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Building an Evidence-Based Practice of Action Civics:

The current state of assessments and recommendations for the future

By Jessica Gingold

Harvard Graduate School of Education

Tufts UNIVERSITY | Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service

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Executive Summary

Over the past two decades, in both youth development and civic education, leaders have adopted increasingly strength-based, action-centered approaches to teaching civic and leadership skills. A new community of researchers and practitioners, the National Action Civics Collaborative (NACC), has recently emerged epitomizing this new approach. This Collaborative seeks to advance "action civics," which draws on both youth development and civic education. In action civics, students are not taught *about* civics, but rather, they are taught to "*do* civics and *behave as citizens*" (Levinson, 2012, p. 224). NACC members focus their efforts on marginalized youth and emphasize youth voice, youth expertise, collective action, and reflection. Their mission is to close the civic empowerment gap—a widening gap in civic knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors between low-income, minority youth and wealthier, white youth—by implementing action civics in classrooms and youth organizations throughout the country (Levinson, 2012; NACC, *National Service Learning Conference*). NACC organizations engage students in a multi-step process to identify key issues in their *own* communities, conduct research, strategize, and take action, all while teaching the necessary political and civic knowledge to be effective. While these organizations have common practices, they evaluate their work using different tools. The diversity of tools leads to the driving questions of this report: how are NACC member organizations currently evaluating their work and what framework could guide future evaluation and assessment of action civics?

To answer that question, this report first reviews the civic education and youth development literature, making the case that action civics is a distinct field bridging both domains and thus requires new evaluation approaches. The report then provides an overview of current civics assessment methods, indicating that methods are largely uncoordinated and constantly evolving. The report's main findings are derived from an in-depth analysis of the 27 evaluation tools used by NACC organizations. The findings begin with a theory of change for action civics derived from the tools, interviews, and focus groups of NACC leaders. It includes the following six outcomes:

- Civic and cultural transformation (e.g. systems reform, policy changes, stereotype shifts)
- 21st Century positive youth leadership
- Active and informed citizenship
- Youth civic participation (e.g. participation in meetings, commissions, advocacy)
- Youth civic creation (e.g. research reports, media, arts)
- An academically successful student

These outcomes promote the long-term impacts of broader incorporation of youth voice and a stronger democracy.

The report then describes the tools currently being used, focusing on student-level evaluation tools. Most tools measure eight competencies: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, agency, civic values, professionalism, civic knowledge, and academic improvement. The tools measuring these competencies are largely survey-based assessments of students' attitudes and self-reported skills. Four community-impact tools are also in use; they offer the beginning of a framework for assessing youth contributions and effects on community.

Although each NACC member organization is unique, an analysis of their evaluation tools indicates that they are in fact measuring similar outcomes and competencies, and thus, it makes sense to have a common framework for action civics evaluation.

Based on the findings, the report offers recommendations for addressing challenges that organizations face in assessing action civics. The six recommendations are:

1. Decide on the purpose of common assessments
2. Affirm or modify a common theory of change and outcomes
3. Develop a common assessment toolkit
4. Develop digital tools and a data-hub
5. Empower youth in the assessment process, aligning assessment with the mission of action civics
6. Develop partnerships between researchers and practitioners to cultivate mechanisms for long-term monitoring and evaluation

For action civics to influence current civic education practices, participating organizations must create a framework for evaluating their work in a consistent fashion while maintaining flexibility. Doing so will be challenging, but the effort will be worthwhile, carving a definitive space for action civics in the future of civic education.

Background

As young people come of age in today's polarized political environment, it is necessary to teach students not only the basics of our political system, but also how to develop their own voices to improve the system (Malin, 2011). Researchers and practitioners alike are shining a light on the state of civic education in the United States, calling for an approach that empowers young people with the necessary attitudes, skills, and knowledge to be active and responsible citizens (Campbell, Levinson, & Hess, 2012; Youniss, 2011).

One aspect of current civic education that is receiving critical attention is inequality. Often valuable civic education and empowerment opportunities are unequally distributed, leaving the most marginalized youth the least prepared to participate (Ferman, 2012; Levinson, 2012; Pope, Stolte, & Cohen, 2011). Disparities in civic knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes between low-income, minority youth and wealthier white youth have been termed the "civic empowerment gap" (Levinson, 2012, p. 32; Pope, Stolte, & Cohen, 2011).

Conventional civic education is also being criticized as too narrowly concerned with remedying deficits in students' knowledge. Over the past two decades, there has been a renewed focus on engaging adolescents in positive development and civic engagement. This shift challenges the high-stakes testing educational climate focused on purely academic skills and inspires educators to develop the *whole* person, engaging both cognitive skills and "non-cognitive" or soft skills (CASEL, 2003; Lerner et al., 2005; Partnership for 21st Century Skills). Many who do this work invoke not only the developmental needs of young people, but also the future of our democracy and economy.

In youth development, the field of Positive Youth Development (PYD) uses an asset- and strength-based approach to engage youth (Lerner et al., 2005). PYD focuses on developing the five Cs, "competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring," which together lead to a sixth C—(community/civic) contribution (Geldholf et al., in press; Lerner et al., 2005, p. 12). In education, advocates for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) have pushed for schools to teach "soft skills"—emotion management, problem solving and positive relationship skills—with states like Illinois adopting SEL learning standards (Beland, 2007; Illinois State Board of Education, 2013; Zins and Elias, 2007).

PYD *may* result in youth civic engagement, but neither PYD nor SEL *insists* on youth applying their positive character developments in the civic realm. In efforts to bridge civic education with communities, the fields of service-learning and youth organizing engage young people in their communities while developing positive leadership capacities (Fox et al, 2010; Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Youniss, 2012). Levinson (2013) refers to this brand of civic education as "guided experiential civic education" (p. 57).

According to the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (2013), "Service-Learning …integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection." Service-learning, with its emphasis on *doing* for others, not necessarily affecting the underlying systems of power, tends toward the development of the "personally responsible citizen"—one with pro-social values, voluntarism, and general good neighborliness (Bardwell, 2012; Kahne & Westheimer, 2004). Service-learning emphasizes individual over collective acts and does not insist that young-people connect their service work to systemic issues (Levinson, 2012; Walker, 2000). Further, service-learning's emphasis on volunteering can have an alienating affect on low-income students of color who see themselves (as well as their communities or families) as objects of charity rather than agents of change (Levinson, 2012; Youniss, 2012).

Conversely, youth organizing focuses almost exclusively on tipping the balance of power in institutions and society at large, emphasizing the power of the collective, especially the youth collective, over that of the individual citizen (Fox et al, 2010; Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

These less-traditional forms of civic education recognize the developmental needs of adolescents and society's need for engaged citizens. Still, many lament that these approaches leave out important more "traditional" understandings of civic education—instruction on government structures, the political processes, and historical documents (Levine, 2012a; Levinson, 2012; Niemi, 2012). Thus, while there are many new, high quality programs and approaches to civic-focused youth development, there is little consensus on both civic education content and evaluation (Campbell-Patton & Patton, 2010; Evans, 2007; Kahne et al., 2012; Levine, 2012a; Torney-Purta et al., 2010; Youniss, 2011).

An Emerging Field: Action Civics

In response to the growing interest in youth civic engagement, a community of practitioners and researchers came together in 2010 to create the National Action Civics Collaborative (NACC). They are driven by a belief that youth disengagement, especially in marginalized communities, puts our democracy at risk (Ferman, 2012). Youth disengagement is widening the "civic empowerment gap" (Levinson, 2012, p. 32; Pope, Stolte, & Cohen, 2011). In response, action civics has "students *do* civics and *behave as citizens* by engaging in a cycle of research, action, and reflection about problems they care about personally while learning about deeper principles of effective civic and especially political action" (Levinson, 2012, p. 224).

The name "action civics" is quickly gaining traction—Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently described it as "the new generation of civic education" (Duncan, 2012; Levine, 2012).

The NACC organizations (see Table 1) recognize that many other organizations have a similar approach. They seek to build a movement and invite other organizations to join them in developing a research-based approach to civic education that meets the challenges of today's democracy. In order to advance action civics to a robust evidence-supported field in education, it is important to establish a framework and tools for assessing and evaluating this work.[1] The NACC leaders thus enlisted me to do a thorough analysis of each organization's current assessment tools.

NACC's mission is "to close the civic engagement gap by implementing Action Civics—student-centered, project-based, high-quality civics education—as a critical component of every school and youth organization throughout the country, such that all young people are prepared to be active and informed citizens" (NACC, *National Service Learning Conference*).[2]

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[1] For the purpose of this paper, the words "assessment" and "evaluation" are used interchangeably.
[2] For more information on action civics curriculum and implementation, see www.centerforactioncivics.org or contact organizations directly

Table 1: National Action Civics Collaborative (NACC) Organizations

	CIRCLE	Earth Force	Generation Citizen	Mikva Challenge	The University Community Collaborative[3]	Youth on Board
Mission Statement	CIRCLE conducts research on civic education in schools, colleges, and community settings and on young Americans' voting and political participation, service, activism, media use, and other forms of civic engagement (CIRCLE, 2013).	Earth Force engages young people as active citizens who improve the environment and their communities now and in the future (Earth Force, 2013).	Generation Citizen envisions a democracy in which every citizen participates. Generation Citizen strengthens our nation's democracy by empowering young people to become engaged and effective citizens (Generation Citizen, 2013).	Mikva Challenge develops the next generation of civic leaders, activists and policy-makers. We do this by providing young people with opportunities to actively participate in the political process, because we believe that the best way to learn leadership and to learn democracy is to experience both (Mikva Challenge, 2013).	The UCC prepares and supports youth and young adults to become confident, effective leaders and collaborates with organizations to create cultures that value and integrate the contributions of youth, thereby building stronger communities (UCC, 2013).	Youth on Board helps young people and adults think differently about each other so that they can work together to change society (Youth on Board, 2013).
Location	Tufts University	National	National	Chicago	Philadelphia	Boston
Population served	All ages	K-12 (but mostly 5-12)	6-12 and college	Middle and High school	High school and college	High school
Program- location	No programming	Mixed	Classroom-based	Mixed	Out-of-school-time	Out-of-school-time
Implementation model	Does not implement (conducts research)	Train other organizations and schools to implement action civics process	Train classroom teachers and college "democracy coaches" to implement action civics curriculum	Mixture—train teachers to implement action civics curriculum *and* implement youth governance program with Mikva staff	Train UCC alum to implement action civics programs	YOB implements action civics program directly

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[3] Formerly the University Community Collaborative of Philadelphia (UCCP)

NACC does not blame young people for their inaction and apparent apathy, but instead advocates that schools and out-of-school organizations have failed to provide adequate opportunities for young people to be engaged (Watts & Flanagan, 2007). By instituting an action civics approach that reaches the most marginalized communities, practitioners can help close the growing civic empowerment gap and lift up youth voices in their communities (Levinson, 2010, 2012; NACC, 2013, *Action civics declaration*; Pope, Stolte, & Cohen, 2011). In practice, practitioners follow the action civics framework and a similar multi-step process.

Action civics is not a liberal or conservative program, nor is it applied to only one issue area. What matters are four guiding principles (NACC, 2013, *Action civics declaration*)[4]:

- Action, especially collective action
- Youth voice, including experiences, knowledge, concerns, and opinions
- Youth agency, including action, authority, and leadership
- Reflection, especially as it enriches the process

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<u>Action Civics Takes Many Forms</u>

- In Boston, students who are part of Youth on Board's student policy group, BSAC, successfully lobbied state legislators to include student feedback in teacher evaluation (BSAC, 2011).
- In Philadelphia, UCC youth create a weekly news show POPPYN (http://whatspoppyn.blogspot.com/) in which they take on issues important to youth.
- In Charleston, young people involved in Earth Force noticed that plans for a new bridge had not included any pedestrian or bike paths and were responsible for raising the issue and working with the planners to incorporate a pedestrian / bike lane to provide that access.

