF CIVIC OUTREACH PROGRAMS

To better assess the vast number of programs that currently provide a diverse range of civic outreach services, this Essay provides a basic framework for categorizing civic outreach programs based on the type of services offered and to whom these services are provided. As a starting point, this Essay proposes two basic models of civic outreach programs. Model 1 encompasses programs that direct services to actors in educational institutions. Programs within this model provide services to administrators, teachers, and students based on their relationship to an existing K–12 or post-secondary educational institution. Importantly, the majority of civic outreach programs fall under Model 1. In contrast, Model 2 encompasses programs that direct services to the general public. This mod-

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70. Flanagan & Levine, *supra* note 21, at 173 (“As generational replacement theories suggest, democracies depend on the social integration of successive younger generations into the body politic.”).

71. *Id.* at 160.

72. *Id.* at 159–60; see also *Closing the Achievement Gap*, *supra* note 37 (adding complexity to this issue, Levinson argues that the fact that race or SES affects civic participation rates functions to undermine America’s legitimacy and stability).

73. CTR. FOR THE STUDY OF SOC. POLICY, *supra* note 56, at 4 (“Creating opportunities for young people to grow into thriving adults will increase the well-being of the next generation, and ultimately translate into savings for taxpayers.”).

74. CAMPAIGN FOR THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCH., *supra* note 38, at 17 (“Numerous studies have shown that knowledge gained through courses in civics, history, economics, the law, and geography increase a student’s confidence in and propensity towards active civic participation.”); KURTZ ET AL., *supra* note 19, at 4 (noting that youth “who have taken a civics or American government class are much more likely to believe they are personally responsible for making things better for society” and that voting is important); Kyl, *supra* note 64, at 37 (“The recognition that Americans have a civic literacy deficit is not new, and many committed individuals have undertaken noble efforts to educate young Americans.”); U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC., *supra* note 29, at 3 (noting that the U.S. Department of Education shares the urgency about bolstering civic learning that is reflected in current leading reports on civic education in our nation’s schools).

el captures the few civic outreach programs that do not fit squarely within Model 1.

### *A. Model 1: Program Services Are Directed at Educational Institutions*

Model 1 includes those civic outreach programs that seek to enhance civic literacy by providing services directly to actors within K–12 and post-secondary educational institutions.<sup>75</sup> A distinguishing characteristic of programs that fall within Model 1 is exclusivity—only actors associated with a given educational institution are eligible for services. Within this model, programs target three distinct types of institutional actors: administrators, teachers, and students. Although it is possible for a program to engage actors on more than one level, this Essay categorizes programs based on which institutional actor is the principal recipient of services.

#### 1. Administrator-Focused

Programs directed at administrators are the rarest type of program within Model 1. Administrator-focused programs seek to effectuate improvements in civic literacy by incorporating civic learning and engagement opportunities on a schoolwide level. Although these programs often require substantial buy-in from teachers, they are different from teacher-focused programs because teacher involvement is a consequence of the school administration's decision to participate in the program.

One excellent example of an administrator-focused program in the K–12 setting is the Chicago-based Democracy Schools program run by the McCormick Foundation. The goal of Democracy Schools is to help secondary schools provide students with authentic civic experiences by emphasizing participatory citizenship in all aspects of the school experience.<sup>76</sup> According to Shawn Healy, resident scholar and director of professional development for Democracy Schools, providing services at the administrative level is the best way to effectuate civic learning.<sup>77</sup> By training the trainer, the Democracy Schools program helps school administrators build partnerships within their building that enable civic learning goals to be incorporated across the curriculum.<sup>78</sup>

Given that a school is generally not organized to allow for cross-curriculum learning, the initial focus of the Democracy Schools program is to provide resources and ongoing support to administrators as they

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75. This definition excludes adult education classes that occur outside of the post-secondary context.

76. *Civics Program Strategy*, MCCORMICK FOUND., <http://www.mccormickfoundation.org/page.aspx?pid=568> (last visited Apr. 14, 2013).

77. Telephone Interview with Shawn Healy, Resident Scholar & Dir. of Prof'l Dev. for the Democracy Sch. Program, McCormick Found. (Oct. 29, 2012) [hereinafter Healy Interview].

78. *Id.*



restructure how their school operates.<sup>79</sup> During this accreditation period, the Democracy Schools program helps administrators critically evaluate the quantity and quality of civic learning within their school in order to identify areas for improvement.<sup>80</sup> Once an improvement plan is in place, Democracy Schools provides the school with a small amount of money (typically \$500) to facilitate fulfillment of the plan.<sup>81</sup> This money is most often used to hire substitute teachers, giving administrators and teachers time to determine how to most effectively integrate civic learning opportunities across the curriculum.<sup>82</sup> In the past six years, seventeen schools have successfully completed the Democracy Schools accreditation process.<sup>83</sup> Once accredited, these schools were awarded \$3,000–\$5,000 to support the continuation of civic learning across the curriculum.<sup>84</sup>

Administrator-focused programs also exist at the post-secondary level. For example, through its Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) initiative, the Association of American Colleges and Universities supports administrators of post-secondary institutions as they take steps to make “civic and democratic learning an expected outcome for every college student.”<sup>85</sup> A similar program, the American Democracy Project (ADP), was created by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.<sup>86</sup> Like the CLDE, the ADP is a multi-campus initiative designed to ensure that all college graduates are capable citizens.<sup>87</sup> To help member colleges and universities accomplish this goal, the ADP hosts national and regional meetings and supports campus initiatives that include “voter education and registration, curriculum revision . . . , campus audits, [and] special days of reflection.”<sup>88</sup>

## 2. Teacher-Focused

Teacher-focused programs connect teachers with valuable civics resources and often provide teachers with specific training opportunities. Unlike administrator-focused programs, which seek to integrate civic learning across the curriculum, teacher-focused programs have the narrower goal of providing individual teachers with resources or training to enhance their ability to teach civics and to provide authentic civic engagement opportunities to their students.<sup>89</sup> Most teacher-focused pro-

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79. *Id.*

80. *Id.*

81. *Id.*

82. *Id.*

83. *Id.*

84. *Id.*

85. *Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement*, ASS'N AM. CS. & U., [http://www.aacu.org/civic\\_learning/](http://www.aacu.org/civic_learning/) (last visited Apr. 14, 2013).

