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The Research Digests

This Digest is one of a series of periodic digests produced by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) for the Queensland College of Teachers. Each digest focuses on a single topical issue, and provides a review of major messages from research on the issue. A key feature of the digests is an emphasis on what the research means for teachers and teaching. Over the course of several editions, a wide range of issues will be covered, so that teachers from different areas of schooling will find topics of relevance to their needs and interests.

Previous Issues

- 1 (Oct 2007) *Writing to learn*
- 2 (Apr 2008) *Managing student behaviour in the classroom*
- 3 (Oct 2008) *Using Data to Improve Learning*
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Research Digest

Number 8

Civics and Citizenship Education

This edition of *The Digest* is focused on research about civics and citizenship education, and in particular, research into the role of schools in supporting students to become active and informed citizens. *The Digest* also reports on what research tells us about young people's civic knowledge and engagement, and about what motivates young people to participate in society.



Approaches to Civics and Citizenship Education

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Civics and citizenship education has, over time, in different ways, been recognised as a key aspect of Australian education. In the 1890s and early 1900s it was linked to history and moral training; by the 1930s and 1940s it had developed into an explicit curriculum area as a component of social studies (Civics Expert Group, 1994). More recently, it has been recognised in agreed national educational goals for young Australians which have identified civic knowledge and active citizenship as desirable outcomes of schooling.

The ten agreed national goals set out in the 1989 Hobart Declaration on Schooling included a specific focus on civics and citizenship:

To develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which will enable students to participate as active and informed citizens in our democratic Australian society within an international context. (MCEETYA, 1989)

Ten years later, the 1999 Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century superseded the Hobart Declaration but reiterated that when they leave school young Australians should be:

... active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life. (MCEETYA, 1999)

Most recently, in 2008, the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, which replaced the Adelaide Declaration, set out two broad goals, the second of which stated that by the end of secondary schooling:

All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens. (MCEETYA, 2008)

Some important attributes of 'active and informed citizens' are listed in the elaboration of this goal. These indicate a broad view of the student learning outcomes that are expected to be gained from civics and citizenship education, including:

- *appreciate Australia's social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, and have an understanding of Australia's system of government, history and culture*
- *are committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia's civic life*
- *are responsible global and local citizens. (MCEETYA, 2008)*

The articulation by the Australian Ministers of Education of these key goals between 1989 and 2008 demonstrates the value that has been placed on the development of civic knowledge and understanding, and education for active citizenship.

Research in this field includes international and national large scale studies, involving surveys of students' knowledge and attitudes to civics and citizenship education, and country case studies. It also includes the collection of qualitative data about school approaches. This digest reports on that body of research, from the late 1990s until the present.

The digest draws on searches of a number of databases and bibliographic resources, including the Australian Education Index, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Education Research Complete, British Education Index and Scopus.

A selection of relevant websites is listed, and a full reference list is provided. Links to those references for which full-text online access is freely available are also included.

Approaches To Civics And Citizenship Education

In Australia, over the last two decades, a number of initiatives have attempted to increase knowledge and interest in the processes of civic participation, and to assist schools in their role of supporting students to become active and informed citizens. Research findings from national and international assessments of civics and citizenship, and from school case studies of civics and citizenship activities provide useful insights about effective approaches to supporting students to develop the attributes of active and informed citizenship.

Australian chronology of approaches to civics and citizenship education

A summary of the main public milestone reports and policy initiatives that have shaped Australian approaches to civics and citizenship education in Australia since 1994 is provided in the following chronology.

- ▶ 1994: The report of the Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the people ...* presented to the Prime Minister. (Civics Expert Group, 1994)
- ▶ 1996-2000: Australia participated in the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Civic Education Study of Fourteen Year Olds.

- ▶ 1997: *Discovering Democracy* program launched – resource development.
- ▶ 1999: *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century* endorsed by Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). (MCEETYA, 1999)
- ▶ 2001: MCEETYA decides to implement triennial National Civics and Citizenship Sample Assessment at Years 6 & 10.
- ▶ 2002: Publication of Australian national report from IEA Civic Education Study. (Mellor, Kennedy & Greenwood, 2002)
- ▶ 2002/3: States and Territories start curriculum mapping of Civics and Citizenship Education across key learning areas.
- ▶ 2004: First cycle of National Assessment Program - Civics and Citizenship Years 6 & 10 implemented.
- ▶ 2005-2007: National Statements of Learning for Civics and Citizenship Education developed and incorporated into state and territory curricula. (MCEETYA, 2006)
- ▶ 2006: Report of 2004 National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship Years 6 & 10 published. (MCEETYA, 2006)
- ▶ 2007: Second cycle of National Assessment Program - Civics and Citizenship at Years 6 & 10 begins.
- ▶ 2008: *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* signed by all Australian Education Ministers.
- ▶ 2009: Report of 2007 National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship Years 6 & 10 published. (MCEETYA, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c)

The report, *Whereas the people ...* (Civics Expert Group, 1994) had reported a 'civic deficit', across the whole community, citing evidence from their national civics survey that *deficiencies of knowledge, capacity and civic confidence are apparent*. These findings were supported by subsequent research into and assessment of student knowledge.

