

Inventory of Civic Education In New Jersey Schools

Conducted by:

**New Jersey Center for
Civic & Law-Related Education**

Data analysis:

**Eagleton Institute of Politics
Center for Public Interest Polling**

Data Collection:

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THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
RUTGERS

**INVENTORY OF CIVIC EDUCATION
IN NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Inventory of Civic Education in New Jersey Schools was conducted in the autumn of 2004 by Arlene Gardner, director of the New Jersey Center for Civic & Law-Related Education. Assistance with data collection and analysis was provided by the Eagleton Institute of Politics' Center for Public Interest Polling. Patrick Murray at Eagleton authored this summary report of the survey findings.

INVENTORY OF CIVIC EDUCATION IN NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS

SURVEY FINDINGS

A. Background and Methods

The Inventory of Civic Education in New Jersey Schools was developed by the New Jersey Center for Civic & Law-Related Education at Rutgers University. The initial mail questionnaire was mailed during the autumn of 2004 to 570 school districts in New Jersey (not including special service districts or charter schools). The Eagleton Institute of Politics' Center for Public Interest Polling provided limited assistance with questionnaire development and conducted two reminder mailings. The New Jersey Center for Civic & Law-Related Education made additional telephone and email contacts to boost the survey's response rate. Eagleton was primarily responsible for data cleaning and entry along with this summary report.

A total of 189 school districts returned the questionnaire, representing a 33 percent response rate. The districts participating in this survey are largely representative of the state as a whole in terms of size, district factor grouping, and region (see Survey Demographics table). Because of this, the survey results on any individual question should fall within a margin of approximately ± 6 percent had all New Jersey school districts participated in the survey. This margin of error means that if 54 percent of school districts in this survey report teaching a law-related course in their curriculum, we are confident that the true number in the population of all districts would fall within 48 and 60 percent had all schools been surveyed.

The margin of error for sub-groups within the population (e.g. DFG, region, etc.) is larger. As the demographic table shows the margin for most subgroups is about 10-13 percentage points. In these instances, any notable differences between groups must generally be

16 percentage points or more to be considered statistically valid. In most cases in this survey, there are few if any differences that meet that criterion when the results are compared by region or district factor group. The only demographic comparison where there do seem to be statistical variations is among districts that span different grade ranges. Other subgroup differences found in the survey results, such as by number of students served, are generally correlative with grade span. The narrative report that follows will discuss these differences as appropriate.

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS			
	<u>Population</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Margin of Error</u>
TOTAL	(570)	(189)	<u>+5.8%</u>
<u>District Factor Group</u>			
A/B	19%	20%	<u>+12.5%</u>
CD/DE	26	21	<u>+13.3%</u>
FG/GH	29	30	<u>+10.7%</u>
I/J	23	26	<u>+11.1%</u>
Vocational	4	3	<u>+39.2%</u>
<u>Number of Students</u>			
Under 500	18%	14%	<u>+16.2%</u>
500-5000	63	65	<u>+7.2%</u>
Over 5000	20	21	<u>+12.5%</u>
<u>Grade Span</u>			
K-12		49%	
K-5/6		7	
K-8		30	
7-12		2	
9-12		12	
<u>Grade by Size</u>			
K-12, 500-5000		30%	
K-12, over 5000		19	
K-6/8, under 500		14	
K-6/8, 500-5000		22	
7/9-12, 500-5000		13	
Other		2	
<u>Region of State</u>			
North	38%	36%	<u>+9.9%</u>
Central	27	30	<u>+10.3%</u>
South	35	34	<u>+10.1%</u>
<u>Community Type</u>			
Suburban	n/a	67%	n/a
Urban	n/a	14	n/a
Rural	n/a	14	n/a
Mixed	n/a	5	n/a

TABLE: Inventory of Civic Education in New Jersey Schools

	TOTAL (n=189)	District Grade Span *		
		<u>K-12</u> (n=92)	<u>K-5/8</u> (n=71)	<u>7/9-12</u> (n=26)
Does your school district have a <u>required</u> civics/American democracy/citizenship course in grades 6-12?	39%	46%	39%	12%
Does your school district have an <u>elective</u> civics/American democracy/citizenship course in grades 6-12?	41	64	4	62
Is civics/American democracy/citizenship incorporated as part of another course in grades 6-12?	90	98	77	100
Is civics/American democracy/citizenship incorporated as part of the elementary grade (K-5) course of study?	78	88	93	--
Does your school district have a specific course or unit of a course where New Jersey and local government are taught? [NAMES SEPARATE COURSE]	35	29	49	19
Does your district have a law-related education course?	54	75	27	54
Does your district have a character education program that includes a civic education component?	77	80	80	54
Does your district include current issues or current events in any social studies course?	98	99	97	96
Are civic education projects or simulations part of your social studies curriculum?	81	95	73	58
Is your school district involved in co-curricular or extra-curricular civic education programs?	76	91	54	85
Are your students involved in school governance?	88	90	86	85
Has your school district offered any in-service workshops on civic education?	35	41	24	42
Do you have a civic education course, program or unit that you think is exemplary?	29	39	17	27
Does your school district have a social studies supervisor?	62	87	23	85
Do the social studies supervisor's responsibilities include any other subject areas?	41	53	18	58