In each of these examples, youth collectively transformed their communities while gaining individual skills to prepare them to be successful leaders and citizens both now and in the future.

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Action civics' model answers Malin's (2011) call for service-learning and community involvement programs to be re-imagined, building from "the existing civic drives that young people exhibit" (p. 115). This framework's strengths-based approach is also reflective of Positive Youth Development (PYD) (Watts & Flanagan 2007). Translated into programs, action civics uses an iterative process in which adults scaffold opportunities for students to launch youth-driven civic projects by going through a multi-step process "typically comprised of issue identification, research, constituency building, action, and reflection" (Cohen & Schuchter, 2012; Levine, 2012a; Levinson, 2012; NACC, 2013, *Action civics declaration*; Pope, Stolte, & Cohen, 2011)[5]. As young people go through action civics programs, they build essential civic leadership skills, while also contributing meaningfully to their communities—all-stemming from the interests and experiences of the young people themselves. This dual purpose of action civics—developing youth civic leaders *and* affecting the current political landscape—is perhaps its most distinctive feature, and one that is hard for traditional assessments to evaluate. Consistent with Community Youth Development (CYD), action civics argues that young people who feel their actions contribute to real world structural problems, and are offered the opportunity to critically reflect will be the most invested in continuing to politically engage into adulthood (Crecer Strategies, 2008; Watts & Flanagan, 2007).

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[4] See Appendix B for visual
[5] See Appendix C for charts of action civics process steps

The action civics framework aligns with PYD and SEL approaches, integrates the commitment of both service-learning and youth organizing to putting youth in real-life civic contexts, and draws on more traditional civic education insofar as it insists youth learn the political systems in their communities and beyond.

Figure 1: Action civics in civic education context[6]

Youth leadership development

Guided-experiential (non-traditional) civic education

Action Civics

"Traditional" civic education
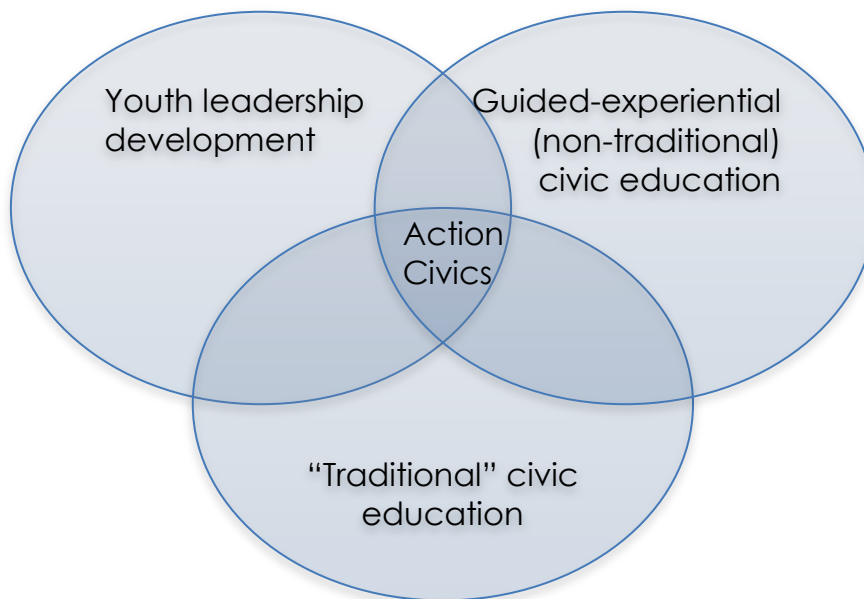
Assessment in Civics

As mentioned before, there is little consensus on how best to assess and evaluate civics, especially as new forms of civic education emerge that stress the behaviors of citizens and the process of taking action more than concrete civic knowledge (Campbell-Patton & Patton, 2010). Since the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the number of states that require any form of civics assessment has decreased, and the means of assessing have narrowed (Godsay, Henderson, Levine & Littenberg-Tobias, 2012). All states have social studies standards, but only twenty-three have any state assessment and only nine have exams required for high school graduation (Godsay, et al., 2012; Sullivan, 2013). Nearly all-existing state assessments, with the exception of a new system under development in Tennessee, are multiple-choice tests (Godsay, Henderson, Levine & Littenberg-Tobias, 2012). On the federal level, the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) was tracking civic knowledge every few years, but due to funding cuts was canceled in 2013. Outside of government-sponsored civics assessments, research organizations such as CIRCLE and resources like PerformWell (2013) have offered validated civic assessment scales that attempt to assess more diverse criteria such as civic efficacy and engagement and other pertinent individual civic outcomes (Flanagan et al., 2007). While these types of measures have the advantage of being valid, reliable, and resistant to teacher bias, they are time-intensive to develop, unresponsive to local communities and lack current events (Levine, 2012a). Most importantly, they do not give students opportunities to demonstrate skills and action.

When Levine (2012a) argues that "assessment may be on the verge of breakthroughs" (p. 53), he is largely referring to the advent of digital tools for assessment, primarily through simulations that can measure students' contributions to collaborative efforts, and "badges," or portable certificates that demonstrate an individual's possession of specific skills. Kahne, Ullman,

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[6] Adapted from Fox et al. (2010)

& Middaugh (2012) agree with Levine that badges and digital portfolios could provide powerful means for high school students to capture their civic growth and demonstrate it to others. Mozilla's new open badge system has started to create an infrastructure to support these alternative approaches (http://openbadges.org/). Sullivan (2013) reviews the advantages of badges for civics assessment in education: avoiding adding another high-stakes test, incentivizing schools to adopt innovative and action-based civics curricula, and recognition that students possess skills that rarely show up in standardized tests and grades. Still, critics of badges worry that they may turn learning into a commodity, undermine a student's intrinsic motivation, and that they are largely subjective (Sullivan, 2013). Both sides agree that digital badging has the potential to disrupt the educational paradigm as we know it, empowering peers as assessors along with adults, and challenging educational institutions to recognize the vast amount of learning happening outside of their walls (Kahne et al., 2012; Sullivan, 2013). In addition to standardized tests, surveys and badges, practitioners informally assess their work all the time, especially in youth leadership development settings in which youth voices drive the direction of the work. It is nearly impossible to engage youth in civic activities without integrating real-time student feedback into the curriculum.

The most important conversation regards what civic knowledge, skills and dispositions all young people *should* develop and how those definitions translate across contexts—or more simply, what should those tools measure (Sullivan, 2013)? Proponents of more traditional civic education insist that youth must get back to the basics of citizenship knowledge (Niemi, 2012). The service-learning community insists on developing character and moral capacities (Youniss, 2012). From SEL and PYD, we get a list of many core competencies of positive leadership: self-awareness, social awareness, relationships skills, and the 5 C's. SEL instruction in school has further been linked to receptivity to learning, student attachment, and greater academic achievement (CASEL, 2003; Zins & Elias, 2007). In education, the NAEP covers concrete non-local civic knowledge and the Common Core integrates research skills, collaboration, and critical thinking. The reality is that nearly every competency can be construed as a civic competency, and all fit under the 21st Century Skills umbrella. There seems to be a growing consensus that educating for citizenship means developing positive leadership capacities in individual youth, teaching young people about the local, national, and global civic spheres, and actively engaging them in projects that unlock their existing knowledge and teach them the skills necessary to make change (Campbell et al., 2012; Levinson, 2012; Sullivan, 2013). For the purpose of this study, I primarily engage in a grounded theory approach, drawing the action civics competencies of citizens from my analysis of the existing NACC evaluation tools.[7]

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[7] For methodology of this paper see Appendix A.
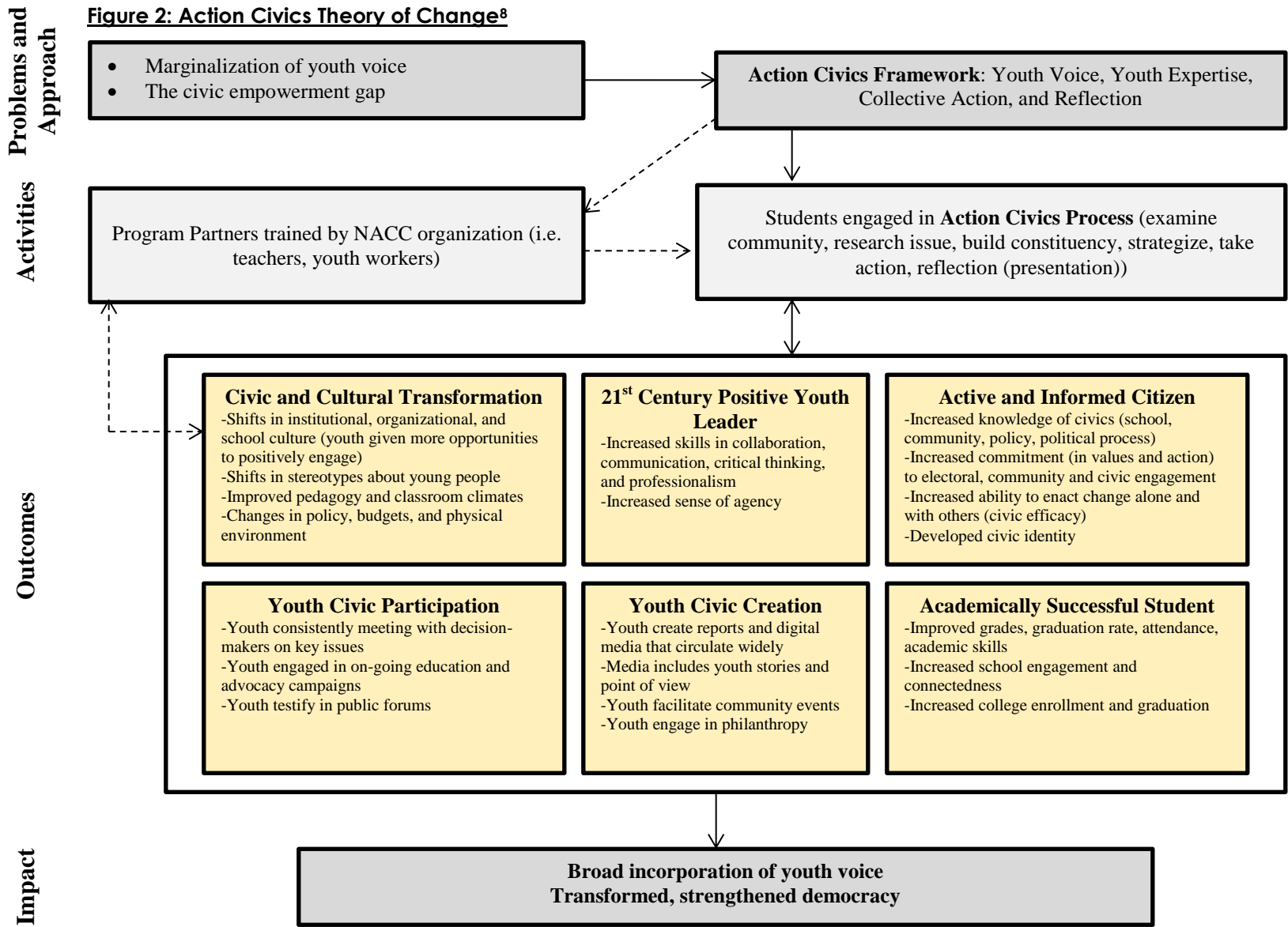
The Action Civics "Theory of Change"

Given the complex nature of youth civic engagement, Campbell-Patton & Patton (2010) argue that evaluation methodology must be appropriate to the specific "theory of change," accounting for the local and individual contexts. There is no single best way to achieve the outcome of a civically engaged youth population, and the process of engagement might be considered in itself a desirable goal (Campbell-Patton & Patton, 2010).