Mellor (2008) noted some constraints and contradictions in the Australian approach over the course of the two decades of policy development in this area. For example, although the *Adelaide Declaration* took a broad view of civics and citizenship education, the first stage of the *Discovering Democracy Program* involved the development of resources which incorporated a paradigm focused on formal Australian

governance institutions and civic knowledge. She also noted that there needed to be attention given in schools to expanding the students' capacities, in terms of levels of knowledge, understanding and dispositions, to further enhance their learning in the area. The second stage of the *Discovering Democracy Program*, which focussed on professional development strategies which schools could adopt, provided scope for this other aspect of student capacity.

International policy trends

A review of policy and practice in citizenship education around the world was reported by Hébert and Sears (2001). This review noted that the implementation of specific courses in civics or citizenship seemed to be a trend in many parts of the world. Recognition that school structures must support education for democratic citizenship was apparent in most countries, as was the *connection between positive attitudes in democratic civic life and schools which encourage students to be involved in school governance and openly discuss and take action on important public issues* (Hébert & Sears, 2001).

Across the world in the past two decades there has been a growing conviction that cultural differences affect the ways in which national outcomes can best be achieved. This view was supported by the IEA Civic Education Study of 28 countries, each of which also produced a national report. A further illustration of this view, in the European context, is the inclusion of a separate instrument to provide a specific European regional perspective in the 2010 IEA International Civic and Citizenship Study. The purpose of this module is to investigate specific Europe-related issues that derive from the overarching assessment framework of the study. The assessment framework developed for the 2010 IEA study, the third survey of civics and citizenship has been a point of reference for developing regional instruments. (Schulz, Fraillon, Ainley, Losito & Kerr, 2008)

The conceptualisation of civics and citizenship education in Australia In 1999 the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) decided to develop key measures to monitor and report on national progress towards achieving the goal of students leaving school as active and informed citizens with informed understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life. National sample assessments of Civics and Citizenship were conducted in 2004 and 2007, and the third

sample assessment in the cycle of the National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship (NAPCC) will be conducted in 2010.

Prior, Mellor & Withers (2001) had described six dimensions of civics and citizenship that provide a useful framework for considering approaches to supporting the development of students' knowledge and dispositions.

- ▶ Dimension 1: *Civic knowledge – for example, understandings about political decision-making processes, institutions, legal requirements.*
- ▶ Dimension 2: *A sense of personal identity – for example, a feeling of self-worth, belonging, efficacy, resilience.*
- ▶ Dimension 3: *A sense of community – for example, locating oneself within communities, some perhaps imagined communities.*
- ▶ Dimension 4: *Adoption of a code of civil behaviours – for example, civil and ethical behaviour, concern for welfare of others.*
- ▶ Dimension 5: *An informed and empathetic response to social issues - for example, environmental issues, social justice, equality and equity.*
- ▶ Dimension 6: *A skilled disposition to take social action – for example, community service, active participation in community affairs.* (Prior, Mellor & Withers, 2001, p 7)

The Australian conceptualisation of civics and citizenship education developed over time, and was especially influenced by the publication of the findings of the 1999 IEA Civic Education Study. The Australian view of civics and citizenship education is one which affirms the distinctions between civics knowledge and citizenship participation, but also sees them as complementary. This duality has been consistently referenced in all the research work undertaken in Australia and also informed international work in the field.

The conceptualisation has its most explicit form in the Assessment Domain developed for the National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship (NAP-CC) (MCEETYA, 2004). Two sub-dimensions (known as the Key Performance Measures) were defined:

- ▶ *Civics: Knowledge and Understandings of Civic Institutions and Processes*
- ▶ *Citizenship: Dispositions and Skills for Participation*

The most succinct description of the difference is that Civics is cognitive whereas Citizenship is dispositional in nature.

Civics was defined in the Assessment Domain as the *study of Australian democracy, its history, traditions, structures and processes; our democratic culture; the ways Australian society is managed, by whom and to what end*. Even this simple definition refers to facts but also indicates there are contested areas which need to be explicitly addressed in the teaching and learning of civics.

Citizenship is a more abstract concept and according to the Assessment Domain involves the development of *the skills, attitudes, beliefs and values that will predispose students to participate, to become and remain engaged and involved in that society/culture/democracy*.