* Caution: Due to small sample sizes, not all differences may be statistically significant.

B. Civic Education Courses

About 9-in-10 survey participants from districts that cover grades K-5 say they incorporate civics, American democracy and citizenship into their elementary grade course of study. Practically all New Jersey students in grades 4 and 5 receive this type of instruction. About half the districts that span grades K-5 teach it in the younger elementary school years as well. Most of these districts devote a quarter or less time to civic education at this grade level, although many report that civics is integrated throughout the curriculum.

Practically all districts report that they incorporate civics, democracy and citizenship into the coursework sometime during grades 6 through 12. The survey figure is 90 percent. However, when those districts that only span K-5 are removed from the calculation, the actual figure is closer to 98 percent for those districts that span grades 6-12. The courses where such topics are incorporated tend to be U.S. History (95%), but can also include World History (35%), New Jersey History (27%), and Humanities (21%). About half of these districts report that they devote a quarter of this course to the topic of civics and democracy. About 1-in-10 say they devote a semester and a similar number say they limit civics to a week or so. The remainder say they integrate civics throughout the course's duration.

About 4-in-10 districts (39%) say they have a required course on civics and an almost identical percentage (41%) say they have an elective civics course for grades 6-12. The required course is found in about half of those districts that cover grades 6-8, compared to only 12 percent in purely high school districts. Generally, the required course is given during the middle school grades.

On the other hand, an elective civics course tends to be almost exclusively offered in high schools. Nearly two-thirds of districts with grades 9-12 have such a course, compared to only 1-

in-20 K-8 districts. About 6-in-10 of these electives are year-long courses. Most of the remaining districts offer a semester program and a handful offer this elective for a quarter. About half of those districts with an elective civics course report that 10 percent of their student body take part and another 1-in-4 say it is less than that. About 2-in-10 districts with an elective report that between 11 and 20 percent of students take the course, and a few say over 20 percent of students enroll.

<i>Which of the following topics are included in the required or elective civics, American democracy or citizenship course or integrated in another course of study?</i>	
94%	Individual rights
94	Role of a citizen
93	Structure of government
91	Responsibility
88	Diversity
78	Fairness
77	Authority

Regardless of how civics is incorporated and at what grade level, nearly all school districts report that the following topics are covered somewhere in their curricula: individual rights (94%), the role of a citizen (94%), the structure of government (93%), responsibility (91%) and diversity (88%). About 3-in-4 districts say they cover fairness (78%) and authority (77%) in their curricula.

C. State and Local Government

Nearly all New Jersey school districts report that they include at least a unit on state and local government in their curriculum, including 35 percent who teach a separate course on the subject. In many cases, this is a grade 4 New Jersey history course. Most of the remaining districts (64%) incorporate New Jersey topics into their U.S. history course of study. About one-third devote a quarter of the school year to local topics. About 1-in-4 devote a semester or the whole year. The remainder either spend a week or two on local topics or integrate them throughout the school year.

<i>[Does your district have a] course or unit [that] include[s] information about the following topics?</i>	
86%	New Jersey history
83	New Jersey government
74	Local government
71	State/local current events
65	New Jersey legislature
61	New Jersey Constitution
55	New Jersey courts

More than 8-in-10 New Jersey school districts cover state history (86%) and government (83%) in their curricula. About 2-in-3 or more cover local government (74%), state and local current events (71%) and the New Jersey legislature (65%). Over half cover the state's

Constitution (61%) and court system (55%).

D. Law-Related Education

About half of all New Jersey districts (54%) report that they teach a law-related education course. These are most likely to be offered in the K-12 districts (75%). About half (54%) of the grades 7/9-12 districts offer such a course and about 1-in-4 (27%) K-5/8 districts do the same. Among districts with high schools, about 6-in-10 offer these courses in grades 11 or 12 and 3-in-10 in grades 9 or 10. Among districts with middle schools, 1-in-10 offer law-related education in grades 7 or 8.