86. *See About ADP*, AM. ASS'N ST. CS. & U., <http://www.aascu.org/programs/ADP> (last visited Apr. 14, 2013).

87. *See id.*

88. *See id.*

89. Interview with Barbara Miller & Jackie Johnson, Exec. & Assoc. Dirs., Ctr. for Educ. in Law & Democracy, in Denver, Colo. (Oct. 17, 2012) [hereinafter Miller & Johnson Interview].

grams educate and support teachers as a means of ensuring that students receive quality civic education and engagement opportunities.<sup>90</sup>

The American Board of Trial Advocates' (ABOTA) Teachers' Law School is an example of a teacher-focused civic outreach program that is available to K–12 teachers.<sup>91</sup> The Teachers' Law School, which was inspired by the Journalists' Law School program launched by ABOTA and Loyola University in 2006, is premised on the idea that teacher education is the most efficient avenue for improving civic literacy on a broad scale: teachers not only possess the necessary pedagogical skills to effectively teach civics but also have uniquely consistent contact with large groups of students.<sup>92</sup>

July 2008 marked the inaugural Teachers' Law School that provided thirty-five teachers from all over Texas a no-cost, three-day intensive crash course in the law.<sup>93</sup> Over the past four years, the Teachers' Law School has expanded to Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, and Pennsylvania, where local ABOTA members volunteer to organize and administer the program. Although each state covers largely the same content—criminal law, constitutional law, family law, evidence, federal courts, and education law—the depth of coverage varies by location because some programs are packed into a single day and others extend over three days.<sup>94</sup> As demand for the Teachers' Law School outpaces the program's growth, ABOTA requires interested teachers to submit formal applications and then awards seats to teachers based on need and merit.<sup>95</sup>

Other examples of teacher-focused programs for K–12 teachers include the Ludwick Family Foundation's Democracy in Action civic education project,<sup>96</sup> Indiana University's Center on Congress professional development seminars,<sup>97</sup> the Center for Education in Law and Democracy's Educating for Citizenship annual conference,<sup>98</sup> and the Center for Civic Education's *We the People* national summer institutes.<sup>99</sup>

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90. Telephone Interview with Christian Lindke, Arsalyn Program Dir., Ludwick Family Found. (Nov. 20, 2012) [hereinafter Lindke Interview]; Miller & Johnson Interview, *supra* note 89; Telephone Interview with Brian Tyson, Exec. Dir., Am. Bd. of Trial Advocates (Nov. 20, 2012) [hereinafter Tyson Interview].

91. See *Teachers' Law School*, AM. BD. TRIAL ADVOCATES, <http://www.abota.org/index.cfm?pg=TeachersLawSchool> (last visited Apr. 14, 2013).

92. Tyson Interview, *supra* note 90.

93. *Id.*

94. *Id.*

95. *Id.*

96. See *Democracy in Action: A Civic Education Project*, ARSALYN, <http://www.arsalyn.org/Display.asp?Page=democracyinaction> (last visited Apr. 14, 2013).

97. See *Teacher Outreach*, CENTER ON CONG. IND. UNIV., <http://congress.indiana.edu/teacher-outreach> (last visited Apr. 14, 2013).

98. See *Programs and Resources*, CENTER FOR EDUC. L. & DEMOCRACY, <http://www.lawanddemocracy.org/programsnew.html> (last visited Apr. 14, 2013).

99. See *We the People, National Summer Institutes*, CENTER FOR CIVIC EDUC., <http://new.civiced.org/wtp-the-program/professional-development/summer-institutes> (last visited Dec. 12, 2012).

At the post-secondary level, Diving Deep is an example of a teacher-focused program.<sup>100</sup> A Campus Compact creation, Diving Deep is a professional development institute that supports administrators and faculty members who have significant experience with civic and community engagement and are currently in a position to institutionalize civic engagement on their campus.<sup>101</sup> Among other things, this four-day institute is designed to help participants expand their capacity to grow and sustain civic engagement and to develop individual action plans for sharing what they have learned with their respective institution.<sup>102</sup>

### 3. Student-Focused

Student-focused outreach programs, which appear to be the most common type of civic outreach program, are different from both administrator-focused and teacher-focused programs because they provide services directly to students through outside resource people. The typical outside resource person is a legal professional such as a lawyer or a judge.<sup>103</sup> Although outside resource people sometimes receive training from the civic outreach program they volunteer with, a defining feature of the student-focused program is that the outside resource people are already uniquely qualified to teach civics-related content.<sup>104</sup>

The Stand Up for Your Rights program offered by Discovering Justice is one clear example of a student-focused civic outreach program that is offered in the K–12 context. Through Stand Up for Your Rights, a team of volunteer lawyers teach middle school students from underserved communities about either the First or Fourth Amendments and how each applies in public schools.<sup>105</sup> These volunteer lawyers visit the classroom for ninety minutes once a week after school for a total of seven weeks and teach out of a handbook developed by Discovering Justice. The program culminates in a mock appellate argument at the John Adams Courthouse where the students argue before a Massachusetts Appeals Court judge.<sup>106</sup>

The Stand Up for Your Rights program focuses on engaging children with civics at a young age before their civic attitudes and dispositions have fully formed.<sup>107</sup> By utilizing practicing attorneys as outside resource people, the program ensures that presenters are accurate con-

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100. *Diving Deep: Campus Compact's Institute for Experienced Civic and Community Engagement Practitioners*, CAMPUS COMPACT, <http://www.compact.org/events/divingdeep> (last visited Apr. 14, 2013) [hereinafter *Diving Deep*].