Taken together these concepts constitute a rich and complex set of understandings, and are based on both civic knowledge and conceptual grasp of all the elements mentioned in the definitions. They also reference that the provision of opportunity to practise civic competencies is essential for effective citizenship education. The Assessment Domain indicates that without civic knowledge, plus a disposition to engagement, a person cannot demonstrate the required citizenship skills or effectively practice citizenship.

Domain descriptors were written for the two Key Performance Measures. The Professional Elaboration provides and expands on the domain descriptors. It elaborated and contextualized the knowledge, understandings, dispositions and skills that students were required to demonstrate in the assessment. The intention was that they should also become the focus of classroom curriculum.

A second development that has shaped the Australian approach was the release in 2006 of the *National Statements of Learning in Civics and Citizenship* (MCEETYA, 2006a) which defined nationally-agreed understandings about the place of Civics and Citizenship in school curriculum. The *Statements of Learning* were to be implemented in the curricula of all jurisdictions. The *Statements* described the knowledge, skills, understandings and capacities that all young Australians should have the opportunity to develop. Consistent with the NAPCivics and Citizenship Assessment Domain, the *Statements of Learning* maintained the key distinction of civics and citizenship and focussed on the importance of schools providing opportunities to develop both in students.

Each of the *Statements of Learning* encompasses four year junctures: the end of years 3, 5, 7 and 9. At each year level juncture, the Statements of Learning for Civics and Citizenship are structured around three broadly-defined aspects that are considered essential and common for curriculum:

- ▶ **Government and Law:** explores institutions, principles and values underpinning Australia's representative democracy.
- ▶ **Citizenship in a Democracy:** explores the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society and the civic knowledge, skills and values required to participate as informed and active citizens in local, state, national and global contexts.
- ▶ **Historical Perspectives:** explores the impact of the past on Australian civil society. (MCEETYA, 2006a)

The third development in the Australian approach was the Australian government's resource and professional development initiative, the *Discovering Democracy Program*, funded from 1997 to 2004. The materials developed in this initiative provided an extensive array of resources to support civics and citizenship education.

Since the publication of the Australia national report from the IEA Civic Education Survey in 2002 (Mellor, Kennedy & Greenwood, 2002), the profile of civics and citizenship education in Australia has been enhanced by these national developments, and by the incorporation of civics and citizenship outcome statements in the curricula of all jurisdictions. In summary, the Australian approach defines the field as both civics and citizenship, and is predicated on an assumption that Civics and Citizenship Education will be embedded across the curriculum, rather than established as a discrete learning area. ■



The Capacities Of School-Aged Australian Citizens

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Three studies since 1999 have collected national data about the civic knowledge and citizenship skills of young Australians:

- ▶ 1999: Civic Education Study of Fourteen Year Olds, conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)
- ▶ 2004: National Assessment Program - Civics and Citizenship Years 6 and 10.
- ▶ 2007: National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship, Years 6 and 10.

The data from these studies have provided significant understandings about civics and citizenship which are of great value to policy makers, teacher educators, and teachers.

IEA Civic Education Study

Twenty-eight countries participated in the IEA Civic Education Study of fourteen year olds. The goal of the study was to identify and examine, in a comparative framework, the ways in which and how well young people are prepared to undertake their role as citizens in democracies.

A list of policy-relevant questions was developed to focus the study, and included questions dealing with the organisation of educational programs, for example:

- ▶ What is the status of citizenship education as an explicit goal for schools?
- ▶ Around what instructional principles and through what courses are formal programs of civic education organised?
- ▶ To what extent does formal education deal with civic identity development in students?

Other questions focused on students, for example:

- ▶ How do students define and understand the concept of citizenship and related issues?
- ▶ For what rights and responsibilities of participation are students being prepared in their own political system or society?

Further questions focused on teachers and teaching and on schools, for example:

- ▶ How do teachers deal with civic education in their teaching, and what is the influence of different types of classroom practices?

- ▶ How well does the education of teachers prepare them to deal with the different facets of civic education?
- ▶ How does the way in which schools are organised influence students' civic participation? (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald & Schultz, 2001)

This international study provided, for the first time, a comprehensive picture of what young Australians knew and understood, what were their skills and attitudes, and how they felt about civic issues (Mellor, Kennedy & Greenwood, 2002). (There was little information on citizenship activities provided by this study and this was noted in the Australian national report as being a weakness. There was also a teachers' survey, which indicated that Australian teachers thought civics and citizenship education was a very important area of learning, but that they felt inadequately prepared to teach effectively in this area.)

The final reports of the whole study highlighted several key findings, including the finding about the part played by educational practices in preparing students for citizenship. The Australian national report of the IEA study analysed and interpreted the Australian data collected during the IEA Civic Education Study and included some comparative analysis with some of the 28 other countries involved in the study (Mellor, Kennedy, Greenwood, 2002). This report also highlighted the relationship between participation in school councils or parliaments and broader civic knowledge.