The NACC theory of change model (Figure 2) shows that the NACC organizations strive to increase youth voice and to narrow the civic empowerment gap by using the action civics framework (youth voice, youth expertise, collective action, and reflection). The framework can be understood as the pedagogical and philosophical approach adults take when implementing action civics. The action civics process—the actual activities that students are exposed to—is the multi-step curriculum or activities that all NACC organizations guide students through (community mapping, issue analysis, research, constituency building, strategizing and taking action). Organizations like Youth on Board and the University Community Collaborative (UCC) implement the action civics process directly, while Generation Citizen and Earth Force train program partners—teachers, youth workers, or college students—in implementing it. Mikva employs both staff and partners, depending on the program. Thus, some action civics organizations have an additional activity—training adult youth workers and teachers in implementing the action civics framework and process. Both the action civics process and program partner training produce many outcomes at the individual and collective levels.

The outcomes can be understood in six categories. Action civics produces: 21st century positive youth leaders, active and informed citizens, academically successful students, youth civic participation, youth civic creation, and civic and cultural transformation. Each outcome reinforces the others, and the order with which they are achieved varies. Further, these outcomes represent broad categories encapsulating both short- and long-term outcomes, and the indicators within the boxes are more consistently proximal.

Some organizations (or programs) do not emphasize all six outcomes but use some combination thereof. The pathway taken through the theory of change may impact the specific outcomes (e.g. classroom-based programs more being more concerned with academic impacts than out-of-school-time programs). The theory is that in the long term, if youth are engaged in the action civics process, then these six outcomes will be achieved and will lead to broader incorporation of youth voice and a stronger democracy.

To consider an example from my experience, for two years, I facilitated the Education Council at Mikva Challenge, a group of high school students who advise Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Together we researched issues that were most relevant to the students (action civics framework). After a summer of leadership development and research activities (action civics process) these students wrote a report (civic creation) on the state of technology in CPS that led to a change in the YouTube policy *and* funding to create a widely-circulated [video on digital abuse](#) (civic and cultural transformation). Additionally, the technology team at CPS, who had never had youth voices at the table before, began meeting regularly with the students (civic participation). Further, many of the students on the council have gone on to excel. One, who had never believed he would go to college, is now a Posse Scholar (21st century youth leader and academically successful) majoring in education policy (active and informed citizen).

Figure 2: Action Civics Theory of Change[8]

- Marginalization of youth voice
- The civic empowerment gap

Action Civics Framework: Youth Voice, Youth Expertise, Collective Action, and Reflection

Program Partners trained by NACC organization (i.e. teachers, youth workers)

Students engaged in **Action Civics Process** (examine community, research issue, build constituency, strategize, take action, reflection (presentation))

Civic and Cultural Transformation
-Shifts in institutional, organizational, and school culture (youth given more opportunities to positively engage)
-Shifts in stereotypes about young people
-Improved pedagogy and classroom climates
-Changes in policy, budgets, and physical environment

21st Century Positive Youth Leader
-Increased skills in collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and professionalism
-Increased sense of agency

Active and Informed Citizen
-Increased knowledge of civics (school, community, policy, political process)
-Increased commitment (in values and action) to electoral, community and civic engagement
-Increased ability to enact change alone and with others (civic efficacy)
-Developed civic identity

Youth Civic Participation
-Youth consistently meeting with decision-makers on key issues
-Youth engaged in on-going education and advocacy campaigns
-Youth testify in public forums

Youth Civic Creation
-Youth create reports and digital media that circulate widely
-Media includes youth stories and point of view
-Youth facilitate community events
-Youth engage in philanthropy

Academically Successful Student
-Improved grades, graduation rate, attendance, academic skills
-Increased school engagement and connectedness
-Increased college enrollment and graduation

Broad incorporation of youth voice
Transformed, strengthened democracy

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[8] More discussion of theory of change forthcoming in Gingold and Levinson (in process)

Assessment Tools that the NACC Organizations Use

The tools currently in use by action civics organizations measure some, but not all of the important points within the theory of change (see Table 2 for overview).[9]

Table 2: Summary of NACC Assessment Tools and Outcomes Measured

Tool	Description	Measured Outcomes
Student written self-assessments and surveys (13 tools)	These are the most common tool and used by every organization. Many of the questions on the surveys come from Flanagan et al.'s 2007 CIRCLE working paper on civic measures. One organization has built on the traditional student survey by creating a civic skills essay that has students write how they would take action on an imaginary problem. Currently each organization uses its own survey, despite covering many similar questions and themes.	21st century positive youth leader and active and informed citizenship. Also some measures for youth participation and creation.
Student performance assessment tools (7 tools)	Three organizations are using some form of performance assessment measuring students' demonstrated skills and actions rather than self-reported skills. These come in the form of presentation rubrics for final action civic projects and the beginnings of a civic portfolio and badge system.	21st century positive youth leader, active and informed citizenship, youth participation and creation.
Adult program-partner surveys and rubric (3 tools)	Organizations implementing programs through training partners survey the adults involved. One organization has a rubric for observing classrooms enacting action civics.	Fidelity of implementation of activities and civic and cultural transformation (school and classroom-level).
Youth contributions and community impacts indices (4 tools)	Three organizations keep track of the youth contributions and community impacts their students, collectively, are having through the action civics process. These tools look more like running lists than assessment tools. They demonstrate the collective action of students, not individual student performance.	Youth civic participation, youth civic creation, and civic transformation.

Overall, student self-report surveys are the predominant assessment tools, with a few organizations employing other methods and quite a bit of variability in the amount of assessment. Further, no organizations are systematically tracking long-term impact, making it hard to claim the outcomes of long-term active and informed citizenship, a stronger democracy, or broad incorporation of youth voice. These types of evaluation are costly and time-intensive. Thus while organizations all have the desire, they often lack the resources.

The Competencies that NACC Student Tools Assess

More important than the "type of tool" is the content of the assessment. Tools in use by NACC organizations today measure nearly all of the outcomes in the theory of change, with a

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[9] List of tools in Appendix E. Specific tools available upon request.

strong emphasis on measuring positive youth leadership skills and active and informed citizenship (meaning both activities in the present and *intentions* for the future). Within those broad outcomes, the analysis of the current student evaluation tools used by NACC organizations reveals eight key competencies: academic improvement, agency, civic commitment, civic knowledge, collaboration, communication, critical thinking and professionalism. Of these eight competencies, academic improvement is measured the least commonly and was not measured at all by two of the six organizations. NACC leaders say that academic success should remain an outcome in the theory of change, but current tools are inadequate for capturing this outcome. Thus, research is needed about the impact of action civics on academic outcomes.

Figure 3: Competencies Measured in NACC Student Assessment Tools
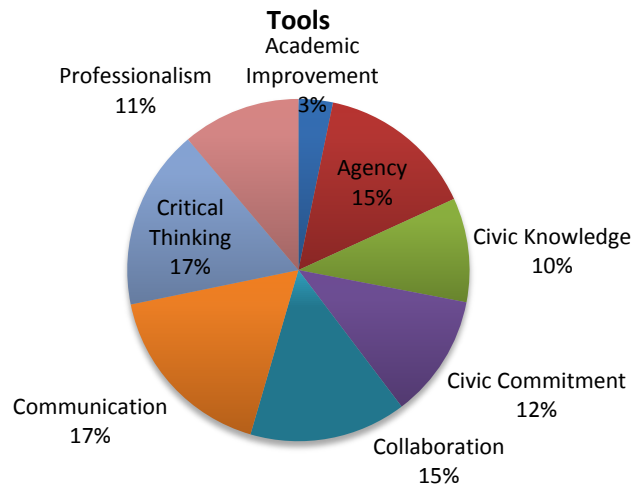

Figure 3 shows the percentages of questions across all NACC student tools that measure each core competency. (E.g. 17% of all measures in NACC student tools measured communication skills)

Attaching these competencies to the theory of change, Table 3 lays out the outcome, the competencies, definitions, and indicators found across the actual student tools.[10] It is worth noting that the delivery of programming (through program partners or by NACC organizations directly) may result in different emphases in outcomes and methods of evaluation. It appears that evaluation tools used in programs that work with partners focused more on outcomes related to civic-oriented and academic competencies, while those delivered directly by NACC organizations placed a greater emphasis on 21st century positive leadership competencies.[11]

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[10] For the actual questions used to measure each of these competencies, please contact NACC organizations or author.

[11] This will depend on the goals of the specific program. Classroom-based action civics would likely care more about academic improvement than out-of-school based action civics programs.

Table 3: Outcomes and Action Civic Competencies in NACC Student-Tools Defined			
Outcome	**Competency**	**Competency Definition**	**Indicators Measured**
Active and Informed Citizen **(Also includes Youth civic participation and creation)**	Civic Commitment	Possessing (and acting on) dedication, engagement, passion for democratic participation and social action.	Civic Identity, Collective efficacy, Future Civic Engagement, Community Problem Solving, Civic Actions
	Civic Knowledge	Understands how government works, how to stay informed, and who has power over you and your issues.	Issue Knowledge, Local Knowledge, Political Process Knowledge, Current Events Knowledge, Public Policy Knowledge
	Agency (also part of positive leadership)	The ability to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances (includes intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness) (Bandura, 2008).	Civic efficacy, Confidence, Self-regulation, Self-awareness, Youth efficacy, General self-efficacy
21st Century Positive Youth Leader **(Also includes Youth civic participation and creation)**	Collaboration	The ability to work effectively with diverse groups of people, sharing responsibilities and moving along group goals.	Perspective-taking, Youth-adult partnerships, Empathy, Community problem-solving, Conflict resolution
	Communication	The ability to clearly state, listen to, and share ideas in public and private settings.	Public speaking, Persuasion (code-switching), Writing, Media (including production and outreach), Active listening
	Critical Thinking	The ability to gather, analyze, synthesize, challenge, research, problem-solve, and reflect about diverse data and viewpoints.	Research skills, Decision-making/problem-solving, Media consumption, Analyzing power, Strategizing
	Professionalism	Skills that will serve the individual in professional settings such as promptness, meeting skills, resume writing.	Accountability, Self-regulation, Facilitation, Active Participation, Presentation skills, Professional goals
Academically Successful	Academic Improvement	A student's academic performance and feelings about school.	School-connectedness, academic achievement, attendance, academic engagement/commitment to learning

How the Action Civics Process is Measured by NACC Student Assessment Tools

As noted above, NACC organizations generally engage students in a 6-step action civics process that involves youth in community problem-solving. Not each step in the process is given equal attention across all NACC evaluations. Although some items ask about specific steps in the process, many questions or scales of questions instead capture the entire process (e.g., have

you ever worked together with other people to solve a problem in the community where you live?). Questions about building a constituency, taking action, and doing research are more prevalent than questions about strategizing, examining one's community, and identifying issues. Questions about a student's experience with the action civic process relate most directly to the outcomes of youth civic participation and creation, as seen in Table 4.