101. CAMPUS COMPACT, DIVING DEEP APPLICATION GUIDELINES 6 (2012).

102. *Diving Deep*, *supra* note 100.

103. Telephone Interview with Meryl Kessler, Legal Dir., Discovering Justice (Dec. 5, 2012) [hereinafter Kessler Interview]; Miller & Johnson Interview, *supra* note 89.

104. Kessler Interview, *supra* note 103; Miller & Johnson Interview, *supra* note 89.

105. Kessler Interview, *supra* note 103.

106. *Id.*

107. *Id.*

duits of constitutional and other legal information. In addition, the program urges participating attorneys to serve as mentors to the children in the program and to encourage these children to pursue legal careers.<sup>108</sup>

Other examples of student-focused civic outreach programs that target K–12 students include the Denver Bar Association’s Partner Alliance of Lawyers and Schools,<sup>109</sup> the National Association for Law Placement (NALP) and Street Laws’ Legal Diversity Pipeline Program,<sup>110</sup> Colorado Springs Judges David Prince and David Shakes’ Judicially Speaking program,<sup>111</sup> Professor Jamin Raskin’s Marshall–Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project,<sup>112</sup> the Liberty and Law Institute’s America’s Founding Documents course,<sup>113</sup> and the American Bar Association’s Teaching the Constitution program.<sup>114</sup>

### *B. Model 2: Program Services Are Directed at the General Public*

The primary difference between Model 2 and Model 1 programs is who is eligible to receive services. Whereas programs within Model 1 provide services exclusively to administrators, teachers, or students associated with a K–12 or post-secondary educational institution, programs within Model 2 have no such limits. Thus, Model 2 is best understood to subsume the relatively few civic outreach programs that do not fall cleanly into Model 1. Within Model 2, outreach programs tend to focus on enhancing civic literacy either among adults or among young people.

#### 1. Adult-Focused

Adult-focused civic outreach programs provide services to individuals who are over the age of eighteen. Many of the civic outreach programs that focus on this age group combine civic education with English-language acquisition. For example, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Vocational and Adult Education website provides links to information about adult civic education: nearly all these links connect the reader to civic outreach programs or to written materials that emphasize English literacy in addition to civic literacy.<sup>115</sup> However, there are

108. *Id.*

109. See Erich Bethke, *A Seat at the Bar: Come to School with Democracy Education*, DOCKET, Sept. 2012, at 12, 12.

110. See *NALP/Street Law Legal Diversity Pipeline Program*, NAT’L ASS’N FOR L. PLACEMENT, <http://www.nalp.org/streetlaw> (last visited Apr. 14, 2013).

111. Judge David Shakes, Co-founder, Judicially Speaking, Remarks at the Twentieth Annual Rothergerber Conference (Nov. 29, 2012).

112. See *The Marshall–Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project*, *supra* note 2.

113. Telephone Interview with Bob Skiver, Dir., Liberty & Law Inst. (Aug. 28, 2012) [hereinafter Skiver Interview].

114. Telephone Interview with Ann Oswald, Former Chair of Teaching the Constitution Comm., Am. Bar Assoc. Judicial Div. (Sept. 13, 2012) [hereinafter Oswald Interview]. Although the Liberty and Law Institute and the American Bar Association (ABA) are not partners, the ABA uses teaching materials that were developed by the Liberty and Law Institute.

115. See *Civics Education: Office of Vocational and Adult Education*, U.S. DEP’T EDUC., <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/elctopic.html> (last visited Apr. 14, 2012).

some adult-focused civic outreach programs that do not have linguistic undertones. One example is Discovering Justice's Courthouse Tours program.<sup>116</sup> Through this program, members of the general public, including adults, can visit Boston's courthouses to learn about each building's history and how the court system operates.<sup>117</sup>

## 2. Youth-Focused

Youth-focused programs provide services to young people outside of formal educational systems. In other words, youth engagement with these programs is independent of the school system and instigated by the participant him or herself. For example, through Washington state's Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC), twenty-two young people aged fourteen to eighteen are given the opportunity to learn about the legislative process firsthand.<sup>118</sup> The purpose of the LYAC is to help legislators address the needs of youth, which members of the LYAC fulfill by providing advice about pending legislation, drafting letters and legislative reports, and soliciting input from other youth and community organizations.<sup>119</sup> To serve on the LYAC, interested youth must submit an application, be recommended for appointment by current members, and be officially appointed to the Council by the Lieutenant Governor. Another example of a general-public, youth-focused program is North Carolina's legislatively created voter preregistration and education program.<sup>120</sup> To increase registration rates among eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds, this program enables all sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds to preregister to vote at the Department of Motor Vehicles when they obtain their driver's license. Once these individuals turn eighteen years old, they are automatically registered to vote.<sup>121</sup>

### C. Preference Should Be Given to Model 1 Programs that Direct Services to K-12 Educational Institutions

Achieving meaningful improvements in civic literacy among America's diverse citizenry is an enormous task that is not amenable to a one-size-fits-all solution.<sup>122</sup> Given this complexity, the various approaches to achieving civic literacy encompassed by Model 1 and Model 2 programs

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116. *Courthouse Tours Program*, DISCOVERING JUST., [http://www.discoveringjustice.org/?p=pgms\\_fieldtrips\\_tours](http://www.discoveringjustice.org/?p=pgms_fieldtrips_tours) (last visited Apr. 14, 2012).