The IEA Civic Education study found that Australian students' achievement on the Civic Knowledge sub-scale was just average, and their comparative achievement on the Interpretative Skills sub-scale was above the international average. There were 10 countries with higher means than Australia on the Total Civic Knowledge scale. In relation to Civic Engagement, Australian students scored significantly lower scores than the international average on each of the three sub-scales. These findings were taken to confirm the need for greater effort to be put into this area of learning in Australian schools.

The relationship between student civic knowledge and participation experiences was established in the Australian national report.

Participation in a school council or parliament is positively related to civic knowledge for Australian students, indeed even more so than for the international students. However, only one third of them have participated in a school council or parliament. Australian students seem to have a more positive view of what can be achieved by groups of students in schools than they have of what adults can achieve by active participation in the political process. Thus, on the Confidence in Participating in School scale the Australian mean, at 9.9, is lower than the international but is not significantly below that of the international group.

(Mellor, Kennedy & Greenwood, 2002)



Findings on student achievement gained from national assessment

The 2004 and 2007 National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship (NAP-CC) assessed a national sample of students at Years 6 and 10. These national sample assessments provided data on student achievement in each cycle, and the findings suggest ways that schools might improve student performance on assessment tasks related to civic activities (MCEETYA, 2006b, 2009a).

Student achievement was mapped against Proficiency Levels, set on the Civics and Citizenship Literacy Scale (which had 6 bands). The Year 6 Proficiency Level was set at Level 2 for both cycles. Students who performed at this level are described in the report in the following terms.

Students who achieved at Proficiency Level 2 demonstrate accurate factual responses to relatively simple civics and citizenship concepts or issues in responding to multiple choice items and show limited interpretation or reasoning in their responses to open-ended items. They interpret and reason within limits across the two key performance measures. They recognise the division of governmental responsibilities in a federation, that respecting the rights of others to hold differing opinions is a democratic principle, and can identify a link between a change in Australia's identity and the national anthem. (MCEETYA, 2009a, p xiii)

The Year 10 Proficiency Level was set at Level 3 for both cycles. Students who performed at this level are described as being able to:

Demonstrate relatively precise and detailed factual responses to complex key civics and citizenship concepts or issues in multiple choice items. In responding to open-ended items, they use field-specific language with some fluency, and reveal some interpretation of information. They recognise some key functions and features of parliament, identify the importance in democracies for citizens to engage with issues, and analyse the common good as a motivation for becoming a whistle-blower. (MCEETYA, 2009a, p xiv)

In the 2004 and 2007 cycles of the national assessment, both age-based cohorts demonstrated achievement at lower-than-expected levels. Additionally there was only a 2-3% improvement from 2004-2007. Only about half of the Year 6 students achieved their designated proficiency level and fewer

than one third of the Year 10 students achieved theirs. There were significant variations between jurisdictions, but most of the education jurisdictions found the results discouraging. The third cycle is being conducted in October 2010, with a revised Assessment Domain, so those outcomes are not yet known.

The second major finding in the report of the 2007 assessment (MCEETYA, 2009a) related to information on the effect on student achievement of participating in school governance and civics and citizenship-related experiences in school, and of participating in citizenship activities outside school. These findings applied to students at both year levels.

- ▶ Significant cumulative effects in achievement were demonstrated to operate as a result of participating in civics and citizenship (C&C) related and school governance activities in school
- ▶ Significant cumulative effects on achievement derived from participating in C&C-related activities outside school
- ▶ Parent occupation also had a significant effect on achievement.

The impacts of these participation effects, in addition to the usual effects of parental background on student achievement are shown in Figure 5.8 from the 2007 report. This figure is shown below.

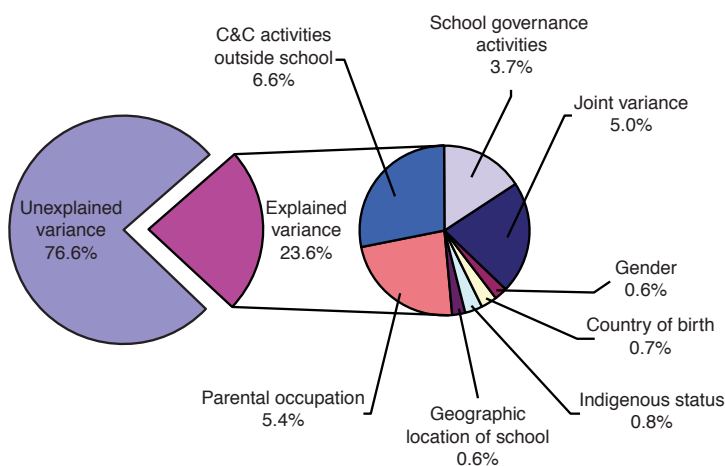


Figure 1: Disaggregation of Variance and Explained Variance in Student Performance on the Civics and Citizenship Literacy Scale, by Student Background and Civic Participation Variables, 2007. (MCEETYA, 2009a, p. 99)

The figure shows that almost a quarter of the variation in achievement can be explained by a combination of student's parental background and participation in civics and citizenship activities. This is a considerable effect. However for schools a significant element of this finding is that only some of this effect directly relates to school provision.

