



High School Students' Acquisition of Civic Knowledge: The Impact of We the People

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SUMMARY

Citizens' acquisition of political knowledge, the storehouse of factual knowledge that people hold about politics, forms a foundation for democratic political life. People possessing greater civic knowledge tend to be supportive of democratic values, such as liberty, equality, and political tolerance. Knowledge imbues citizens with the confidence and ability to stake a position in the marketplace of political ideas as well as to actively engage in governmental and civic affairs. Decades of research confirms that the public has a relatively low stock of political knowledge, and that knowledge levels have remained fairly stable over time. High school civic education offers the opportunity to impart core political knowledge to young people, and establish habits for acquiring political information in the long term. This study compares the political knowledge acquisition of students whose teachers have gone through the *We the People* professional development program to students whose teachers have not. It also examines the knowledge gain of students who participated in the *We the People* instructional program to that of students who took civics classes employing more traditional approaches. Student knowledge assessment data from an original study fielded in schools across the state of Indiana during the fall semester 2014 is employed. We find that students of teachers who have participated in *We the People* professional development scored higher on tests of their knowledge of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, political parties and elections, and race and politics than students in the comparison group. The influence of *We the People* professional development on teacher effectiveness in conveying political knowledge is evident for students enrolled in either the *We the People* program or a traditional civics class. The *We the People* curriculum is especially successful in imparting knowledge of the U.S. Constitution, which is a goal of the program.

Key Research Findings

- * Students' political knowledge increased over the course of the semester for the entire sample.
- *The increase in political knowledge levels as a result of civics instruction was significantly higher for students of teachers with *We the People* professional development than for the comparison group.
- *Students who took civics with a teacher with *We the People* professional development had significantly higher scores on knowledge of the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, political

parties and elections, and race and politics than students in the comparison group at the end of the semester.

*Students in the *We the People* program had significantly higher scores on knowledge of the U.S. Constitution than other students in the study.

**We the People* students' scores are similar to those of students taking a traditional civics class with a teacher who has *We the People* professional development for knowledge of the Bill of Rights and race and politics.

*Teacher professional development and type of class had no influence on knowledge of government institutions.

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Introduction

Knowledge forms the foundation for citizens' engagement in political life (e.g., Niemi and Junn, 1998; Galston, 2001; Milner, 2010; Campbell, 2006). A strong knowledge base facilitates individuals' development of political attitudes that are predicated on more than just emotion, and fosters comprehension of how their own interests fit into a complex political system. An appreciation of the principles embodied in the Constitution undergirds American citizenship. People possessing greater civic knowledge tend to be supportive of democratic values, such as liberty, equality, and political tolerance (Finkel and Ernst, 2005; Galston, 2004; Brody, 1994; Youniss, 2011). Further, political knowledge is directly related to participation. People who possess sufficient political knowledge of democratic government and processes tend to be more politically efficacious. They have the confidence and ability to stake a position in the marketplace of political ideas as well as to actively engage in governmental and civic affairs (Galston, 2004; DelliCarpini and Keeter, 1996; McDevitt and Chaffee, 2000; Meirick and Wackman, 2004; Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011).

Political knowledge encompasses a vast amount of information pertinent to government and political life. Delli Carpini and Keeter define political knowledge as "the range of factual information about politics that is stored in long-term memory" (1996: 10-11). Decades of research confirms that the public has a relatively low stock of political knowledge, and that knowledge levels have remained fairly stable over time (Bennett, 1995; Neuman, 1986; Smith, 1989; Delli Carpini, 2005; Galston and Lopez, 2006; Friedman and Friedman, 2013). About half of the public is somewhat knowledgeable about the basic institutions and procedures of government, although knowledge of the Constitution and Bill of Rights is less robust (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Pew Research Center, 2011). In sum, the average American citizen is poorly informed, but not uninformed (Delli Carpini, 2005). Individuals who are very informed about one aspect of politics tend to be knowledgeable in other areas (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996).