Figure 4: Action Civics Process Prevelance in NACC Student Assessment Tools
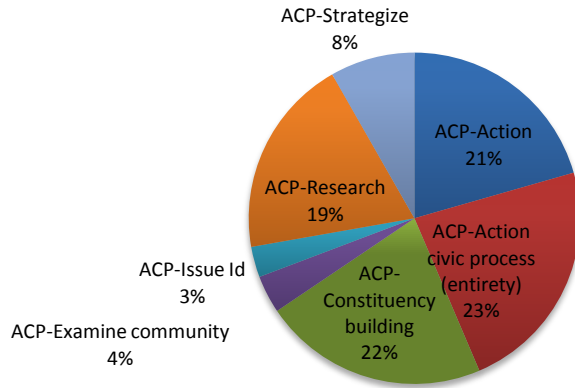
This chart shows the percentages of questions about the action civics process broken down by each step of the process. (E.g. 3% of questions about the action civics process ask about issue identification)

Table 4: Outcomes and Action Civics Process questions defined

Outcome	Competency	Competency Definition	Indicators
Youth Civic Participation **(Also Active and Informed Citizen)**	Action Civics Process	This refers to questions/measures of students engaging in the process of taking action. It includes many of the competencies above, especially critical thinking and civic commitment.	Reports and demonstrations of action civics process steps (esp. research, constituency building, strategizing, action)
Youth Civic Creation	Action Civics Process (action)	This refers to physical civic contributions youth make. These questions are often communication oriented.	Reports and demonstrations of youth created media, reports, etc.

Types of Questions and Measures in NACC Student Tools

Figure 5 shows that the majority of measures in student assessment tools assess students' self-reported skills and attitudes or dispositions. NACC organizations may be able to say that many students *feel* that they are better students or more invested in their communities, but may not necessarily have the data to show that students *are* in fact better students or are more active contributors to their communities. For competencies like agency, it makes sense to use mostly attitude/disposition questions, since agency is mostly about a student's feeling about his

or her abilities. For example, one common question found in all student surveys is an attitudinal measure of civic efficacy (part of agency and civic commitment). It is, "How much do you agree with the following statement: I believe I can make a difference in my community?"

When measuring collaboration or communication, most surveys ask respondents to report their use of skills, e.g., "How often do you do the following: I make sure I understand what another person is saying before I respond." When reporting directly on the student's experience with the action civics process, questions often asks about actions-reported:

Which of the following things have you done before? Circle all that apply. A. made a plan to solve an issue, B. persuaded people to care about an issue…

In thinking about future assessment tools, it will be important to consider how to create more tools and measures that capture indicators of action, since action is the core of NACC's model. The presentation rubrics used by three organizations and civic badges/portfolios being developed at Mikva Challenge are moving assessment in the direction of assessing actions observed and skills demonstrated, but those more progressive forms of assessment are often more time intensive and harder to easily quantify, making them difficult to integrate into practice. They are especially difficult to integrate in a traditional classroom setting.

Figure 5: Types of Measures in NACC Student Assessment Tools
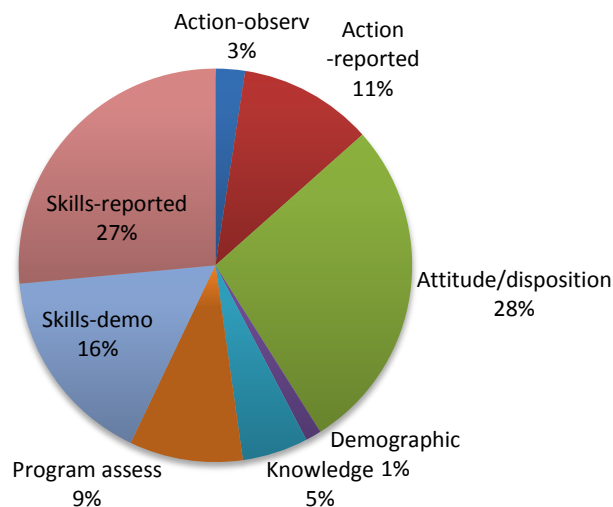
This chart shows the breakdown of all the questions across NACC student tools by the format of the question. (E.g. 28% of all questions in NACC student tools measured students' attitudes and dispositions)

Measures of Youth Contributions and Community Impact

A distinguishing feature of action civics (in contrast to simulation programs like iCivics or Model UN) is that young people act in *authentic* civic arenas. And as youth take action, communities are changed. While most leaders of action civics believe that youth leadership and civic development are more important than the impact of action civics projects, many still care that youth make real contributions to community transformation. In that vein, Earth Force helps link the efforts of young people to larger initiatives, for example, in Denver by working with the city's sustainability and non-point source pollution prevention programs. As Lisa Bardwell told

me, "I'm becoming more and more convinced that if we can ground projects in tangible outcomes, a young person will be convinced that she or he can make a difference."

Youth on Board has been tracking the impact of their youth policymaking council, BSAC, since 2003, amassing an impressive list of accomplishments. Mikva Challenge collects impacts of their policymaking councils and classroom activism projects in year-end reports. Earth Force collects project descriptions in their teacher survey. While I did not intensively code all of these documents, I was able to find some common themes of the types of impacts that young people in action civics are making in the world. On the following page, Table 5 shows the theory of change outcomes with the broad categories of impacts youth make and an example of each. Ultimately, community impact may be best captured through a story bank of collective action examples. Methods of capturing these outcomes are not standardized or consistent.

The current strategy of simply listing events and activities is certainly worth expanding.[12] Additionally, student and teacher survey tools can also capture quantitative data on types of actions taken. Another avenue is in the realm of social media. As students do more digital advocacy, there are opportunities to capture the reach of such work through tracking web site analytics and social media sharing. Below is a "storify"[13] of a recent UCC effort to create more awareness around issues facing teen fathers. The teens created several Twitter hash tags that eventually spread within the Philadelphia area. As NACC considers how to capture the tangible impacts young people have on their communities, the digital sphere will be an integral part.

Figure 6: Example of Using Social Media for Tracking Community Impact

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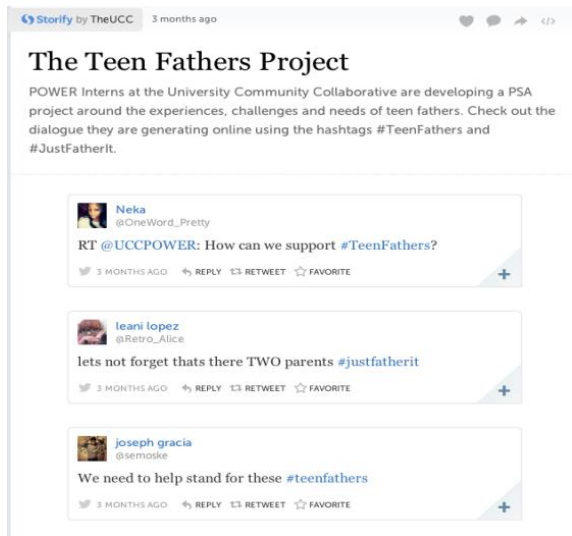
[12] Template for listing youth contributions and community impact in Appendix G
[13] https://storify.com/

| Table 5: Youth Contributions/Community Outcomes from NACC Assessment Tools ||||
Outcome	Contribution	Indicator/Description	Example of impact
Youth Civic Participation	Meeting with Public Officials	Often when youth in action civics programs meet with adults, they are changing stereotypes about young people, even if a policy isn't changed.	YOB[14] students met with BPS to review school code of discipline and ensure students' voices were represented.
	Education/ Advocacy Campaign (Local and digital)	Frequently, students choose to launch school, community or digital education campaigns around their issues. These usually last over a period of time.	MC students at a Chicago HS attempted to influence the principal selection by raising awareness among student body, doing interviews and panels.
Youth Civic Creation	Youth Published Materials (written or digital)	Often, students culminate their action research by developing a policy report or media project. These reports can become widely distributed and influential.	Recommendations from the MC Education Council's policy paper were included in the redesign of the district's K-12 College and Career Planning strategy.
	Community Event	Another way to influence a community is by holding an event on the issue students have researched. These events can be school, community or citywide.	MC students working on juvenile expungement reform held a community event to educate people about the current laws.
	Media Exposure	Since the media rarely focus on young people, especially youth of color, making positive change in communities, obtaining media exposure can be a powerful form of impact.	The MC Education Council's work on cyber-bullying was covered in the *Chicago Tribune* and on WBEZ—the NPR station.
	Philanthropy	Young people are sometimes given money to allocate to other youth. Youth philanthropy provides young people with power to decide where the money should go.	The MC Teen Health Council distributed $10,000 to youth wellness teams to carry out health projects in 19 different Chicago schools.
Civic and Cultural Transformation	Policy Change	Sometimes youth efforts result in real world policy changes, which is perhaps the pinnacle of action civics.	YOB students successfully lobbied MA board of education include student feedback in teacher evaluation.
	Budget Change	Power is where the money is. When youth are able to get decision makers to allocate funds to their ideas that can be one of the most significant impacts.	YOB students lobbied with other groups for a line item in the MA state budget for dual-enrollment for high school students.
	Environment Change (e.g. mural, garden)	Concrete physical projects can be highly successful for getting youth engaged and leave permanent marks on communities	One class of EF students developed a school organic garden—the plan, fundraising, maintenance, and food prep.

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[14] YOB = Youth on Board, MC = Mikva Challenge, EF = Earth Force

The table above categorizes the contributions youth make through action civics that are found in the current community-level assessment tools. This area of assessment is largely undeveloped and presents an opportunity to capture not only the individual growth of students due to action civics, but also on-going community impacts (mentioned in the theory of change as "youth civic participation," "youth civic creation," and "civic and cultural transformation"). Like a ripple in a pond, the transformation of the individual student is only the first drop in the lasting effects of this work. Before offering up a way forward in building an evidence-based field of action civics, it is important to consider why it has been challenging thus far to create assessments that work and capture the story of this work. In the following section, I discuss some of the fundamental challenges for assessing this type of work.

The Challenges (and Opportunities) of Assessing Action Civics

In my conversations with staff at all of the NACC organizations, they reiterated a common theme: evaluation is hard and imperfect. In the words of Barbara Ferman from the UCC, "We've literally tried anything and everything over the years, and nothing is really satisfactory." Jill Bass from Mikva echoes Ferman's frustration, "Our evaluation measures don't NAIL it—they do not report what we know in our gut." This unsatisfactory feeling seems to come from five common experiences that NACC practitioners face:

1. The "student growth" dilemma
2. Losing the whole in the parts
3. Specifying and naming common outcomes
4. Different paths through the theory of change
5. Creating tools that work for practitioners

Measuring "student growth"

All of the organizations have at some point had the following experience: student A comes to the organization and takes a pre-test about her skills, knowledge, and attitudes about civic engagement. Student A starts out shy, with little experience being active in her community. As she participates in the action civics process, she comes out of her shell. Anyone who knew her before could see tremendous growth. She spoke out at a public hearing. She has done primary research. She is more engaged in school. At the close of the program, she takes the post-survey with the same questions she took at the beginning. Surprisingly, most of the results show that she has either stayed constant or declined in her abilities. This phenomenon is seen in every NACC organization. While it could be true that in some cases the student really has not grown or the program needs improvement, the consistency with which we see this finding demonstrates that something is amiss. Many leaders in the field attribute it to the fact that most students they work with have never been exposed to the work of making change in their communities, and thus when they take the pre-survey, they are overconfident. Once exposed to the hard work of active citizenship, students report more realistic assessments of their abilities. As Barbara Ferman said from the UCC, "It is silly to ask students how they are at things they've never learned about or been exposed to."

In response to this trend, most organizations are now employing some form of retrospective survey in which participants recall how they felt prior to the program and compare to how they feel now. While this measure remains imperfect, and is often seen in the literature as less valid and reliable than a pre/post comparison, it can be more practical, both in terms of resources and in results for practitioners (Allen & Nimon, 2007; BYAEP, 2012; Lamb, 2005).