That direct effect derives from the civics and citizenship-related and school governance activities, which were found to be very significant for those students who had experienced them. The 2007 survey had asked students about their actual participation in these civics and citizenship and governance activities. Three quarters of year 6 and two thirds of year 10 students had voted for class representatives. Approximately one third of year 6 and one fifth of year 10 students had served on a student representative council (SRC), and of those, approximately three quarters believed they had 'contributed to school decision-making'. Less than a third of students reported that they had contributed to school decision-making in non- SRC ways. Variable numbers said they had participated in peer-support programmes, helped create a school newspaper, represented the school, or participated in such activities outside school. These responses indicate that only a minority of students were actively engaged in such activities (other than voting for class representatives), but when they were engaged they felt they 'had made a useful contribution'. Students who had had these opportunities felt positive about them, but only a minority of students in primary and secondary schools in Australia had had such opportunities.

There was a significant correlation between schools where the mean student achievement score was high and students reported high levels of actual participation in these activities. Similar correlations occurred between schools with low mean achievement and low levels of student participation in these activities. Additionally the effects of participation were cumulative – that is to say, the more of these activities participated in, the greater was the effect on achievement. The inescapable conclusion is that schools which provide their students with such opportunities are more likely to have students who are more knowledgeable and are more skilled at participation and have a greater disposition to engage, than schools that do not.

The Report concluded:

If schools do not wish to provide a detailed or conventional Civics and Citizenship curriculum to all their students, thereby adding to the students' civic knowledge, this report's findings indicate that worthwhile gains will come from a governance model which allows decision-making by students in the school. (MCEETYA, 2009a, pp 108–9)

The descriptions of student capability contained in the proficiency levels indicated some of the knowledge and skills which students demonstrated. As was described as the second key finding from the national assessment and shown in the Figure 5.8 from the report, there are particular benefits to schools providing opportunities for students to practice active citizenship participation. Other research has provided examples of such activities. ■



The Place of Civics and Citizenship in schools: Delivery options

10

An ACER evaluation of the professional development stage of the *Discovering Democracy* program in Victoria (Holdsworth & Mellor, 2004) provided a model of whole school approaches to civics and citizenship education. This evaluation report picked up key findings from the Civics Expert Group and the IEA Civic Education report, and drew on the conceptualisation of civics and citizenship education in the NAP-CC Assessment Domain. It included a diagram, see Figure 2, which had been used in the professional development program and which enabled teachers and administrators to analyse the ways their schools did (or might be able to) deliver Civics and Citizenship Education.

An examination of the diagram indicates that there are several aspects of school life which can be natural sites for civics and citizenship learning in a school. Also there are overlapping and inter-connected elements. Opportunities for civics and citizenship learning can occur across the whole sweep of a school's life, most especially when the view prevails that students are full members of the school community and thus entitled to learn to be part of the decision-making processes undertaken in that school. While the advantages of having a consistent application of civics and citizenship policy across the school are clear, it can also be seen that focussing on one or more elements could make a difference to civics and citizenship learning opportunities available to students in a school.

In the study most schools had chosen to focus their implementation on one of the four areas. These can be mapped to the four main elements of the diagram:

- A:** Auditing and Whole School Practice and Policy work
- B:** Classroom teaching & learning and curriculum development
- C:** Learning activities in Active Citizenship
- D:** Community links & partnerships

In the publication *Discovering Democracy in Action: Implementing the Policy*, the selected case study reports were compiled under the same four headings. This collection of actual case studies of effective implementation was written by teachers, usually in teams, who had participated in professional development activities. They had also some funding to support implementation, in their schools, of civics and citizenship programs and activities which they had devised for their schools.