High school civics instruction offers the opportunity to impart core political knowledge, and establish habits for acquiring political information in the long term. Understanding the conditions under which political knowledge is most successfully acquired is essential for fostering democratic engagement. This study assesses the effectiveness of high school civic education in conveying political knowledge. Specifically, we are interested in the question: Does teacher professional development make a difference in students' acquisition of political knowledge through high school civics courses? This study compares the political knowledge acquisition of students of teachers who have gone

through the *We the People* (WTP) professional development (PD) program to students whose teachers have not had WTP PD. It also examines whether students who participated in the *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution* instructional program gained more knowledge than students who took civics classes employing more traditional approaches. WTP is a long-standing curriculum intervention that has involved over 28 million students and 75,000 teachers in all fifty states since 1987. We employ student knowledge assessment data from an original study fielded in schools across the state of Indiana during the fall semester 2014 to explore these questions.

Civic Education and the Acquisition of Political Knowledge

Researchers across a variety of disciplines, including political science, communication, cognitive psychology, and public relations, have identified three major antecedents of knowledge acquisition—ability, motivation, and opportunity (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Hallahan, 2000; Barabas, et al., 2014). The high school civics classroom can be a site where ability, motivation, and opportunity are fostered. Ability and motivation are traits intrinsic to the individual. Ability refers to a person's cognitive skills and capacity for learning. People develop different levels of proficiency in retaining and processing information. Civics teachers can recognize and tap into students' ability in a way that stimulates political learning. Grade point average is a rough measure of students' ability. Motivation represents people's desire to learn, and a willingness to engage with and process information. Students' level of interest in political and civic life as well as their capacity for engagement varies based on a multiplicity of factors, including those related to home and family life and their social networks. In school, motivation can be related to teachers' encouragement, class climate, or the instructor's pedagogic style. Opportunity takes into account the availability of information and the manner in which it is presented. It encompasses factors that can be largely outside the control of the individual, such as the amount of exposure to a message, the number of arguments it contains, and the presence of distractions that can hinder comprehension (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Chaiken, 1987; MacInnis, et al., 1991; Hallahan, 2000). Under the right circumstances, high school civics classes have the potential to offer significant intentional exposure to political information within a structured environment that is conducive to learning.

Civic education can influence the acquisition of political knowledge both directly and indirectly. The classroom is a unique setting where young people can gain knowledge, establish autonomy in their ideas, and develop confidence in their ability to be political actors (Ehman, 1980; Morgan and Streb, 2001). Civics classes can stimulate interest in political affairs, create a lasting sense

of civic duty, and encourage an orientation toward political life that compels people to be attentive to politics. Knowledge gained through civics instruction can serve as a foundation for seeking further information. Events, such as an election campaign, public policy controversy, a discussion of politics, or a media report, may invigorate recall of relevant political facts that were learned in class. Thus, civic education may be responsible for positioning people to encounter and be receptive to information about the political world long after they leave the classroom.

***We the People* Program and Professional Development**

Civic education varies greatly across, and even within, schools. Civics offerings range from dedicated social studies/American government classes to brief sections of a history class. While civics classes often are conducted using a standard lecture/textbook approach, some schools offer programs that employ active pedagogies designed to impart civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions that encourage students to take part in the polity. Our study explores the political knowledge levels of students who have gone through the *We the People* program compared to students who took civics classes employing a more traditional approach.

The *We the People* program instructs students in the foundations and institutions of American government. It is distinctive for its emphasis on constitutional principles, the Bill of Rights, and Supreme Court cases. A WTP textbook reflecting the curriculum is available in both a print and an ebook version that facilitates interactive learning. WTP students take part in simulated congressional hearings that encourage them to engage in a range of learning activities. This exercise requires students to research and develop succinct, yet complete, answers to probing questions. Some classes take part in district, state, and national WTP hearings in Washington, D.C. The finals of the national competition are held in congressional hearing rooms on Capitol Hill. This active approach to civics instruction is associated with positive learning outcomes (Vontz and Leming, 2005-06). Several studies have shown that *We the People* students gained superior knowledge about key elements of government and politics, and that the program promotes greater amounts of political tolerance and engagement (Leming, 1996; Brody, 1994; Neimi, 2001; Hartry and Porter, 2004; Owen and Soule, 2010; Eschrich, 2010; Owen, 2013; Owen and Riddle, 2015).