No organization is currently using the "gold standard" of evaluation, the randomized control trial (RCT)—comparing students who go through action civics programs with a control group who have not (BYAEP, 2012; Campbell-Patton & Patton, 2010). Earth Force has tried to organize such an approach in the past, but found it to be very difficult. Campbell-Patton & Patton (2010) argue that such a standard does not fit the dynamic field of civic education assessment. Generation Citizen attempts a quasi-experimental model by comparing post-surveys of Generation Citizen students in the fall with pre-surveys of Generation Citizen students in the spring.

A few of the organizations are experimenting with more participatory evaluation tools such as badges and portfolio assessments. Jill Bass, from Mikva, spoke of wanting to change the typical form of student assessment from "what are you going to give me?" to "this is what I think I deserve because of the following evidence of what I have learned and accomplished." While student surveys have a place in the action civics assessment toolkit, it is unlikely they will ever be able to fully capture the magic of student transformation.

Losing the whole in the parts

Many little things happen within an action civics program that show growth, development, and impact that a survey (and maybe even the most perfect tool) just cannot capture. As one NACC leader put it, "I am more interested in how this program has turned someone's life around than that 80% of my students are now better public speakers." One youth worker shared her frustration with evaluation by telling a story of witnessing a group of students engaging on Facebook in an intense discussion about teen pregnancy—the type of achievement not captured in assessments. In my own experience, it was true that when students did the big things like testifying at a school board meeting, we captured it, but often the little things were truly remarkable: the unprovoked professional advocacy e-mail that a student wrote to his principal, a student's showing up on time despite a personal tragedy, or when an older student coached a younger student through giving a public testimony.

These micro-empowerments are all part of the story of youth development and civic engagement yet rarely make it into the way in which we discuss outcomes. Recently, when I visited a Generation Citizen classroom, one student who had been mostly disengaged lit up in a discussion on their issue of school food saying, "Wait! Don't taxpayers have a say in this? Since my mom pays taxes, shouldn't she be able to say something about the food we eat?" How can evaluation tools capture the magic of the in-between moments? Perhaps there is some power in naming this gap. If we know that standard and even many alternative assessment tools still cannot capture all the micro-empowerments, then we can be explicit about the limits of evaluation. Still, facilitators can play a big role in capturing these little things. Perhaps there could be a student transformation tool that is not linked to the more technical outcomes, but rather is a space for both facilitators and youth to capture the little things that happen within action civics work. If action civics leaders hold up these mini-moments of success and insist that they matter, others will see that too. However, this may be easier to pull of in an out-of-school context than in a classroom-based context.

Specifying and naming common outcomes

Each organization is constantly adjusting the competencies it tries to develop in young people. Most agree that at the end of the day it is youth outcomes that matters the most—but

what exactly are those outcomes? Alison Cohen of Generation Citizen said, "of course we hope projects are successful, but process and learning is the most important."

The tools in current use assess eight student competencies. Yet the five organizations disagree about the weight of each outcome. Academic improvements are not measured at all by some organizations. Professionalism is a very high priority at some while very low at others.

Further, many of the competencies, such as collaboration and communication, involve overlapping skills.

Still, the fluidity of these categories should not discourage leaders from using them. Students in action civics are gaining important skills and it is important to name them for multiple reasons: communicating outcomes to outsiders (including funders), tracking what is and isn't working, and empowering students in their own career development. As students can clearly articulate the skills they have gained and impacts they have made, they are more capable of transferring such skills to their college and career lives.

Different paths through the theory of change

Some NACC organizations directly enroll youth and use their own staff as educators. Others train and support partners that work with youth. The latter typically have less control over the process, engage youth for shorter times, and engage youth who have no choice about whether to participate in the action civics project. All of these differences influence the outcomes. For instance, outcomes may be different if students choose to enroll in an action civics program rather than taking a mandatory social studies course that uses an action civics model. These differences also affect the tools that work well for evaluation. Tools that demand a lot from youth, such as portfolios, may be ideal for capturing growth over the course of a semester, but how realistic is it for teachers with varying levels of comfort with action civics to collect and manage this process?

Further, when partners implement programs, this creates another set of questions for evaluation—how is the teacher transformed? How is the classroom changed? As one NACC leader said, "There is tension about what and whom to evaluate—teachers vs. student impacts vs. community impacts vs. changing adult perceptions of young people." As a suite of tools are developed, the theory of change can be helpful in deciding what critical points should be evaluated and what tools are appropriate for the various contexts.

Tools that work for practitioners and students

This brings me to a final challenge *and* opportunity. Without a doubt, surveys are the easiest tools to implement if you have access to a person who can tabulate the data. You hand them out, collect them, and look at statistics. However, many facilitators of this work find surveys to be less-than-helpful in actual program implementation. In an interview with facilitators of Mikva's youth governance programs, who currently use both surveys and a simplified badge system, they overwhelmingly insisted that the badges were better for practice. Badges actually helped facilitators think more about what skills they were encouraging in young people and helped young people articulate clearly the leadership skills they are working on.

Still, badges are far from perfect and hard to standardize. Respondents said that each facilitator had his or her own style in implementing the badge. The initial version of the Mikva badge system was far too complicated to be implemented, and thus a much simpler, but also

less robust tool has been put into practice.[15] How can organizations develop tools that are standard and robust, but also practitioner friendly?

Often, leaders of action civics get annoyed with assessment because it seems to detract from the core of what action civics is about—empowering young people. The more that tools for evaluation are also building youth voice, expertise, and encouraging reflection, the better suited they are for action civics. One idea includes putting evaluation into the hands (and phones) of youth participants through mobile-optimized websites, apps or a text-message based platform. Regardless of the exact digital platform, civics education and assessment is going digital and it will be important for action civics to think critically about how to use these tools best. Ultimately, digital tools will only enhance evaluation if practitioners buy-in to them and if they are integrated into curriculum.
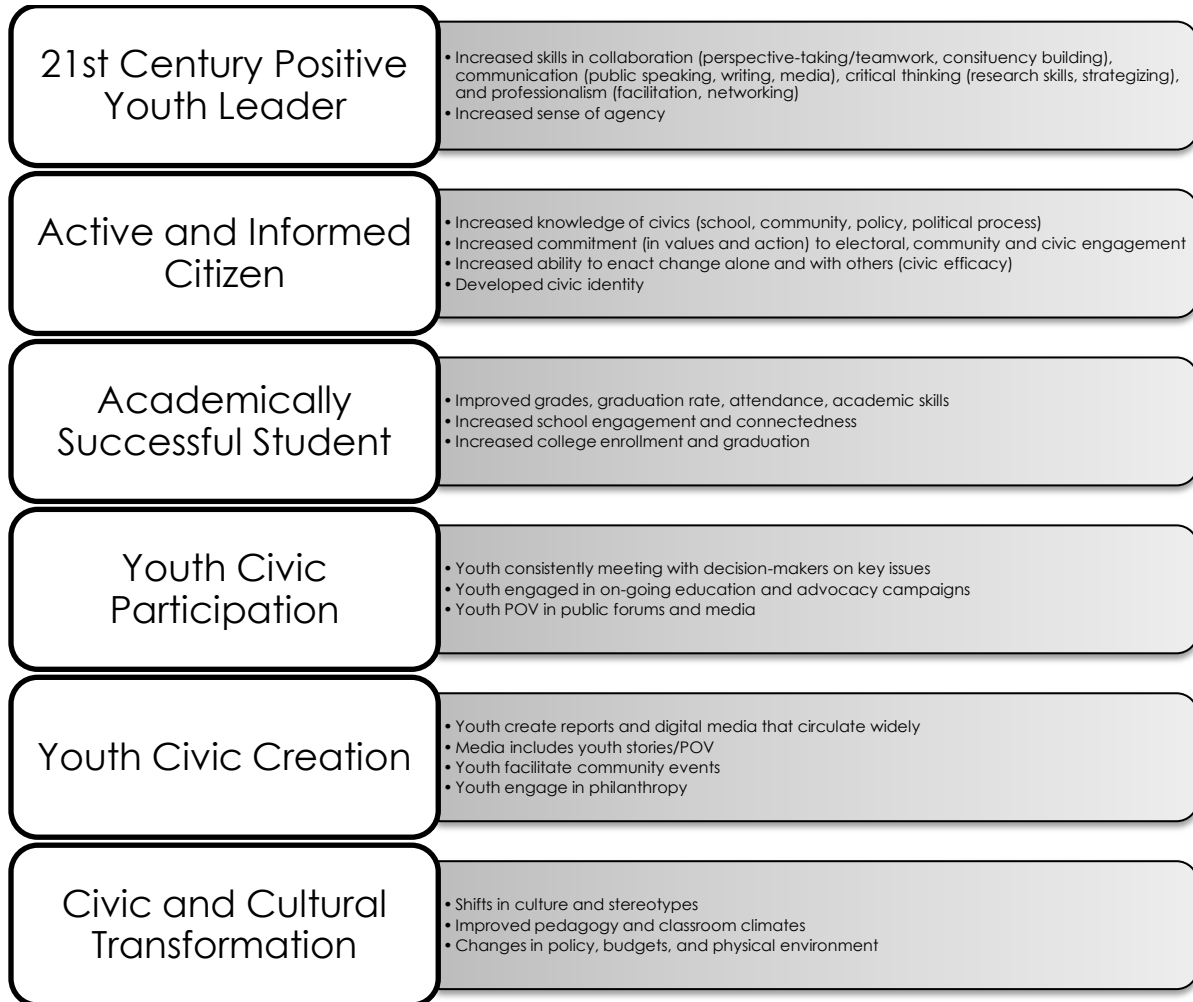
A Way Forward

As one action civics leader said, "If we can agree as a group to really begin to gather systematic measures, then we can be sure of what we are doing is different [than those in the larger civic education domain]." Another action civics leader insists this process is really about pushing civic education forward, asking the question, "Could we develop something more creative and consistent with the integrity of the field of action civics?"

In the findings section, I present the theory of change and the analysis of the assessment tools currently in use to begin to develop a common language around what action civics is actually "producing" both in students and in the world. I reiterate these outcomes in Figure 7. While this figure presents initial indicators for these outcomes, more detailed indicators will need to be established by practitioners in the field, individual organizations, and researchers.

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[15] Documents available upon request; in full disclosure, the original badge tool was created by the author of this report in collaboration with Mikva staff.

Figure 7: Action Civics Outcomes

21st Century Positive Youth Leader	• Increased skills in collaboration (perspective-taking/teamwork, consituency building), communication (public speaking, writing, media), critical thinking (research skills, strategizing), and professionalism (facilitation, networking) • Increased sense of agency
Active and Informed Citizen	• Increased knowledge of civics (school, community, policy, political process) • Increased commitment (in values and action) to electoral, community and civic engagement • Increased ability to enact change alone and with others (civic efficacy) • Developed civic identity
Academically Successful Student	• Improved grades, graduation rate, attendance, academic skills • Increased school engagement and connectedness • Increased college enrollment and graduation
Youth Civic Participation	• Youth consistently meeting with decision-makers on key issues • Youth engaged in on-going education and advocacy campaigns • Youth POV in public forums and media
Youth Civic Creation	• Youth create reports and digital media that circulate widely • Media includes youth stories/POV • Youth facilitate community events • Youth engage in philanthropy
Civic and Cultural Transformation	• Shifts in culture and stereotypes • Improved pedagogy and classroom climates • Changes in policy, budgets, and physical environment

Although variations in local conditions and programs mean that each action civics organization will have unique needs, the theory of change and the content in the current tools are similar enough to envision having a common core of tools from which to adapt measures. This paper is the first step in creating a common vision for assessment of this emerging field. In the future, it will be necessary to develop more detailed indicators for each outcome, and common tools for the suggested suite of tools below. For now, the following table lists the ideal set of tools that would be used in measuring action civics. While resources in both time and money make it unrealistic that any one organization would use all the suggested evaluation tools, some combination of the following tools would allow an organization to demonstrate the effectiveness of their action civics theory of change. Of the list below, a common student survey, essay, and presentation rubric have been developed from the existing tools.[16] The beginnings of a portfolio/badges rubric are in use by Mikva. These provide a standard from which to work.