117. *Id.*

118. WASH. ST. LEG. YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL, <http://lyac.leg.wa.gov> (last visited Apr. 14, 2013).

119. *Id.*

120. H.B. 1260, 2009 Leg. Sess. (N.C. 2010).

121. *Id.*

122. See *Civics Program Strategy*, *supra* note 76 (explaining that reinvigorating the importance of civic literacy in our education system is "a job too big for any single foundation or organization"); *Closing the Achievement Gap*, *supra* note 37 (emphasizing the importance of students' backgrounds when developing effective approaches to civic education).

are not only inevitable but also desirable.<sup>123</sup> Despite the need for diverse civic outreach programs, the remainder of this Essay concentrates on programs that fall within Model 1 and provide services in the K–12 context. Preference should be given to these programs because they are not only the most common form of civic outreach but also the best equipped to achieve meaningful improvements in civic literacy.

First, by providing services that directly benefit young people, programs within Model 1 necessarily target the group of Americans that is least knowledgeable about civics-related topics. As discussed in Part I, studies consistently show that young people are the least knowledgeable segment of the population.<sup>124</sup> Given the unique civic deficit observed in young Americans, programs that serve young people have an enhanced capacity to improve overall rates of civic literacy.

Second, programs within Model 1 fulfill the historic purpose of schools to prepare students for meaningful civic engagement. When the idea of public schools was first conceived by America's founders, the critical mission of schools was to create effective democratic citizens as a means of preserving self-rule<sup>125</sup> and forging a common American identity among a nation of immigrants.<sup>126</sup> As historical conduits of civic knowledge,<sup>127</sup> public schools have played—and will continue to play—a central role in creating American citizens.<sup>128</sup> Because they align with the accepted purpose of public education, Model 1 programs possess institutional legitimacy that makes them most capable of widespread acceptance and implementation.

Finally, of the programs within Model 1, those that provide services specifically to actors in K–12 educational institutions have the greatest capacity to effectuate improvements in civic literacy among young people.<sup>129</sup> Unlike post-secondary educational experiences, the K–12 experi-

123. U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *supra* note 29, at 8 (“The next generation of civic learning features a mix of public, private, and nonprofit initiatives.”); Dudley & Gitelson, *supra* note 18, at 180 (noting that there is no single window for civic learning and engagement).

124. Dudley & Gitelson, *supra* note 18 (“One consistent theme emerging from studies of citizens’ knowledge is that young people are the least knowledgeable.”).

125. See Frederick M. Hess, *Civic Education, Devalued*, in *TEACHING AMERICA*, *supra* note 42, at xi (“For America’s founders[,] . . . the crucial mission of schools was to form good democratic citizens.”); LEVINSON, *supra* note 33, at 48 (“Public schools were founded in the United States for civic purposes.”); Tom Donnelly, *Popular Constitutionalism, Civic Education, and the Stories We Tell Our Children*, 118 *YALE L.J.* 948, 965–66 (2009) (“From the earliest years of American public education, one of its key roles has been to prepare young Americans for the duties and responsibilities of citizenship.”).

126. Campbell, *supra* note 5, at 493 (“Historically, public, or ‘common,’ schools were created in order to forge a common citizenry within a nation of immigrants.”).

127. CAMPAIGN FOR THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCH., *supra* note 38, at 11 (“[T]he role of schools as conduits of civic knowledge and virtue is deeply rooted in the American tradition.”).

128. MACEDO, *supra* note 67, at 274 (“The institution of public schools has played a central role in the project of creating American citizens”).

129. *But see* Flanagan & Levine, *supra* note 21, at 173 (arguing that because the transition to adulthood has lengthened, colleges should be the central institution for growing civic literacy).

ence is mandatory and universal. As the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools has emphasized, “[O]ur schools remain the one universal experience we all have to gain civic knowledge and skills.”<sup>130</sup> Similarly, Frederick Hess<sup>131</sup> has explained that schools and educators are in the best position to teach students to be citizens because “schools are the only institutions with the capacity and mandate to reach virtually every person in the country.”<sup>132</sup> Moreover, because this shared national experience extends more than a decade, K–12 educational institutions have the unique capacity to facilitate widespread mastery of civic content and skills by teaching civics to successive generations of citizens in a systematic and authoritative manner.<sup>133</sup>

### III. SHARED CHALLENGES AMONG CIVIC OUTREACH PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Among the many Model 1 programs that provide services to actors in K–12 educational institutions, two shared challenges exist. First, these programs often struggle to identify and systematically measure program outcomes.<sup>134</sup> Although lack of agreement about the “right” outcome and limited funding are obstacles to measuring program outcomes, research-backed civic outreach programs have become the industry standard.<sup>135</sup> By scaling research efforts to align with available resources, all civic outreach programs have the ability to meet this basic expectation. In addition to aligning with industry standards, programs that measure outcomes enjoy many auxiliary benefits such as affirmation of volunteers and participants, access to data that can be used for program improve-

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130. CAMPAIGN FOR THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCH., *supra* note 38, at 5.

131. Frederick Hess is a resident scholar and the director of education policy studies for the American Enterprise Institute.

132. Hess, *supra* note 125, at xiv.

133. Tom Donnelly, *A Popular Approach to Popular Constitutionalism: The First Amendment, Civic Education, and Constitutional Change*, 28 QUINNIPIAC L. REV. 321, 324, 336 (2010); CAMPAIGN FOR THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCH., *supra* note 38 (“Only if transmitted through our public schools—which educate more citizens in a sustained way than [do] any other institutions—can all students, regardless of background, exercise their full potential as citizens.”).