The WTP curriculum and WTP teacher PD focus on six essential questions that are reflected in the six chapters of the *We the People* textbook:

1. What are the philosophical and historical foundations of the American political system?

2. How did the framers create the Constitution?
3. How has the Constitution been changed to further the ideals contained in the Declaration of Independence?
4. How have the values and principles embodied in the Constitution shaped American institutions and practices?
5. What rights does the Bill of Rights protect?
6. What challenges might face American constitutional democracy in the twenty-first century?

Secondary school students' learning is dependent on the knowledge base and pedagogical skills of their teachers. Effective professional development includes three essential components: content knowledge, pedagogy, and student assessment. WTP teacher PD is administered through training institutes, workshops, and seminars. Teacher participants interact with law, history, and political science scholars who are responsible for conveying high level content related to one or more of the essential questions and demonstrating effective pedagogy. In addition, the teacher participants interact with mentor master teachers familiar with both the content and the pedagogy of the *We the People* textbook. The mentor teachers are responsible for helping teacher participants understand the content and how best to implement the program content in their classroom. WTP PD also provides pedagogy sessions delivered by mentor teachers and university and college social studies methods professors that demonstrate "best practices," including written argument development, Socratic questioning, interactive teaching strategies, primary document analysis, and critical reading of non-fiction sources. The final component of the WTP professional development program focuses on assessment. In small groups of 4-6 teachers and guided by mentor teachers, participants prepare written statements answering congressional hearing questions designed to complement the six units in the *We the People* textbook. The participants are assessed based on: 1) their understanding of the basic issues involved in the question; 2) their knowledge of constitutional history and principles; 3) their use of sound reasoning to support their positions; 4) their use of historical or contemporary evidence and examples to support their positions; 5) the extent to which they answered the question asked; and 6) the extent to which most members contributed to the group's presentation.

Research indicates that teachers who participated in *We the People* professional development felt that they gained content knowledge and enhanced their skills substantially whether or not they went on to teach the WTP curriculum (Fairbank, et al., 2009). WTP PD has a positive impact on elementary and middle school teachers' content knowledge as well as their attitudes towards teaching

civics, teaching practices, and pedagogical content knowledge. Teachers who attended the week long *We the People* summer institute gained in their ability to impart the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of democratic citizenship to students (Vontz, 2010).

Hypotheses

We test the following hypotheses about the effectiveness of teachers who received *We the People* professional development and the WTP curriculum in imparting political knowledge to high school students:

H₁: High school students who took civics from a teacher with WTP PD will have higher political knowledge scores than students whose teacher did not have WTP PD.

H₂: High school students who took a *We the People* class will have higher political knowledge scores than students who took a traditional civics/social studies/American government class.

We anticipate that the impact of WTP PD will be evident for teachers regardless of whether or not they are instructing a *We the People* class. Students of WTP PD teachers who experienced the *We the People* curriculum should have the highest knowledge scores in the study.

Data

A quasi-experimental design without random assignment was employed to compare students in civics, social studies, and American government classes taught by teachers with and without *We the People* PD at multiple school sites across the state of Indiana in the fall semester of 2014. Schools with teachers who had participated in WTP PD and who taught WTP classes were recruited to take part in the study. Teachers without WTP PD from the same schools constitute the comparison group. Twenty-one teachers from twelve high schools from across the state took part in the study. In three of the schools there is only one instructor who teaches all of the civic education classes. The WTP teachers taught other civics/social studies classes in addition to their WTP class with one exception. The schools vary in size, location (urban/suburban/rural), and type (neighborhood/selective enrollment/technical; public/private). The student samples per school range in size from 39 to 169, with a mean of 85 students.

Teachers completed a baseline survey in September 2014 prior to the administration of the student surveys. The comparison group teachers were matched to the extent possible with the WTP PD teachers based on their educational background and years of experience. The WTP PD and

comparison group teachers in the study are highly comparable on these indicators. The average number of years teaching civics—twenty—is identical for each group, and ranges from 5 to 36 for the WTP PD teachers and 7 to 34 for the comparison group teachers. 27% of the WTP PD teachers have bachelor's degrees and 73% have advanced degrees (master's/law degree). 33% of the comparison group teachers hold bachelor's degrees and 67% have master's degrees. All of the teachers in the study had participated in professional development of some type. The WTP PD teachers took part in five to seven day WTP summer institutes that conveyed the content knowledge and specialized skills required of instructors in the program. These teachers also had follow-up services, including one day seminars and engagement in a network of WTP instructors.