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[16] These tools are available in the appendix of this paper.

Table 6: Action Civics Suite of Evaluation and Assessment Tools		
Tool	**Theory of Change Outcomes Measured**	**Implementation**
Student Pre- and Post- Survey (See Appendix H)	Youth attitudes/dispositions and reported skills/actions in: • 21st Century Positive Youth Leadership • Academic success • Active and Informed Citizenship • Youth Civic Participation • Youth Civic Creation	Student fills survey out before and after participation in action civics programming. Ideally, students in action civics programs would be compared to those not in action civics programs.
Student Action Civics Essay (See Appendix H)	Youth demonstration of transferable skills in: • Active and Informed Citizenship	Student writes an essay before and after participation in action civics programming. Best used in a classroom setting.
Student Portfolio and Badges (Existing in draft form at Mikva Challenge)	Youth demonstrated actions and skills in: • 21st Century Positive Youth Leadership • Active and Informed Citizenship • Youth Civic Participation • Youth Civic Creation • Civic Transformation	Students collect evidence of their leadership growth and civic contributions—peers and adult facilitator validate growth and badges earned. Built into this assessment could be a tool for listing the "micro-empowerment" moments youth have as they go through the action civics process.
Student Presentation Rubric (See Appendix I)	Youth demonstrated actions and skills in: • 21st Century Positive Youth Leadership • Active and Informed Citizenship • Youth Civic Participation • Youth Civic Creation • Civic Transformation	Peers, Facilitator and/or outside "judges" fill out rubric of student action civics projects at year-end fair.
Academic and career tracking	Youth demonstration of changed actions and skills in: • Academic Success • Active and Informed Citizenship	Administrator collects: • school records on grades, attendance, school completion, college enrollment and completion • data from alumni on career paths
Alumni survey	Youth attitudes/dispositions and reported skills/actions in: • 21st Century Positive Youth Leadership • Academic success • Active and Informed Citizenship • Youth Civic Participation • Youth Civic Creation • Civic Transformation • Contributions to a transformed, strengthened democracy	Administrator collects: • Periodic survey of alumni who have participated in programs
Program partner survey	Program partner reports of: • Implementation of action civics framework and activities • Youth civic participation and civic creation • Civic transformation in classroom and school setting	Program partners fill out a survey after implementing program.

Tool	Theory of Change Outcomes Measured	Implementation
Youth contribution/ Community outcomes tracking sheet (Template in Appendix G)	Evidence of: • Youth Civic Participation • Youth Civic Creation • Civic Transformation • Broad incorporation of youth voice • Transformed, strengthened democracy	Facilitators, teachers, program directors, evaluation director track indicators of outcomes--#s of meetings, media hits, media created, social media views, policies changed, etc.
Story banks: students, program administrators, community	Evidence of: • 21st Century Positive Youth Leadership • Academic success • Active and Informed Citizenship • Youth Civic Participation • Youth Civic Creation • Civic Transformation	Students, facilitators, teachers, program directors, evaluation directors write stories about individual students, alumni, campaigns, classrooms, decision makers, communities, who have been impacted by action civics.
Adult decision-maker survey	Adult decision makers self-reports of experience with action civics youth demonstrating: • Youth Civic Participation • Youth Civic Creation • Civic Transformation • Broad incorporation of youth voice • Transformed, strengthened democracy	Evaluation and Program directors collect a standard survey from decision-makers that students interact with to gauge the impact students are having on adults.
Communications and Aggregated Metrics for Action Civics	Evidence of Action Civics growth as a field and: • Broader incorporation of youth voice • Transformed, strengthened democracy	Administrators, Evaluation directors, NACC leaders track appearance of "action civics" in national and local fields, aggregate data across organizations to show levels of youth engagement and civic contributions

I propose six recommendations for continuing to shift the field of action civics toward an evidence-based practice.

Recommendation 1: Decide on the purpose of common assessments

    a. In order to effectively build common assessment tools, it is essential to determine the underlying motivations. Do organizations want to have common assessments for funding purposes? Is this about sharing best practices? How transparent does the field want to be?

Recommendation 2: Refine common theory of change, action civics outcomes, and indicators

    a. While this report offers up a theory of change for NACC and competencies for action civics students, NACC organizations need to affirm or modify these ideas to create the framework that truly fits their needs.

    b. The current theory of change does not explicitly specify short-term vs. long-term outcomes (though implicitly, outcomes such as civic and cultural transformation are more long-term focused than the immediate skill development of young people). It may be helpful to more explicitly identify the short- and long-term indicators for each outcome to fully operationalize the theory.

    c. The indicators within the theory of change need to be refined further to local contexts.

Recommendation 3: Develop a common action civics assessment toolkit

    Including...

    a. Program partner assessment tool (not discussed in this report)

    b. Universal student survey tool and performance assessment tools with add-ons for local contexts (consider tools that also evaluate the collective since students are acting collectively i.e. rubric for Mikva's action civics fair)—two draft standard tools are currently available in Appendix H and I.

    c. Universal performance assessment tools and system (consider badges, apps, digital portfolios)

    d. Youth Contribution/Collective action index to collectively track impact of action civics work on communities

    e. Long-term evaluation tools

    f. Story bank to capture the stories of students and communities

Recommendation 4: Develop digital tools and data-hub

    a. Earth Force is currently looking into a database management system that gives their partner organizations their own data-space and creates an open-source sharing of data. While this might be a big step for action civics organizations to have a joint database, it might be worth further exploring this idea.

    b. Perhaps an easier first step would be to coordinate more social media collaboration. Having students, facilitators, and program administrators use a simple #actioncivics hash tag could promote action civics and allow for the quantifying of social media reach. It could help to consult with a social media expert to brainstorm ways to utilize these tools better.

    c. Develop a joint-student app and/or website to empower student participatory evaluation and to capture stories of students

    d. Create a website for action civics (in process)[17]

Recommendation 5: Empower youth in assessment process, aligning assessment with the mission of Action Civics

    a. Expand on and explore current innovations of badges (Mikva), social media (UCC), community impact tracking (YOB), in-depth reflective tools

    b. Consider the practices of facilitators that encourage youth participation in evaluation (1-on-1s, reflective writing, student feedback on grading). Develop best practices and integrate into training of staff and program partners.

Recommendation 6: Develop partnerships between researchers and practitioners to cultivate mechanism for long-term evaluation tracking

    a. Seek out research partners who use multiple methods of assessment

    b. Create long-term partnerships to capture impact over time

This is not a report full of answers, but rather it illuminates key questions and suggestions for next steps. Raising youth voices and narrowing the civic empowerment gap is urgent work, and developing sound, standardized and flexible tools for assessment can help with that challenge. Malin (2011) calls "for a renewal in the dialogue about American identity that puts youth development front and center, such that the focus is on how to educate and develop citizens that have the will and capacity to uphold a free and democratic American society" (115). Action civics is an approach to civic education that answers that call. If it is to redefine how educators imagine civic education overall, though, this paper is just one step in an on-going process of defining the field and establishing coherent assessment practices and language. It is not a stretch to say that this work has the potential not only to benefit individual students' lives, but also the health of our nation.

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[17] NACC is unveiling website, www.actioncivicscollaborative.org, in September 2013

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Appendix A: Methodology of this Paper

This project employs an action research model (Chaudary & Imran, 2012). Both the analytical process and the final products were produced iteratively and collaboratively with the NACC member organizations (listed in Table 1). Findings are based on three key data sources: an analysis of the 27 existing assessment tools used by NACC organizations gathered in February of 2013, interviews with executive directors and staff of NACC organizations, and review of websites and relevant materials of organizations. It is important to note that I likely did not see *every* tool each organization uses. Further, the creation of evaluative tools is an evolving process, and in the time that I did this analysis many organizations shared tweaks they had made to their tools. Additionally, so much of the magic of action civics happens interpersonally between staff and students—this constant informal evaluation and assessment was impossible to capture in this project. Thus, in this paper I give the landscape of action civics assessment tools at one point in time.

The coding scheme used to analyze the assessment tools was derived both from a review of relevant literature and from the tools themselves through the process of coding.[18] It is important to note that the coding process was done by one person only and thus has limited reliability across measures. Thus, rather than report detailed quantitative analysis, the paper steers toward presenting trends found across the assessment tools, and using those trends to offer a vision for a coherent approach to understanding and assessing action civics as a unique field.

One other important aspect to note is my own positionality within the project. As a former employee of Mikva Challenge, one of the NACC organizations, I have a great deal of practical experience in the action civics field. On the one hand, this is a strength allowing me greater access and insight. Still, this may also limit the criticality of my assessment given that I am biased toward wanting action civics to succeed and continue to grow. Further, I am most well-versed in Mikva Challenge's approach to action civics. While I made an effort to learn about and visit the other NACC organizations, I am aware that I view action civics work through a specific set of experiences. With these biases clear, I do my best to give a coherent picture of the current field of action civics, the assessment tools and competencies within the current action civics assessment framework, and give widely applicable recommendations for moving forward.
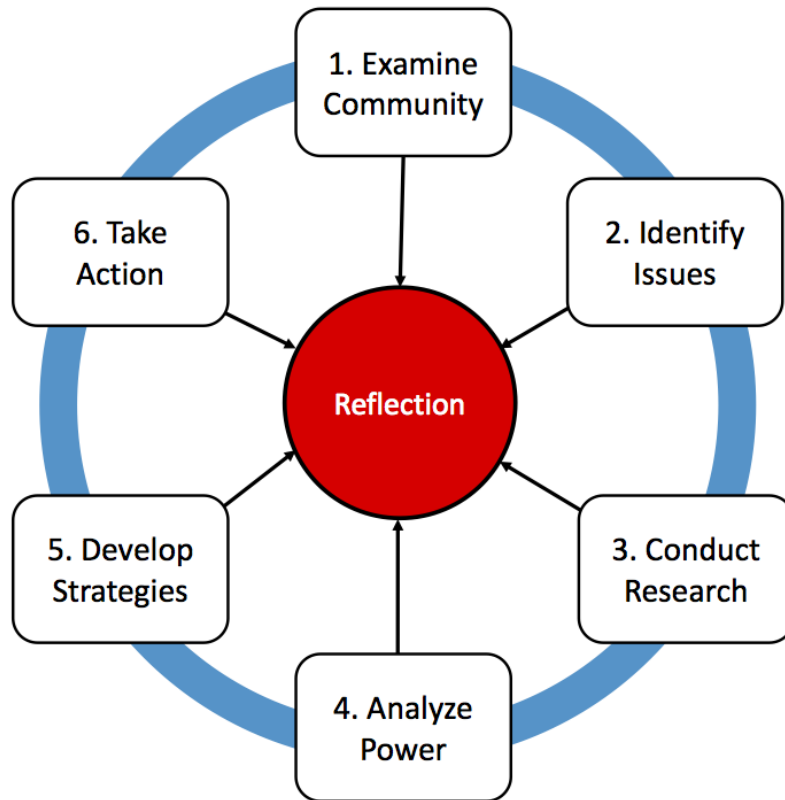
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[18] Complete codebook available upon request

The process is illustrated by Mikva Challenge's Classroom Activism program on this page and Earth Force on next page)

Classroom Activism Steps

Mikva Challenge

- 1. Examine Community
- 2. Identify Issues
- 3. Conduct Research
- 4. Analyze Power
- 5. Develop Strategies
- 6. Take Action

Reflection

The Earth Force Process[19]

Step 1- Community Environmental Inventory: Students identify environmental issues and strengths within their own community.