<i>Topics taught in districts with law-related education courses:</i>	
89%	U.S. Supreme Court cases
86	First Amendment
81	Rule of Law
42	Non-governmental orgs.
41	International law
40	International human rights

Topics taught in these courses generally include U.S. Supreme Court cases (89%), the First Amendment (86%), and the Rule of Law (81%). About 4-in-10 law-related courses cover non-governmental organizations

(42%), international law (41%) or international human rights (40%).

E. Character Education and Civics

About three-quarters (77%) of state school districts have a character education program with a civics component. This topic is covered in some way by nearly all districts during grades K-5. About 6-in-10 grade 6-8 district curricula include this type of instruction. And just over one-third of high schools do the same.

<i>Topics taught in districts with civics education component in a character education program:</i>	
97%	Respect
95	Responsibility
94	Citizenship
94	Fairness
94	Honesty
92	Trustworthiness
79	Open-mindedness

These course almost universally cover respect (97%), responsibility (95%), citizenship (94%), fairness (94%), honesty (94%) and trustworthiness (92%). About 8-in-10 (79%) also include open-mindedness in their character education civics study.

F. Current Events and Simulations

Practically all districts (98%) incorporate current issues or current events into their social studies curriculum. This is widespread at every grade level.

About 8-in-10 districts (81%) offer civics-related simulations as part of their social studies coursework. Almost all K-12 districts (95%) do this, along with 73 percent of K-5/8 districts and 58 percent of 7/9-12 districts. The K-12 districts tend to spread these types of projects across the different grade levels, while the K-5/8 districts tend to cluster them during the later grades.

<i>Types of projects in districts with civics education simulations in the social studies curriculum:</i>	
84%	Mock elections
73	Mock trials
36	Moot courts
23	Legislative hearings
21	Negotiations
10	Project Citizen

Mock elections (84%) and mock trials (73%) are among the most popular types of civics simulations in New Jersey schools. About one-third of those districts who use this type of learning tool have moot courts

(36%) and somewhat fewer employ legislative hearings (23%), negotiations (21%) or Project Citizen (10%).

G. Co-Curricular/Extra-Curricular Activities

Nearly 9-in-10 districts (88%) say their students are involved in school governance. This includes nearly all students at the high school level, over 8-in-10 at the middle school level and over half at the elementary school level.

Three-in-four districts (76%) are involved in co-curricular or extra-curricular civic education programs. This includes nearly all K-12 (91%) and 7/9-12 (85%) districts and about half (54%) of K-5/8 districts. Most schools say less than one-quarter of their students participate in these types of programs.

<i>Is school district involved in any of the following extra-curricular activities?</i>	
51%	Peer Mediation
49	Mock Trial
40	Voter registration
38	Mock Election
37	Conflict resolution
32	Model UN
22	Youth Leadership
18	Service learning
14	We the People
12	Junior State of America
7	Legislators Back to School
7	YMCA Youth & Government
7	Civic Empowerment
6	Close-Up
5	Project Citizen
2	Teen Court

Among the 16 different extra-curricular or co-curricular programs listed in the survey, half of all New Jersey school districts report that they utilize peer mediation (51%) and mock trials (49%). About 4-in-10 do voter registration (40%), mock elections (38%) and conflict resolution (37%). About one-third participate in Model UN (32%) and one-fifth use Youth Leadership (22%) and service learning (18%).

Fewer districts partake in or employ We the People (14%), Junior State of America (12%), Legislators Back to School (7%), YMCA Youth & Government (7%), Civic Empowerment (7%), Close-Up (6%), Project Citizen (5%) and Teen Court (2%).

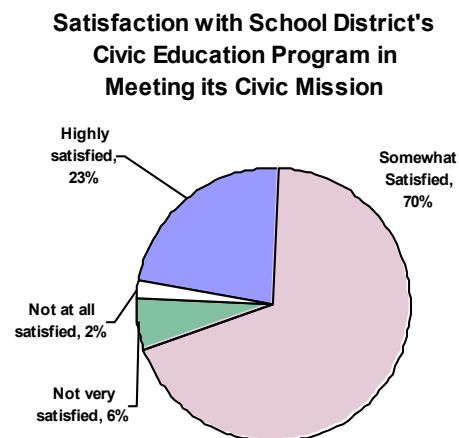
H. Social Studies Supervision

Overall, 62 percent of school districts surveyed have a designated social studies supervisor. This includes nearly 9-in-10 K-12 districts (87%) and 7/9-12 districts (85%) compared to 23 percent of K-5/8 districts. About two-thirds of these supervisors report having other responsibilities (such as World Languages for example).