134. I identified these shared challenges based on my experiences as a research fellow for the Byron R. White Center at the University of Colorado Law School and on in-depth interviews with the following individuals: Melissa Hart, director of the Byron R. White Center for the Study of American Constitutional Law, home to the University of Colorado Law School chapter of the Marshall–Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project and the Colorado Law Constitution Day Project; Shawn Healy, resident scholar and director of professional development for Democracy Schools, a McCormick Foundation program; Christian Lindke, program director of Democracy in Action, a Ludwick Family Foundation program; Jackie Johnson, associate director for the Center for Education in Law and Democracy, home to the Educating for Citizenship annual conference; Barbara Miller, director of the Center for Education in Law and Democracy, home to the Educating for Citizenship annual conference; Brian Tyson, executive director of the American Board of Trial Advocates, home to the Teachers’ Law School program; Bob Skiver, executive director of the Liberty and Law Institute, home to the America’s Founding Documents program; Ann Oswald, former chair of Teaching the Constitution, an American Bar Association program; and Rachel DuFault, chair of Teaching the Constitution, an American Bar Association program.

135. Healy Interview, *supra* note 77.

ment, and increased legitimacy in the eyes of prospective grantors and participants.

Second, civic outreach programs that provide services in the K–12 context face ongoing threats to sustainability. Sustainability challenges are most directly related to limited funding opportunities, but unproductive competition among civic outreach programs functions to exacerbate such challenges. Although funding opportunities are unlikely to increase, programs can enhance their long-term sustainability by fostering formal collaborative relationships with compatible civic outreach programs. In addition, simple acts of cooperation—such as sharing information about one’s program and the timing of its major events—can increase awareness of where services are being provided and reduce unnecessary scheduling conflicts.

The challenges of measuring program outcomes and ensuring program sustainability require collective attention because they are common to all Model 1 civic outreach programs that provide services to actors in the K–12 context. Precisely because these challenges are endemic, they threaten to undermine such programs’ shared goal of improving civic literacy among young Americans. Failing to face these challenges is not an option. If civic outreach programs are to be successful in promoting civic literacy among America’s diverse citizenry, program leaders must be willing to address these challenges by engaging in the same type of critical analysis that is required of an active, engaged citizenry.

#### *A. Civic Outreach Programs Struggle to Identify and Measure Outcomes*

Research-based civic outreach programs (i.e., programs measuring outcomes, not merely outreach) have become the industry standard.<sup>136</sup> The CCSP’s 2011 report, *Results-Based Public Policy Strategies for Promoting Youth Civic Engagement*, provides clear evidence of this norm.<sup>137</sup> The CCSP not only encourages policy makers to make spending decisions by “leading with results”<sup>138</sup> but also identifies the selection of strategies that have “documented effectiveness” as the key to effective policy making.<sup>139</sup> In its 2012 roadmap and call to action, *Advancing Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement*, the U.S. Department of Education similarly advocates for “data-based decision-making”<sup>140</sup> and for measuring the success of civic learning and democratic engagement opportunities by whether they are effective.<sup>141</sup> Moreover, the Department

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136. *Id.*

137. *See generally* CTR. FOR THE STUDY OF SOC. POLICY, *supra* note 56, at 1.

138. *Id.*

139. *Id.* at 16.

140. U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC., *supra* note 29, at 22.

141. *Id.* at 7 (“We must measure the success of civic learning and democratic engagement opportunities not only by whether they are provided to all students but also by whether they are effective.”).



identified the need for more robust evidence of civic outcomes as one of its five priorities for action<sup>142</sup> and mentioned research-based programs in four steps of its nine-step roadmap for improving civic learning and democratic engagement.<sup>143</sup>

### 1. Obstacles to Identifying and Measuring Outcomes: Lack of Agreement and Lack of Funding

Although the call for research-based civic outreach programs is unequivocal, there are two major obstacles that inhibit programs' abilities to effectively identify and measure program outcomes. First, widespread disagreement about what constitutes a "good" citizen<sup>144</sup> makes it difficult for programs to determine which outcomes are most relevant to measure. As evidence of this fundamental disagreement, in *What Kind of Citizen? The Politics of Education for Democracy*, Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kane observed that civic outreach programs embody a "spectrum of ideas about what good citizenship is and what good citizens do."<sup>145</sup> Similarly, in *Political Literacy, Civic Education, and Civic Engagement: A Return to Political Socialization?*, Robert Dudley and Alan Gitelson noted that "programs that seek to teach and encourage citizenship education and engagement often engender different and sometimes contradictory beliefs regarding what 'good' citizenship constitutes and what comprises 'acceptable' civic education and civic engagement."<sup>146</sup>

Second, funding limitations and the perceived expense of developing and implementing meaningful assessments have prevented many civic outreach programs from measuring program outcomes. Limited staffing appeared to be the most common challenge because programs are often unable to expend resources administering or tracking assessments following the provision of services.<sup>147</sup> In the absence of evidence that their programs yield substantive outcomes, many civic outreach programs focus on reporting the extent of their outreach efforts (i.e., the number of individuals the program served) as a proxy for program success.<sup>148</sup>

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142. *Id.* at 3.

143. *Id.* at 22–25.

144. LEVINSON, *supra* note 33, at 43; BROOK THOMAS, CIVIC MYTHS: A LAW AND LITERATURE APPROACH TO CITIZENSHIP 237 (2007); Campbell, *supra* note 5.