Some schools mapped their programs to the model and developed a strategy to broaden their policy for civics and citizenship delivery within the school (A). Others developed specific civics and citizenship curriculum and professionally developed teachers so they could adopt a more open climate in their classrooms (B). Possibly the most instructive case studies related to the school organisation, ethos and environment. Some of the schools which had tackled the issue of how to get students to play a more active role in the organisation of their school found that they developed programs with activities which could enable the students to develop a more active role in their learning (C). Many of the schools developed programs which explicitly included links to their broader communities in some significant way (D). ■

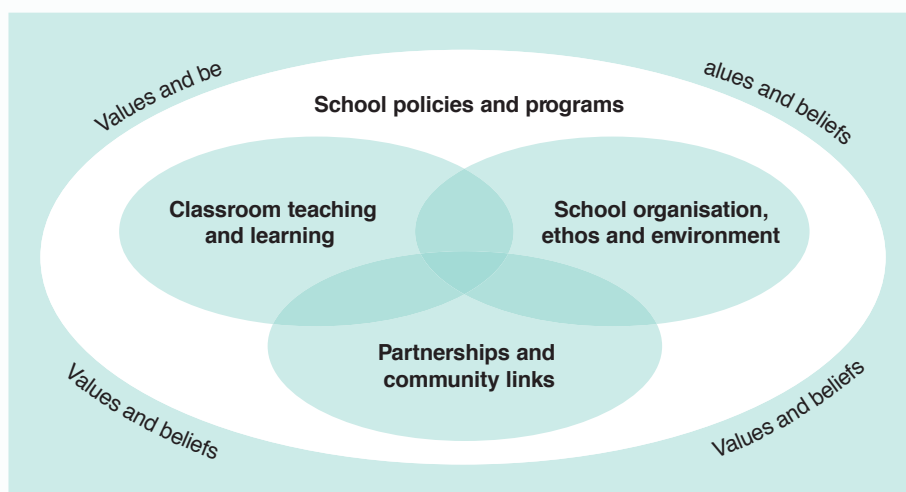


Figure 2: Civics and Citizenship Education: A Whole School Approach (Holdsworth & Mellor, 2004, p vii)

Active Citizenship in Schools



Case studies of how Australian teachers have responded to the civics and citizenship initiatives described above provide qualitative evidence about a variety of ways of creating teaching and learning approaches and school contexts in which students can engage actively in civics and citizenship education.

Active participation in decision-making is recognised worldwide as the area of civics and citizenship learning which is most likely to lead to the development of a disposition to active citizenship. All the reports previously mentioned in this digest have indicated the value of providing students of all ages with opportunities to engage in such activities. The best learning outcomes are achieved when these opportunities can be explicitly linked to a broader civic knowledge that has been taught in a civics class. But, as the previously mentioned findings from the NAP-CC demonstrated, even when not linked, it appears to have a positive effect on civics and citizenship learning, and the disposition to engage more generally.

As the Australian report for the IEA Civic Education Study had indicated:

Just as student participation outside of classrooms yields benefits in terms of enhanced civic knowledge, so too does their active participation within classrooms. Civic education cannot consist of the passive reception of decontextualised information. It must allow students to engage with the knowledge they are expected to learn,

and which is necessary to equip an active citizenry, and with activities that will give them experience with the practice of democracy. (Mellor & Kennedy, 2003, p 537)

The case studies in *Discovering Democracy in Action: Implementing the Program* reported a range of learning activities associated with active citizenship, including:

- *excursions to places and attention to programs that provide information relevant to particular areas of civic knowledge (e.g. to houses of parliament, electoral centres, museums)*
- *more complex engagement by students in school governance and a more complex range of settings and ways in which students can engage in a broader range of decision-making processes in the school*
- *the adoption of a wide range of activities that expressly require service from students within the school community*
- *programs designed to increase self-management by students and care of others*
- *the construction of a 'product' using an overly cooperative model of working together.* (Holdsworth & Mellor, 2004)

Several of these case studies are summarised below. (Page references have been given to the quotes from the *Discovering Democracy in Action: Implementing the Program* report.)



The following interesting learning activities were reported from a primary school in a country town.

We conceived the idea of having a role-play of a local Council, where the issue to be debated was whether it would be desirable to have young people directly represented on the local council. We believed that a role-play was an excellent way of engaging students as both tutors and learners. It became increasingly clear that the success of the role-play was based on the fun the students would have, both in the roles they had developed as councillors, and as tutors of civics and citizenship to other Year 6 students. (Holdsworth & Mellor, 2004, pp 56–59)

The role-plays and materials were developed and scripted by students in class over a 15-week period. In the role-play each councillor made a speech in support of, or against the idea of young people having direct representation on local council. After four speeches, the role-play would stop, and the two appointed facilitators would set the audience a task that the councillors would then help them to complete. The role plays were presented to Year 5 and 6 students at a number of neighbouring primary schools.

It became clear with the success of each venue that the audiences were not only entertained, but also educated and left with knowledge and a process for change in which they could be prime motivators. (Holdsworth & Mellor, 2004, p 57)

Some schools in the evaluation study worked in cluster arrangements. A cluster of primary schools, a P-12 school, and a secondary college in a rural area created a cluster web site that detailed events and hosted those events. From the outset, the planning team had a strong belief that ‘participation’ and ‘doing’ were more effective ways of teaching citizenship than theory in a classroom. The program was explicitly focussed on participation, heightened awareness of civics and citizenship and communication skills.