Step 4- Options for Influencing Policy and Practice: Students identify a policy or practice related to their issue that they want to affect. They set a project goal and use democratic decision-making again to determine a course of action.

Step 2- Issue Selection: Students learn democratic decision-making processes to select the issue they will be researching. They research the issue and narrow and refine its definition.

Step 5- Planning and Taking Civic Action: Students develop and implement a well-organized plan of action to ensure project reaches completion.

Step 3- Policy and Practice Research: Students identify and analyze policies and practices related to their issue. They research the issue from all sides and identify key stakeholders they can engage in their research and action.

Step 6- Looking Back and Ahead: Students assess the project and process, identify next steps, celebrate successes, and share their stories.

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[19] Retrieved from http://www.earthforce.org/index.php?PID=11

Appendix D: Action Civics Theory of Change

Problems and Approach

- Marginalization of youth voice
- The civic empowerment gap

Action Civics Framework: Youth Voice, Youth Expertise, Collective Action, and Reflection

Activities

Program Partners trained by NACC organization (i.e. teachers, youth workers)

Students engaged in **Action Civics Process** (examine community, research issue, build constituency, strategize, take action, reflection (presentation))

Outcomes

Civic and Cultural Transformation
-Shifts in institutional, organizational, and school culture (youth given more opportunities to positively engage)
-Shifts in stereotypes about young people
-Improved pedagogy and classroom climates
-Changes in policy, budgets, and physical environment

21st Century Positive Youth Leader
-Increased skills in collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and professionalism
-Increased sense of agency

Active and Informed Citizen
-Increased knowledge of civics (school, community, policy, political process)
-Increased commitment (in values and action) to electoral, community and civic engagement
-Increased ability to enact change alone and with others (civic efficacy)
-Developed civic identity

Youth Civic Participation
-Youth consistently meeting with decision-makers on key issues
-Youth engaged in on-going education and advocacy campaigns
-Youth testify in public forums

Youth Civic Creation
-Youth create reports and digital media that circulate widely
-Media includes youth stories and point of view
-Youth facilitate community events
-Youth engage in philanthropy

Academically Successful Student
-Improved grades, graduation rate, attendance, academic skills
-Increased school engagement and connectedness
-Increased college enrollment and graduation

Impact

**Broad incorporation of youth voice
Transformed, strengthened democracy**

Appendix E: List of All NACC Tools

Document ID	Org	Descriptive Name
1	EF	EF Community Project Descriptions
2	EF	EF Post Program Student Survey
3	EF	EF Post Program Educator Survey
4	GC	GC Classroom Context Observational Protocol
5	GC	GC Democracy Coach Presurvey
6	GC	GC Democracy Coach post-survey
7	GC	GC Democracy Coach post-post survey
8	GC	GC Civic Skills Student Essay
9	GC	GC Student Pre-survey
10	GC	GC Student Post-survey
11	MC	MC Civics Fair Program with Community Project Descriptions
12	MC	MC Youth Governance Wins
13	MC	MC Badge Goal Worksheet
14	MC	MC Badge 360 Evaluation
15	MC	MC Digital Badge Proposal
16	MC	MC Civic Leadership Awards (Badges Rubric and Guide)
17	MC	MC Civics Fair Judge's Rubric
18	MC	MC Civic Achievement Portfolio Rubric
19	MC	MC Project Soapbox Student Survey
20	MC	MC Civics Fair Student Survey
21	MC	MC Wisconsin Trip Student Survey
22	MC	MC Community Activism Pre/Post Program Student Survey (2012)
23	MC	MC Community Activism Post Program Student Survey (2013)
24	MC	MC Elections Post Program Student Survey
25	MC	MC Civic Achievement Portfolio Student Post Program Survey
26	MC	MC Youth Governance Civic Leadership Survey
27	MC	MC Community Activism Teacher Post-Program Survey
28	UCC	UCC Superpower of Youth Leaders Rubric
29	UCC	UCC Voices/Power Final presentation Rubric
30	UCC	UCC Voices/Power Post-Program Student Survey
31	UCC	UCC Youth Action Scholars Post-Program Survey
32	YOB	YOB BSAC Student Community Accomplishments
33	YOB	YOB Student Post-Program Survey

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Appendix F: Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Academic Improvement	This refers to questions regarding a students' academic performance and feelings about school.
Action Civics	The gold standard of guided experiential civic education in which "students *do* civics and *behave as citizens* by engaging in a cycle of research, action, and reflection about problems they care about personally while learning about deeper principles of effective civic and especially political action" (Levinson, 2012, p. 224)
Agency	The ability to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances (includes intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness) (Bandura, 2008)--includes measures of civic efficacy.
Civic Knowledge	Understands how government works, how to stay informed, and who has power over you and your issues.
Civic Commitment	Possessing (and acting on) dedication, engagement, passion for democratic participation and social action.
Collaboration	The ability to work effectively with diverse groups of people, sharing responsibilities and moving along group goals.
Communication	The ability to clearly state, listen to, and share ideas in public and private settings.
Critical Thinking	The ability to gather, analyze, synthesize, challenge, research, problem-solve, and reflect about diverse data and viewpoints.
Performance assessment	These tools capture students demonstrating skills or actions. For the purpose of this paper, they can be rubrics, essays, badges, and other alternative methods.
Professionalism	Skills that will serve you in professional settings such as promptness, meeting skills, resume skill.
Program partner	A teacher, youth worker, college student who works with the NACC organization, but is not considered part of staff.
Retrospective post-survey	A form of a survey in which students are asked at the end of the program to consider how they were at the beginning and then consider what has changed. This form of survey is used widely throughout NACC.
Survey assessment	These tools capture a student's self-reports about their growth and experience.
Type of Q- Skills-reported	These questions are a type of attitude question in which students report how competent they are at a given skill. In some ways, this is a measure of self-efficacy.
Type of Q-Action - observed	These measures capture when a student has demonstrated an action.
Type of Q-Action - reported	These questions measure a student's self-report of actions they have taken. (i.e. I have worked with a group of people to solve a problem)
Type of Q- Attitudes/dispositions	These questions are measuring how a student feels or what a student believes about a given idea or concept.

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Type of Q-Demographic	These are questions that pertain to a student's demographics.
Type of Q-Knowledge	These questions ask student to demonstrate what their understanding and awareness of key ideas often through open-ended or multiple choice questions.
Type of Q-Skills-demo	These measures capture when a student has demonstrated a skill.

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Appendix G: Template for NACC Youth Contribution and Community Impact Tracking Sheet

Action Civics Group	
2013 Campaign (s)	

Action/Impact Categories		
Youth Participation	**Youth Creation**	**Civic and Cultural Transformation**
Meeting with Public Officials	Media Exposure	Budget Change
Education/Advocacy Campaign (Local and digital)	Youth Published Materials (written or digital)	Policy Change
Public testimonies by youth	Community Event	Environment Change (i.e. mural, garden)
	Youth Philanthropy	Stereotypes shifted

Description of Action	Action/Impact Category

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Appendix H: Action Civics Standard Student Survey (DRAFT)

Overview: This tool is derived from student surveys used by the five National Action Civics Collaborative organizations. It draws together the most common questions asked of students in action civics programs. Where possible, questions that have validated measures are used. This does not purport to be a psychometrically validated survey tool, but rather a tool derived from practitioners. It is meant to be modified according to organizational needs.

Section 1: Active and Engaged Citizenship

This section will measure a student's report of actions and skills as related directly to the action civics process (ACP), current beliefs and actions about citizenship, and future intentions. This section will capture youths' beliefs about their civic knowledge, but not necessarily actual knowledge. Leadership skills are measured in this section in so much as the directly relate to civic action.

Question	Rationale
Civic Participation	

1. Have you ever worked together with other people to solve a problem in the community where you live?
     a. Yes, within the last 12 months
     b. Yes, but it was more than 12 months ago
     c. No, never
	Benchmark against CIRCLE 2006 survey

2. Which of the following things have you done before? Circle all that apply. A. made a plan to solve an issue B. persuaded people to care about an issue C. organized a meeting about an issue D. made a speech on an issue E. created a video, blog, or other form of digital media to affect change on an issue you care about F. met with an adult decision maker about an issue you care about G. examined research related to an issue H. shared your opinion with your local newspaper about an issue I. other: _____	This captures the actions students have taken during the program (but not necessarily their skill within it)

3.   Think about your experience with [organization]. How true are the following statements:

	Not true at all	Not very true	Sort of true	Very true	Rationale
A. We had a say in choosing the issue that we worked on.					Mostly from EF survey, helpful in capturing the fidelity to implementation of ACP. Also, captures "collective" action.
B. We learned about public (or school) policy as part of our project.					
C. We had a chance to discuss different ways to make a difference on our issue before deciding what we were going to do for our project.					
D. I now know enough about the issues in my community to discuss it with friends and family.					

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E. We presented and/or discussed the results of our project with one or more members of the community.				
F. I felt like we had real responsibilities on our project.				
G. I want to continue to work on the issues from [organization/program] project either on my own or with my group.				

4. In a typical week, how often do you:

	Never	Only now and then	Most of the time	All of the time
A. Read the newspaper (paper or online)				
B. Seek out information on political issues.				
C. Seek out information on community issues.				
D. Discuss political issues with others (friends, parents, teachers, classmates).				

Scale from the CIRCLE working paper, questions from NACC

5. When you think about life after high school, how likely is it that you will…

	Not at all likely	Not too likely	Not sure	Somewh at likely	Very likely
A. Vote in every election?					
B. Volunteer regularly?					
C. Stand up for your beliefs?					
D. Give your opinion to a newspaper, TV, radio, or website?					
E. Contact or visit someone in government who represents your community?					
F. Be a leader in your community?					
G. Run for political office (like mayor or president?)					

Adapted from Generation Citizen and Mikva Challenge

Civic Skills

6. Imagine if you found out about a problem in your community and you wanted to do something about it *(for example: violence in your school, high rates of teen pregnancy, or not enough after-school opportunities in the community).*

Think about your own abilities, what do you think you would be able to do?

	Definitely can't	Probably can't	Unsure	Probably can	Definitely can
A. Analyze the issue to figure out what is causing the problem?					
B. Create an action plan to address the issue?					
C. Get other people to care about the problem?					
D. Organize and run a meeting about the issue?					

CIRCLE 2007 working paper validates this scale for measuring "competence for civic action", and modified to include action civics specifics

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						and found in the Active and Engaged Citizen Survey (http://bit.ly/1b9zreq)
E. Express your views with knowledge and confidence in front of a group of people?						
F. Find and examine research related to the issue?						
G. Compare the pros and cons of different solutions to a community issue?						
H. Identify individuals or groups who could help you with the problem?						
I. Work with other youth and adults in your school or community to solve the problem?						
J. Contact an elected official about the problem?						
K. Write letters, brochures, or stories to inform people about the issue?						
L. Share your opinion on the issue with the local media?						

Civic Values

7. How much do you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree	CIRCLE 2007 working paper includes in Participatory citizen scale, and found in the Active and Engaged Citizen Survey (http://bit.ly/1b9zreq)
A. I can make a difference in my community.						
B. Young people have the power to influence public policy.						
C. I have a responsibility to make my community better.						
D. I can make things better by working with others in my community.						
E. I believe that people working together can solve community problems better than people working alone.						
F. I think it is more important for people to find a lasting solution to a community or environmental issue, even if it takes a long time, than to do something that will only make a difference for only a few days.						

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Section 2: Leadership Efficacy

These are questions specifically asking about the leadership skills and actions students in action civics program acquire. They focus on communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and professionalism skills. Ideally, this survey would be implemented along with more authentic means of assessment that measure a student demonstrating their skills (presentation rubrics, leadership badges and portfolios).