145. Westheimer & Kahne, *supra* note 47, at 237.

146. Dudley & Gitelson, *supra* note 18, at 180.

147. Telephone Interview with Elisabeth Medvedow, Exec. Dir., Discovering Justice (Jan. 2, 2013) [hereinafter Medvedow Interview]; Oswald Interview, *supra* note 114; Skiver Interview, *supra* note 113.

148. See sources cited *supra* note 147. This conclusion is bolstered by the large number of civic outreach programs that report how many individuals the programs served compared to the relatively few programs that report substantive program outcomes. *Id.*

## 2. Recommendations for Effectively Identifying and Measuring Outcomes: Increased Transparency and Realistic Scaling

Although disagreement about the “right” outcome and funding limitations are common constraints, programs must find ways to measure outcomes despite such obstacles. The first obstacle seems to be more of a theoretical problem because in practice programs can simply overlook the field’s disagreement about the “right” outcomes. Instead of seeking agreement about which outcomes civic outreach programs should be trying to achieve, programs should prioritize transparency and strive to be explicit about the outcomes *they believe* are most important. Unfortunately, the second obstacle is more difficult to overcome because funding constraints cannot simply be ignored. Despite the inherent difficulties posed by limited funding, there are ways that programs with limited budgets can scale research efforts to begin measuring outcomes.

Before proceeding, it is important to recognize the different types of “valid” evidence. Specifically, the CSSP has recognized three levels of valid evidence: rigorous statistical evidence, practice-based evidence, and program evaluation and emerging evidence.<sup>149</sup> In most cases, rigorous statistical research, which involves statistical evaluations of control groups or randomly assigned participants, is not a viable option for civic outreach programs due to ethical limitations in fields relating to children and family policy.<sup>150</sup> Similarly, practice-based evidence, or evidence that enjoys broad consensus from practitioners, is not the most promising form of evidence in the civic outreach context given the diversity among programs and the fields’ widespread disagreement about the “right” outcome. In contrast, program evaluation and emerging evidence, which involves evaluations of specific programs and research from related fields, is an ideal form of evidence for civic outreach programs that wish to measure program outcomes. The program-evaluation category not only is free of major ethical restrictions but also has the capacity to accommodate divergent approaches to measuring outcomes.<sup>151</sup>

Within the program-evaluation category of evidence there are four basic types of evaluative tools: multiple-choice tests, short-answer tests, performance tests, and portfolio assessments.<sup>152</sup> Multiple-choice and short-answer tests appear to be the most common tool because they require comparatively less time to implement and are less prone to grader

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149. CTR. FOR THE STUDY OF SOC. POLICY, *supra* note 56, at 1.

150. *Id.*

151. In other words, program evaluation evidence is particularly well-suited for civic outreach programs because it typically does not require internal review board approval and can be easily adapted to each program’s unique goals. *See id.*

152. *See* CAMPAIGN FOR THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCH., *supra* note 38, at 35. Although the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools does not specifically refer to these civic learning assessment measures as forms of “program evaluation” evidence, they belong in this category of evidence given that their purpose is to “help evaluate the effects of programs and curricula.” *Id.*

bias than are performance tests and portfolio assessments.<sup>153</sup> The pre- and post-survey combination is a common vehicle for multiple-choice and short-answer tests that can be inexpensively developed and implemented by nearly any civic outreach program.<sup>154</sup> For example, after the third year of the Legal Diversity Pipeline Program, NALP and Street Law decided to create pre- and post-surveys to evaluate the program's progress towards several defined goals.<sup>155</sup> The pre-survey and the post-survey contained the same combination of short-answer and multiple-choice questions (including yes-no and true-false questions).<sup>156</sup> Participating high school students were asked to complete one survey before receiving any services through the program and a second survey after the program.<sup>157</sup> Based on simple comparisons of pre- and post-test data, NALP and Street Law were able to show that the Legal Diversity Pipeline Program was successful in increasing students' levels of interest in legal careers, knowledge about such careers, and knowledge of pathways to the legal profession.<sup>158</sup>

Although multiple-choice and short-answer assessments can be internally developed and implemented—saving considerable time and money—the validity of such assessments can be enhanced through external vetting. For example, the Liberty and Law Institute developed a forty-five-minute, multiple-choice review test to administer at the end of its five-day America's Founding Documents course. After spending a significant amount of time internally developing and revising the test, the Institute circulated a draft of its test to nearly a dozen individuals—including judges, lawyers, history and civics teachers, think tank experts, and academics.<sup>159</sup> Based on these experts' feedback, the Liberty and Law Institute undertook another series of revisions before the finalizing its pilot test and administering it to 250 public school students.<sup>160</sup> Because not all civic outreach programs have the initial capacity to undertake the time- and labor-intensive vetting process, external vetting can be sidelined in favor of internally created measures until sufficient resources become available.

External vetting is one way that programs can improve the validity of self-created measures, but the most direct way to achieve a valid measure is to hire or partner with an outside professional who has exper-

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153. *Id.* at 36.

154. CAMPAIGN FOR THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCH., *supra* note 38, at 36; Medvedow Interview, *supra* note 148; Skiver Interview, *supra* note 113.

155. NALP & STREET LAW, INC., NALP/STREET LAW DIVERSITY PIPELINE PROGRAM: EVALUATION REPORT 1 (2011).

156. *See id.* at 10.

157. *Id.* at 3.

158. *Id.* at 6–9.