Some examples were:

- ▶ The construction of a web site by secondary college students. The maintenance of the site for the next twelve months required the collection on a regular basis of data and information from schools involved in the project so that the site could be updated. This was a digital maintenance task with a reporting function, undertaken by the students.
- ▶ Teams of four middle school (Years 5-8) students matched with another team of four from a different school, worked online, and were given a hypothetical problem of global or local significance to research, and then developed a presentation. The presentations were made at the end of term, with 65 students from across the cluster participating in a day that ranged from speeches and reports, to dramas, role-plays and model building.
- ▶ A Junior Parliament was held in mid-year, with 75 students from years 5-8 participating and another 60 as spectators.



Each primary school provided a team of four students, and the secondary college matched these with students from years 7 and 8. Participating students were given a topic a week before the parliament. One speaker presented for three minutes on the topic, and the four other students formed a panel and were questioned by a designated opposing team. The parliament was run on parliamentary rules with a Speaker and formal language in debates.

The project coordinator described the outcomes of the program:

Students became more interested and more conversant with what was happening in their community. They also became more aware of the decision-making processes in their communities. Many learnt to use ICT proficiently to communicate with other schools and gained confidence in public speaking, debating and presenting to audiences. (Holdsworth & Mellor, 2004, pp 72–74)

The case studies from the Discovering Democracy in Action: Implementing the Program provide qualitative evidence of strategies that have been found to be effective in embedding civics and citizenship education in the curriculum. Student Action teams have been found to be an effective strategy to strengthen students' engagement with school. Staff from a country primary school who attended a Discovering Democracy professional development session about Student Action Teams (SAT) recognised how this would extend the Civics and Citizenship Education activities already operating in their school. These teachers committed to raising the profile

and value of Civics and Citizenship Education in the curriculum across all year levels and with all staff in their school.

A Junior School Council was already running at the school, together with a range of other activities. The idea of Student Action Teams was used to change the structure of the Junior School Council to create a more effective working environment that would benefit the school and the community. A new structure was designed that included a School Focused SAT and a Community Focused SAT. The committees meet every other week and then come together between meetings to share progress or make full Junior School Council decisions. Achievements of the two Student Action teams were written about in the newsletter to keep the families and community informed. Staff monitored the progress of the SATs, and identified a need to improve the structure of class meetings. To create this structure, a set of starter questions was provided to each representative to guide their meeting to focus on school and community issues. (Holdsworth & Mellor, 2004, p. 71)

The coordinators of the Civics and Citizenship Education program at this school recognised the importance of continual discussion and review of new programs with teachers.

All members of staff need to feel that their input is valued and that their concerns and beliefs will be met. Classroom teachers are in the best position to critique any new classroom programs and offer constructive and innovative ideas. (Holdsworth & Mellor, 2004, p. 71)

Another perspective on Student Action Teams and engagement has recently been provided in a booklet titled *Switched On to Learning: Student Initiatives in School Engagement*, written by the students of two Victorian primary schools. Through photos, cartoons, and many student voices, the students' engagement in school is vividly described.

Engagement is not only an idea that relates to school. It's something that affects our whole life.

One of the team put it best saying ... 'If you're engaged at school you can be engaged ever ywhere'. Engaged in life means you have a chance to enjoy life more.

Therefore another way I think we can improve student engagement is to involve the experts – students – in making important decisions about their learning.

By having Student Action Teams, we have gone about investigating engagement with an engaging approach.

While members were selected by teachers initially, students chose future members of the team each year to replace Year 6 students going to high school.

After three years we are at the end of the engagement project. We've used this report to tell you about our learning ... It's a reminder of how far we've come and all the things we've done.

I've only been a part of a SAT this year – it's really helped my learning.

(Student Action Teams at Pender's Grove Primary School & Preston South Primary School, 2009)

Another research project, funded by the Australian Research Council (Kennedy, Jimenez, Mayer, Mellor & Smith, 2003), generated a series of State/Territory case studies.

The ARC project involved conversations between university colleagues and school teachers, and addressed the following key issues in civics and citizenship education:

1. *How does civics and citizenship education fit into the curriculum?*
2. *What is civics education?*
3. *What is citizenship education?*
4. *Are civics and citizenship education necessarily in conflict?*
5. *Where does Discovering Democracy fit?*



6. *Civics and citizenship events and activities.*

7. *Values and civics and citizenship education.*
(Kennedy et al., 2003)

The case studies contain vignettes of an array of activities. An Education for Citizenship Program was an established part of the curriculum at one ACT secondary school, structured around a broad theme at each year level:

- ▶ *Year 7: Caring for what's around us* – plants, animals, the environment, our country, people in our community, people in other lands.
- ▶ *Year 8 – Being a wise consumer* – budgeting, buying food and clothes.
- ▶ *Year 9 – The social scene* – peer groups, relationships and sex, drugs, health, conflict resolution and teenagers and the law.