About one-third (35%) of New Jersey school districts have offered an in-service workshop on civic education in the past five years. About 3-in-10 report that they have a civic education course, program or unit that they feel is exemplary.

I. Civic Education Mission

Most school districts say they are generally satisfied that their program of civic education is meeting its mission to create informed, active, engaged citizens. However, only 1-in-4 (23%) say they are highly satisfied with this and another 70 percent are somewhat satisfied. Another 8 percent are not satisfied. Smaller school districts are a little less likely to say they are highly satisfied although there are no significant differences by level of community resources (as measured by district factor group).



Survey participants were presented with 11 different types of supports or programs and asked to evaluate how helpful each would be to improving the civic education program in their own district. By far, the most helpful of these would be up-to-date, inexpensive, readily

accessible and usable class materials (77%) and access to on-line materials and services (72%). More than 7-in-10 survey participants said these services would be very helpful to them. Only a handful said they would not be helpful at all.

Other potentially helpful services include statewide conferences and workshops for teachers (57% very helpful), networking opportunities with other teachers and administrators (55%), and summer institutes for teachers (46%). About one-third (34%) would see more community support for civic education as being very helpful.

How helpful would each of the following be in improving the civic education program in your school district?			
	<u>Very helpful</u>	<u>Somewhat helpful</u>	<u>Not helpful</u>
Up-to-date, inexpensive, readily accessible and usable classroom materials	77%	22%	2%
Access to on-line materials and services	72	25	3
Statewide conferences and workshops for teachers	57	36	7
Networking opportunities with other teachers/administrators	55	39	5
Summer Institutes for teachers	46	46	8
More community support for civic education	34	48	18
Revised state social studies standards	31	39	30
A state required course in civics, American democracy, government and/or citizenship	30	34	36
A larger number of elective course options	25	38	37
More administrative support for civic education	23	55	22
A statewide assessment for civics/social studies	20	31	49

About as many school district personnel surveyed say that revised state social studies standards would be very helpful (31%) as say they would not be helpful at all (30%). Similar sentiment is expressed for having more administrative support – 23 percent say this would be very helpful to 22 percent not helpful, although 55 percent say it would be somewhat helpful.

Slightly more survey participants say that having a state required course on civic education would not be helpful (36%) than say it would be very helpful (30%). The gap is even wider for having a larger number of elective options – 37 percent say this would not be helpful to 25 percent who say it would be very helpful. About half (49%) of those surveyed feel that a statewide assessment for civics would not be helpful to improving their civic education program. Only 20 percent say it would be very helpful.

Among those who feel that any of these 11 types of services may be helpful, survey participants from the larger, urban K-12 districts tend to be somewhat more likely than others to see them as potentially helpful.

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**APPENDIX:
SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

Instructions: please write in or circle your responses.

About Your School District:

1. County: _____
2. Type of School District:
K-12 K-8 K-5/6 9-12 Other _____
3. Number of pupils in the district:
Under 500 500-5000 Over 5000
4. School District Factor Group: (*recorded from district name*)
5. Type of community:
urban suburban rural

Civics/foundations of American democracy/citizenship

6. Does your school district have a **required** civics/American democracy/citizenship course in grades 6-12?

Yes No Not applicable—no grades 6-12 in district

Does your school district have an **elective** civics/American democracy/citizenship course in grades 6-12?

Yes No Not applicable—no grades 6-12 in district

If yes, what is the title and grade level? _____

How long is the course? Year _____ Semester _____ Quarter _____ Other _____

If the course or courses are elective, what percentage of the student body takes this/these course(s)? _____%

7. Is civics/American democracy/citizenship incorporated as part of another course in grades 6-12?

Yes No Not applicable—no grades 6-12 in district

If yes, what course or courses? (*Check all that apply.*)

_____ U.S. History

_____ World History

_____ NJ history

_____ Others _____

_____ Humanities

Approximately what portion of the course addresses issues of civics, government or citizenship?

Semester Quarter Week Other _____

8. Is civics/American democracy/citizenship incorporated as part of the elementary grade (K-5) course of study?

Yes No Not applicable—no grades K-5 in district

If yes, at what grade levels? _____.

How long is the unit or section on civics? _____

9. Which of the following topics are included in the required or elective civics/American democracy/citizenship course or integrated in another course of study? (*Check all that apply.*)

_____ Individual rights

_____ Diversity

_____ Authority

_____ The role of a citizen

_____ Responsibility

_____ The structure of government

_____ Fairness

_____ Other _____

State and local government/community civics

10. Does your school district have a specific course or unit of a course where New Jersey and local government are taught?