159. E-mail from Bob Skiver, Dir., Liberty & Law Inst., to Author (Oct. 17, 2012, 4:03 PM) (on file with author).

160. *Id.*

tise in crafting and evaluating statistically valid assessments. Partnering with an outside professional not only ensures the statistical validity of a program's assessment tool but also enhances the program's legitimacy by eliciting an objective perspective on program goals and possible outcomes.<sup>161</sup> Discovering Justice and the Marshall–Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project are two examples of programs that have partnered with outside professionals to develop tools for assessing program outcomes.<sup>162</sup> The experiences of these programs suggest that partnerships with outside professionals are most successful when (1) the civic outreach program possesses realistic and clear goals, and (2) the outside professional carefully tailors the assessment tool to directly measure these goals.<sup>163</sup>

Because it is possible to scale efforts to measure outcomes so that they correspond with available resources, all civic outreach programs have the capacity to measure outcomes; lower budget programs can develop outcome measures internally, medium-budget programs can invest resources in vetting their internally developed measures, and higher budget programs can work with outside professionals to create statistically valid measures. Obviously, the availability of resources will affect the validity of such measures. Although civic outreach programs should strive to create and implement valid evaluative tools, commitment to measuring outcomes—no matter how basic the tool—should be the first priority.

Research-based programs are the new industry standard;<sup>164</sup> therefore, measuring outcomes can increase a program's legitimacy, which will, in turn, makes the program more competitive for coveted funding opportunities and more desirable as a partner for collaboration.<sup>165</sup> In addition to increased legitimacy, there are several auxiliary benefits that flow to programs that measure outcomes. First, measuring outcomes forces program leaders to discuss and identify the goals that they are trying to accomplish.<sup>166</sup> This exercise can help programs remain focused on achieving the goals they value most. Second, when evaluations show that the program is meeting these goals, it functions as validation for service providers—many of whom are dedicated volunteers—that the time they invested in the program was worthwhile.<sup>167</sup> Third, evaluations

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161. Medvedow Interview, *supra* note 148.

162. Maryam Ahranjani, Assoc. Dir., Marshall–Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project, Remarks at the Twentieth Annual Rothgerber Conference (Nov. 29, 2012) [hereafter Ahranjani Remarks]; Elisabeth Medvedow, Exec. Dir., Discovering Justice, Remarks at the Twentieth Annual Rothgerber Conference (Nov. 29, 2012).

163. Ahranjani Remarks, *supra* note 163; Medvedow Interview, *supra* note 148.

164. Healy Interview, *supra* note 77; see also CTR. FOR THE STUDY OF SOC. POLICY, *supra* note 56, at 1; U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *supra* note 29, at 22.

165. Healy Interview, *supra* note 77; Lindke Interview, *supra* note 90; see also CTR. FOR THE STUDY OF SOC. POLICY, *supra* note 56, at 1; U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *supra* note 29, at 22.

166. Interview with Melissa Hart, Dir., Byron R. White Ctr., in Denver, Colo. (Nov. 10, 2012) [hereinafter Hart Interview]; Medvedow Interview, *supra* note 148.

167. NALP & STREET LAW, INC., *supra* note 156, at 12.

that document positive program outcomes can be used to recruit more participants and enhance participant buy-in.<sup>168</sup> Fourth, and most importantly, evaluations can help programs identify areas of weakness and strategies for improvement.<sup>169</sup>

### *B. Civic Outreach Programs Grapple with Sustainability Problems*

In addition to the difficulties programs face in identifying and measuring outcomes, civic outreach programs constantly struggle with sustainability problems. Limited funding opportunities and inter-program competition threaten sustainability as civic outreach programs vie for the same financial and human capital resources. Civic outreach programs can bolster their sustainability and reduce unproductive competition by creating collaborative partnerships and increasing coordination. Undoubtedly, the most important—and most underutilized—resource available to civic outreach programs is *other* civic outreach programs.

#### 1. Threats to Sustainability: Limited Funding and Inter-program Competition

It is no secret that funding for civic outreach programs is limited.<sup>170</sup> Not only are opportunities to acquire government funding rare, but private funding streams appear to be drying up.<sup>171</sup> Even programs lucky enough to be funded by large endowments are struggling because their operating budgets are often subject to the vagrancies of the stock market.<sup>172</sup> As a result of these realities, the biggest threat to the sustainability of civic outreach programs is funding. Unfortunately, the problems created by limited funding are exacerbated by unproductive inter-program competition.<sup>173</sup> Although it is difficult to find formal evidence of inter-program competition, nearly all of the civic outreach programs that were consulted for this Essay mentioned inter-program competition as an ongoing problem.<sup>174</sup> Programs not only commonly schedule events on the same day, thus creating unnecessary competition for attendees, but also frequently compete to provide services to actors in the same geographic area.<sup>175</sup>

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168. Hart Interview, *supra* note 167; Skiver Interview, *supra* note 113.

169. NALP & STREET LAW, INC., *supra* note 156, at 11.

170. All of the individuals interviewed for this Essay agreed that funding streams are incredibly limited, making lack of financial resources a very real threat to sustainability for all civic outreach programs.

171. Miller & Johnson Interview, *supra* note 89.

172. Lindke Interview, *supra* note 90.

173. Healy Interview, *supra* note 77; Lindke Interview, *supra* note 90.

174. Hart Interview, *supra* note 167; Healy Interview, *supra* note 77; Lindke Interview, *supra* note 90; Medvedow Interview, *supra* note 148; Miller & Johnson Interview, *supra* note 89; Skiver Interview, *supra* note 113.

175. For example, when the Byron R. White Center launched its Colorado Law Constitution Day Project, it caused a significant reduction in the number of teachers who participated in the Denver Bar Association's (DBA) Constitution Day Program. The immediate result was that many volunteer Denver-area attorneys were not able to find classrooms to visit for Constitution Day.