- ▶ *Year 10 – Being a responsible voter* – political system, excursions for electoral education, Parliament House, ACT assembly. (Kennedy et al., 2003)

A Victorian country high school had instituted, as a committee of the School Council, a Youth Council on which Year 9 and 10 students were representatives, and on which they had a range of responsibilities. A teacher related how the object was

... to give the kids a role in local affairs. It's been a good opportunity for the voice of the kids, and they have been influential in spending \$25,000 per annum of local rates on kids. They have been influential in setting up a range of youth activities for the region ...

There has also been the opportunity for kids to be involved in inter viewing migrants in the region. In another school supported project, called 'Living in Harmony', funded by the Commonwealth, the focus

was on the history of migrants in the region. Our kids were asked to assist in the development of the inter view schedules, they were bussed to the place for inter viewing, and they had to report on and de-brief to peers and the project Steering Committee. The inter view tapes are now all stored in the local library for posterity and a book of the inter views was published. (Kennedy et al., 2003, p 18)

Evidence from explorations of actual school practices, such as those cited from the three projects above, provide insights into ways of implementing civics and citizenship education, and can be used as the basis for a dialogue about how these approaches might be adapted and modified to suit other school contexts.

The case studies from each of the three research projects quoted in the digest provide examples of school change processes. Some common elements of key strategies and processes, seen to be crucial for effective change, can be drawn from these case studies.

- ▶ The creation of a *small core team* of teachers to take responsibility for change and its direction.
- ▶ *Supported time* for members of that team to work together.
- ▶ *An external challenge* from a consultant or 'critical friend' to support teachers' reflection about a school's situation and their consequent initiatives.
- ▶ Preparation of *local documents* that are easy to use within the school.
- ▶ *Support* from the school's administration.
- ▶ Conscious initiatives to involve *larger numbers* of staff members, both in terms of the teaching of the program and its 'ownership'.
- ▶ Explicit attention to *sustainability* of the program within the school. (Holdsworth & Mellor, 2004, p. ix) ■

comment

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Student participation is today relevant to a broader youth participation policy framework that spans youth and education policy and local, state and national government. The term 'student participation' encompasses the idea of young people's involvement in decision making about their learning, school and community, and is associated with processes that enable young people to exercise some control, to belong and to engage in meaningful learning, to participate in their local environment, and to understand their connection to global matters. It is differentiated from the terms 'educational participation' which refers to young people's attendance at schools and presence in classrooms. (Wyn, 2009, p 25)

The key findings of the reports of the international study of civic education conducted by the IEA, and the Australian National Assessment Program – Civics and Citizenship reveal the need for further development of civic and citizenship education in Australian schools, to achieve the national goals relating to active and informed citizens. The research findings also clearly show how schools can inspire their students and provide them with opportunities to participate, and to practise being active citizens. These findings indicate that open classroom climates and whole school governance structures provide authentic opportunities for students to learn to participate effectively in their communities.

Providing students with opportunities to learn and practise civics and citizenship competencies within the school context plays a significant role in developing civic knowledge and engagement. This Digest has provided a range of examples of the opportunities that some schools have offered their students to help shape school life. It should be noted that the implementation of many of these programs did not require significant changes to the way the school was organised. But the case studies do confirm that in these schools a high value was placed on involving students in reporting and decision-making roles within the school. The opportunities and participation experiences provided to their students by these schools reflect the importance teachers and school leaders placed on students' active engagement in their school as part of a civics and citizenship education process. They affirm that developing active citizens is an important and legitimate function for schools. ■

useful online sources

<http://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au/cce/>

This website contains resources, information, activities and links for teachers, students and parents involved in civics and citizenship education.

http://www.mceetya.edu.au/verve/_resources/ccap_assessment_domain_2004.pdf

Access to details about the Australian National assessment program – Civics and Citizenship assessment domains for the 2004 and 207 surveys can be found at this website.

http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/nap_cc_2004_years_6_and_10_report,17149.html

The full report of the 2004 National Assessment Program-Civics and Citizenship is available at this web site.

http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/nap_civics_and_citizenship_2007_yrs6_and_10_report,26602.html

The full report of the 2007 National Assessment Program-Civics and Citizenship is available at this web site.

http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/_resources/FINAL_Yr6_SRM_NAPCC_Feb09.pdf

and

http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/_resources/FINAL_Yr10_SRM_NAPCC_Feb09.pdf

Assessment materials released from the year 6 and year 10 National Assessment program-Civics and Citizenship are located at this website, and can be used by schools.

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