Yes No

If a separate course, what is the title and grade level? _____

If not a separate course, is this information included as part of a U.S. History course?

Yes No

If a unit, approximately how long is the unit on New Jersey and local government?

Year Semester Quarter Week Other _____
Does the course or unit include information about the following topics: (*Check all that apply.*)

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| _____ New Jersey history | _____ New Jersey Constitution |
| _____ New Jersey government | _____ Local government |
| _____ New Jersey courts | _____ State/local current events |
| _____ New Jersey legislature | _____ Other _____ |

Law-related education

11. Does your district have a law-related education course?

Yes No

If yes, at what grade level(s)? _____

What topics are taught? (*Check all that apply.*)

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| _____ Rule of Law | _____ International human rights |
| _____ First Amendment | _____ Non-governmental |
| _____ US Supreme Court cases | organizations |
| _____ International law | _____ Others _____ |

Character education

12. Does your district have a character education program that includes a civic education component?

Yes No

If yes, at what grade level(s)? _____

Which of the following topics are included in the character education program? (*Check all that apply*)

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| _____ Citizenship | _____ Respect |
| _____ Fairness | _____ Trustworthiness |
| _____ Honesty | _____ Open-mindedness |
| _____ Responsibility | _____ Others _____ |

Current events

13. Does your district include current issues or current events in any social studies course?

Yes No

If yes, at what grade level(s)? _____

What is the title of the course or courses? _____

Simulations as part of the curriculum.

14. Are civic education projects or simulations part of your social studies curriculum?

Yes No

If yes, at what grade levels? _____

Please note the types of simulations: *(Check all that apply)*

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| _____ Moot courts | _____ Legislative hearings (e.g., We the People) |
| _____ Mock elections | _____ Project Citizen |
| _____ Mock trials | _____ Others _____ |
| _____ Negotiations | |

Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities

15. Is your school district involved in co-curricular or extra-curricular civic education programs?

Yes No

If yes, at what grade level(s)? _____

Is your school district involved in any of the following *(Check all that apply)*:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| _____ Civic Empowerment | _____ Project Citizen |
| _____ Close-Up | _____ Service learning |
| _____ Conflict resolution | _____ Teen Court |
| _____ Junior State of America | _____ Voter Registration |
| _____ Legislators Back to School | _____ We the People |
| _____ Mock Election | _____ YMCA Youth and Government |
| _____ Mock Trial | _____ Youth Leadership |
| _____ Model UN | _____ Other _____ |
| _____ Peer Mediation | |

Approximately what percentage of the student body is involved? _____%

16. Are your students involved in school governance?

Yes No

If yes, at what grade levels? _____

Professional Development

17. Has your school district offered any in-service workshops on civic education?

Yes No

If yes, was it within the: past year five years ten years

Exemplary courses and programs

18. Do you have a civic education course, program or unit that you think is exemplary?

Yes No

If yes, at what grade level is it taught? _____

What is the title of the course? _____

Approximately what percentage of the student body is involved? _____%

Self-assessment

19. How satisfied are you that the program of civic education at your school district is meeting its civic mission to create informed, active, engaged citizens?

Highly satisfied Somewhat satisfied

Not very satisfied Not at all satisfied

20. How helpful would each of the following be in improving the civic education program in your school district?

	Very Helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful
A state required course in civics/American democracy/government/citizenship			
A statewide assessment for civics/social studies			
Revised state social studies standards			
More administrative support for civic education			
More community support for civic education			
A larger number of elective course options			
Up-to-date, inexpensive, readily accessible and usable classroom materials			
Access to on-line materials and services			
Statewide conferences and workshops for teachers			
Summer Institutes for teachers			
Networking opportunities with other teachers/administrators			

Other _____

Social studies supervisor

21. Does your school district have a social studies supervisor?

Yes No

If yes, what grades levels are supervised? K-5 K-8 9-12 Other _____

How many teachers does this person supervise? _____

22. Do the social studies supervisor's responsibilities include any other subject areas?

Yes No

If yes, what areas _____

23. Name and phone number of social studies supervisor

Name _____

Phone _____

In case we need to clarify a response or ask you an additional question:

Name of person completing the Inventory _____

Position _____

School District _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Thank you for completing the Inventory of Civic Education in New Jersey.

Please return it in the postage paid envelope provided by October 15th to

Eagleton Institute, Carriage House, 185 Ryders Lane, New Brunswick, NJ 08901.

Or via fax: (732) 932-1551.