## 2. Recommendations for Improving Sustainability: Increased Formal Collaboration and Increased Coordination

Because there are so few opportunities to acquire funding, and no evidence that such opportunities will increase in the future, programs must become more efficient in how they use the resources they have. In this difficult financial context, the most valuable resource civic outreach programs have is each other. The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement has emphasized the importance of robust civic partnerships and alliances, identifying the expansion of such partnerships as one of the five essential actions necessary for achieving widespread civic literacy.<sup>176</sup> By increasing inter-program collaboration and coordination, programs can overcome many of the challenges posed by limited funding and inter-program competition.

According to the Center for Policy, Planning, and Performance (CPP&P), a nonprofit organization that provides consulting and management services to nonprofit and government agencies, collaborating through strategic partnerships is a highly effective sustainability strategy when resources are limited.<sup>177</sup> The CPP&P points out that most programs are already engaged in informal collaborative relationships and provides three specific recommendations for establishing formal collaborative relationships.<sup>178</sup> First, programs should be clear about the results they wish to achieve and have specific benchmarks for measuring progress towards those results.<sup>179</sup> Second, programs need to be aware of their own limitations and have a clear sense of the other programs in their field.<sup>180</sup> Finally, programs should only seek out partnerships with programs that have compatible missions.<sup>181</sup> Importantly, collaborative relationships can be as limited or as expansive as the parties wish. The spectrum of collaboration runs from mere pooling of administrative costs, to partnering for a specific event, to creating a permanent collaborative association.<sup>182</sup>

The Arsalyn program is proof that creating formal collaborative relationships improves sustainability.<sup>183</sup> Understanding that “expansion requires partnerships,” Arsalyn (a relatively small organization run by two staff members) partnered with the Center for Civic Education (CCE)

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However, once the White Center and the DBA connected, the programs were able to coordinate their Constitution Day outreach efforts. Specifically, the following year, the DBA referred its local attorneys to the White Center, and the White Center placed these attorneys in classrooms along with its volunteer law students.

176. NAT'L TASK FORCE, *supra* note 4, at vi.

177. *Building Capacity Through Collaboration*, CENTER FOR POL'Y, PLANNING & PERFORMANCE, [http://www.effective.org/programs/consulting/consulting\\_collaborate.html](http://www.effective.org/programs/consulting/consulting_collaborate.html) (last visited Apr. 14, 2013).

178. *Id.*

179. *Id.*

180. *Id.*

181. *Id.*

182. *Id.*

183. Lindke Interview, *supra* note 90.

(a much larger organization that provides civic outreach services in many states) on its Citizens Not Spectators Program.<sup>184</sup> Both programs started in California and are designed to increase youth civic engagement and voting. Although their similarities enabled a successful partnership, each program has benefitted from the partnership in different ways. Specifically, Aarsalyn has benefitted greatly from CCE's deeper financial resources, and CCE has benefitted greatly from Aarsalyn's strong relationships with local high schools. As a result of this partnership, both programs have expanded and together provide more voter education to high school students than ever before.<sup>185</sup>

In addition to creating formal partnerships as a means of enhancing sustainability, both Aarsalyn and the McCormick Foundation's Democracy Schools program utilize technology to increase coordination among programs and to decrease unproductive competition.<sup>186</sup> For example, Aarsalyn maintains a database of civic and political organizations that provide civic outreach services across the country.<sup>187</sup> Any civic outreach program can enter its information into the database. Users can then search for programs by name, size, and geographic location, allowing leaders of civic outreach programs to identify and connect with other programs nearby. Similarly, Democracy Schools uses a shared electronic civic-learning calendar to track all of the events sponsored by civic outreach programs in its surrounding area.<sup>188</sup> This tool helps program leaders schedule events so that they do not conflict with other civic outreach efforts, thereby reducing unproductive competition for those people who are targeted for services (e.g., administrators, teachers, and students).

Increased coordination not only reduces unproductive competition but also provides a clearer picture of which geographic areas are in the greatest need of services. With a clear understanding of where civic outreach services are already being provided, programs can more strategically funnel services to underserved areas to begin closing the civic opportunity and achievement gaps. Another potential benefit of increased coordination is that programs acquire a cohesive voice that can be used to facilitate legislative changes that align with the mission of all civic outreach programs.<sup>189</sup> Given the significant funding limitations faced by civic outreach programs, the development of robust, collaborative relationships and effective coordination efforts should be priorities for enhancing sustainability.

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184. *Id.*

185. *Id.*

186. Healy Interview, *supra* note 77; Lindke Interview, *supra* note 90.

187. *arsalyn* *INFO Search*, ARSALYN, <http://www.arsalyn.org/Search.asp> (last visited Apr. 14, 2012).

188. *Civic Learning Calendar*, MCCORMICK FOUND., <http://www.mccormickfoundation.org/page.aspx?pid=992> (last visited Apr. 14, 2013).

189. For example, programs could collectively push for legislation like Florida's Justice Sandra Day O'Connor Civics Education Act., H.B. 105, 112th Leg. Sess. (Fla. 2010).

## CONCLUSION

The proliferation of civic outreach programs can be attributed to three trends: pervasive and ongoing civic deficits, decreasing national support for civic education, and increasing awareness of the benefits of civic literacy. Given the large number and wide variety of current civic outreach programs, it is important to be able to differentiate among programs. Although a wide variety of approaches to improving civic literacy is desirable, Model 1 programs that target actors in K-12 educational institutions should be given special consideration because they are best equipped to effectuate meaningful improvements in civic literacy. However, there are two challenges shared by such programs: (1) identifying and measuring outcomes, and (2) ensuring program sustainability. In light of these challenges, leaders of civic outreach programs should focus on scaling their efforts to measure outcomes and on increasing their commitment to inter-program collaboration and coordination. Strengthening civic outreach programs should be a national priority because it is clear that civic education plays an integral role in preserving our democratic system of governance.