Question						Rationale
Communication						
8. Think about the following statements. How often do you do each thing?						Many questions related to this scale and collaboration can be found in the civic participation skill questionnaire (http://bit.ly/18bAtdS) on PerformWell.
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	
A. I make sure I understand what another person is saying before I respond.						
B. I can communicate in different situations and settings with different people.						
C. When speaking or writing, I organize my thoughts, stay focused on one topic at a time, and make my points clear.						
D. I can confidently present a speech in front of a group of people.						
E. I can create and implement a media strategy for spreading my issues.						
Critical Thinking						
9. Think about the following statements. How often do you do each thing?						
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	
A. When I read an article or website or listen to a speaker, I think about how the perspective of the author/speaker may influence his/her arguments.						
B. I can identify potential obstacles and the steps I need to take to put a project into action.						
C. I use past decisions and experiences to help decide new problems.						
D. I can identify other people/groups interested in my issue and evaluate which are likely to support or oppose my work.						
E. I can create questions for surveys and interviews to collect evidence to support my arguments.						
F. I use evidence from research to create solutions to problems in my community.						

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Collaboration						
10. Think about the following statements. How often do you do each thing?						Many questions related to this scale and communication can be found in the civic participation skill questionnaire (http://bit.ly/18bAtdS) on PerformWell.
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	
A. I am able to identify and use the skills that are needed to make a team work well together.						
B. When a group I'm in gets stuck on a problem, I help brainstorm solutions and new ways to go forward.						
C. I encourage other members in my group to contribute.						
D. I listen to and value the contributions and perspectives of others in my group.						
E. I handle disagreements well.						
F. I am comfortable speaking with adults in my school and community.						
Professionalism						
11. Think about the following statements. How often do you do each thing?						
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	
A. I actively work to keep my group on task and focused on our goals.						
B. I actively contribute to group discussions and projects.						
C. I am on time to meetings and other life commitments.						
D. I can write professional e-mails.						
E. I can set, monitor, and achieve goals within a set amount of time.						
F. I confidently facilitate meetings of my peers.						

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_____

Section 3: Civic Knowledge

These are questions related to a student's knowledge of current events, local politics and general understanding of the political process and public policies.

Question
Current Events
Example current events:
12. President Obama proposed that all U.S. troops leave _____ by the end of the year.
a. Afghanistan
b. Germany
c. Iraq
d. Libya
e. I don't know
Current events questions are formulated by GC according to the following criteria: Assortment that includes different levels of significance (international, national, regional, local), different levels of prominence, and that includes headline news and details behind the news (Consider items that were in the Boston Globe, Providence Journal, and New York Times at least two days in the last month. Have at least one item that merited a NY Times news alert)
Local

13. Name the following:
    a.   Your governor _____
    b.   Your senators _____ _____
    c.   Your mayor _____
    d.   Your alderman (or comparable local rep) _____
    e.   Three people (in your school or community) who have power over the issue you have been working on _____ _____ _____
    f.   Two other organizations in your community that are working on the issue you have been working on _____ _____

Political Process and Public Policy

14. In the United States, both citizens and noncitizens can:
 	
    a.   Run for public office
    b.   Own a United States passport
    c.   Be protected by our laws
    d.   Vote in primary elections
    e.   I don't know

15. Who makes the decision about whether a law is constitutional or not?

    a. President
    b. Congress
    c. Supreme Court
    d. City Council
    e. I don't know

These types of questions should reflect whatever elements of the political process your program covers, but the more they are actual "knowledge" questions (asking a student what he or she knows directly, not what they think they know, the more reliable of a measure it is).

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_____

Section 4: Academic Impacts

These are questions about a student's self-reports of academic achievement and attitudes about school and learning. Ideally, organizations would track student grades, attendance, and discipline records to have a more accurate reading of the academic impacts.

Question
16. How many days last semester were you absent from school without an excuse from your parent/guardian or teacher? (this does not include absences if you were sick or for religious holidays, etc.) a. 0 b. 1-5 c. 6-10 d. more than 10 e. I don't know

17. How true are the following statements:

	Not true at all	Not very true	Sort of true	Very true
A. I think of myself as a good student.				
B. I have considered dropping out.				
C. I plan to graduate from high school.				
D. I plan to graduate from college.				
E. As a result of my [organization] experience, I have a better understanding of how the skills I learn in school can be used in the real world.				
F. My [organization] experience makes me more excited about learning.				
G. I feel involved in the decision made at my school.				

Section 5: Your Action Civics Experience

Open-ended questions allow students to express in their own words what they are taking away from the experience. They may capture impacts that the organization doesn't even know it is having. This could also be captured through other formats (video, visually).

Please write your answers to the questions below clearly and neatly.

18. In your own words, can you describe the work you did over this past year? What issue did you choose? What tactics did you use? How successful were you?

_____
_____
_____
_____

19. What are two things that you liked about [Organization] this year?

_____
_____
_____
_____

20. What are two things that you would change about [Organization] to make it even better?

_____
_____
_____
_____

21. What are the two most important skills you developed in the program and why?

_____
_____
_____
_____

22. Has [organization] changed the way you look at community service, community engagement, and civic responsibility? If so, how?

_____
_____
_____
_____

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Section 6: Action Civics Essay

This is a tool created by generation citizen that measures shows the transferability of the civic skills students have gained while working on their action civics projects. While, this still is not as authentic as capturing students "doing" the skills, this tool captures demonstration of knowledge of the action civics process beyond just self-reports captured on the survey. It could be part of the survey tool or its own tool (See 8-GC for complete tool).[20]

Issue

You live in a community that was hit very hard by Hurricane Sandy. As a result of the storm, half of the homes in your community were destroyed and most of the community's residents were displaced and had to leave the community. A few months after the storm, only a small portion of those displaced have been able to return. Few of the wealthier residents have returned, while many of the poorer residents have stayed in their homes despite unlivable conditions.

Over these past few months, your community has also encountered a dramatic increase in crime after the devastating effects of Hurricane Sandy. People have been looting stores and other businesses that have struggled to re-open for business. There has also been a rise in armed robberies and muggings of residents.

You and other frustrated residents have decided to create a plan to address <u>one of two major</u> <u>problems</u> that has impacted your community after Sandy: 1) "cleaning up" the crime problem in the community; or 2) addressing the displacement of so many residents. The plan you create will be presented at an open city council meeting.

Task

To address this problem, you must include the following:

1) Create a plan, in ***2-3 paragraphs****,* to address the crime problem OR displacement of residents in your community. You will present this plan to the city council and community members and must:

   a. Describe the overall goal of your plan. (1 paragraph)

   b. Explain the steps you would take to address the problem. Be as specific as possible. (1-2 paragraphs)

---

[20] The rubric GC uses to grade is available upon request and will also be in the common tool databank. This tool could be adapted to the different approaches each organization uses. It is best used in a classroom setting.

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2) Write ***2-3 paragraphs*** persuading the city council and community members:

  a. Why the storm-related crime OR displacement of residents is important to address. (1 paragraph)

  b. Why your plan will successfully address the storm-related crime OR displacement of residents. (1-2 paragraphs)

Section 7: Demographic Information (relevant to your organization)

Each organization captures the demographic information in whatever way is relevant. However, it may be worthwhile to aggregate this data from time to time to measure the full reach of action civics organizations. If organizations move to share a database (like Earth Force is creating), that could make this easier.

References

Flanagan, C., Syvertsen, A., and Stout, M. (2007). Civic measurement models: Tapping adolescents' civic

  engagement. *CIRCLE Working Paper 55.* Somerville, MA: The Center for Information & Research on

  Civic Learning & Engagement.

Performwell. (2013). Active and Engaged Citizenship. [Survey tool]. Retrieved from http://performwell.org/index.php/find-surveyassessments/programs/child-a-youth-development/civic-engagment-for-youth/active-and-engaged-citizenship-aec

PerformWell. (2013). Civic Participation Skills. [Survey tool]. Retrieved from http://www.performwell.org/index.php?option=com_mtree&task=att_download&link_id=446&cf_id=24

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Appendix I: Standard Action Civics Presentation Rubric

TEAM:_____ PROJECT:_____

EVALUATOR(S):_____

ACTION CIVICS PROJECT							
Community Analysis and Issue Selection	**3**	Students identify and analyze a specific personally relevant community issue	**2**	Students identify and analyze a less specific and less relevant community issue	**1**	Students' issues are not specific or relevant	**0**	Students have not identified a specific issue or community.
Researching Issue	**3**	Students present root cause analysis of issue and clearly present evidence from various research methods (survey, interviews, internet research).	**2**	Students understand root causes of their issue and use at least one research method to present evidence for their claims.	**1**	Students have a general idea about the root causes, but lack good research support.	**0**	Students do not present any research.
Goal setting	**3**	Students craft a SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely) goal.	**2**	Students have goals, but are less focused.	**1**	Students have a general idea of what they want to accomplish, but no clear goal.	**0**	Students lack goals for taking action.
Strategizing and power analysis	**3**	Students have coherent tactics and identify the targets, allies and opponents of their solution.	**2**	Students have tactics, but are less sure of how they will put it into action.	**1**	Students have a general idea of tactics and no idea of how to put into action.	**0**	Students lack strategy.
Sustainable action	**3**	Students have taken action on their project that will have long-term, sustainable impact.	**2**	Students have taken action on their project with a solution that will likely have a shorter-term effect.	**1**	Students have begun taking action, but lack clear ideas about sustaining it.	**0**	Students did not take action.
Reflective practice	**3**	Students are able to deeply reflect on the work they have done, identifying key lessons learned.	**2**	Students have reflected somewhat on what they have learned.	**1**	Students have not reflected much on their work.	**0**	Students did not reflect.

TOTAL INDIVIDUAL POINTS: /
                                                18

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PRESENTATION SKILLS								
PROFESSIONALISM (DRESS, PUBLIC SPEAKING, PREPARATION)	**3**	Dressed appropriately, Confident speaker, fully prepared	**2**	Mostly dressed appropriately, somewhat confident and prepared	**1**	Did not dress appropriately, appears nervous and unprepared	**0**	Little to no effort
CLARITY OF MESSAGE	**3**	Message is clear and explicit, reiterated in both media project and presentation, with evidence to support it.	**2**	Message is mostly apparent but contains some gaps in the argument with shaky evidence.	**1**	Message is unclear or confusing, no evidence.	**0**	No apparent intentional message
INFORMATION PRESENTED	**3**	Information is well researched and credited to legitimate & varied sources: statistics, expert interview, articles and personal experiences.	**2**	Information is mostly well researched and appears legitimate but lacks variety, breadth or citations.	**1**	Information does not have an apparent source. Only one type is presented.	**0**	No supporting information included
TEAMWORK	**3**	Team worked collaboratively, visibly supporting each other, participating equally. Presentation was practiced and well-timed.	**2**	Team was visibly supportive of each other but lacked preparation. Some members presented more than others.	**1**	Team was not respectful/ supportive of each other. Some members did not present or participate.	**0**	Team did not complete or present at event
GRASP OF ISSUE	**3**	Several (3 min) members answered questions clearly and effectively. Answers were thoughtful and prepared.	**2**	Two or fewer members answered questions. Some answers were unclear or inaccurate.	**1**	One or fewer persons answered questions OR answers were unclear or inaccurate.	**0**	No one answered questions.
TOTAL GROUP POINTS:								
		/15						
TOTAL POINTS:	**/33**							

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_____

COMMENTS (please provide some general feedback on student's performance during the semester—thing you liked/had questions about):

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS/REVIEW (future improvement plan) :

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

EVALUATOR SIGNATURE:_____ **DATE:** _____
PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE:_____ **DATE:** _____

Acknowledgements

CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) conducts research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25.

It is based at the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University.