Complete data were collected on 1,015 students. 663 students were in classes taught by WTP PD teachers; 386 of these students were enrolled in the *We the People* program and 277 took a traditional civics class. 351 students took civics with the comparison group teachers. There are no statistically significant differences in the gender composition of the students in the comparison and intervention groups. The majority of students in the sample are white. However, the comparison group has a greater percentage of black students than the WTP PD teacher groups, which have more Asian American/Pacific Islander students. All groups have approximately the same percentage of Latino students. 87% of the students in the sample were seniors in high school, and the rest were mostly juniors. There is a higher percentage of seniors in traditional classes taught by WTP PD teachers than in the other groups. The vast majority of students in the comparison (98%) and WTP PD teacher/traditional (nonWTP) class (96%) groups were taking civics as a required class. 58% of students took *We the People* as a required class and 42% took it as an elective (See Table 1).

Table 1
Student Characteristics by Comparison Group, WTP Teacher/nonWTP Class, and WTP Teacher/WTP Class
 (percentage)

	Comparison Group	WTP Teacher/nonWTP class	WTP Teacher/WTP class	Sign. χ^2
Male	47	50	49	
Female	53	50	51	.605
White/Caucasian	67	76	74	
Black/African American	17	4	6	
Latino	7	7	6	
Asian American/Pacific Islander	2	8	7	
Multiracial	7	5	8	.000
Junior	17	6	9	
Senior	82	94	87	
Freshman/Sophomore	1	0	4	.000
Required Class	98	96	58	
Elective Class	2	4	42	.000

n=101

This analysis is based on pre/posttest student survey data. In addition to items measuring students' civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions, the questionnaire includes measures of classroom climate, instructional approaches, classroom resources, students' media use, demographic variables, and grade point average (GPA). Teachers administered the tests to students online near the beginning (early September) and at the end (late December) of the fall semester 2014 during class periods. There are no confounding factors in the study, as the teachers with WTP PD had no contact with the comparison group students, and the tests were administered to all students during the same time period in each school. Close contact with teachers was maintained by the researchers throughout the study in an effort to minimize sample attrition. All teachers were provided with a stipend for participating in the study, and there was no teacher attrition. Students who were absent could make up the test on another day. Thirty-eight students dropped out of the study, for an overall attrition rate of 3.6%. There is no evidence of differential attrition for the comparison or intervention class groups, or for particular schools.

Measures

Political Knowledge

Political knowledge is the dependent variable in the analysis. This study employs 48 political knowledge items that were included in both the pretest, which established a baseline, and the posttest. The knowledge survey items were constructed after consulting prior research, civics inventories, grade-appropriate civics tests, and state civic education rubrics, including the Indiana rubric. We intentionally avoided using any materials related to *We the People* when creating the pre and posttests. We reviewed content areas with the participating teachers at an orientation meeting held in Indianapolis prior to administering the pretest to ensure that the questions covered material that would be presented in class. The teachers did not have access to the study questions. The survey items consist of both original questions and those that have been previously tested and have known reliability. The test consisted primarily of multiple choice questions with three open ended items. Each item was coded 1 for a correct answer and 0 for an incorrect answer. There is a debate in the literature about the treatment of the “don’t know” responses to political knowledge questions (see Luskin and Bullock, 2011). We combined the “don’t know” response with those indicating an incorrect answer. Additive indexes representing five dimensions of political knowledge were constructed: constitutional principles, the Bill of Rights, U.S. government institutions, political parties and elections, and race and politics. The internal consistency for each measure is greater than .50 (Cronbach’s alpha), and increased for each variable over the course of the study. (See Table 2 for index reliabilities and Appendix A for question wording.)

Constitutional Principles

Students were surveyed about their understanding of principles, thinkers, and key events related to the inception of the U.S. Constitution. This dimension consisted of twelve items (range 0-12). Participants were asked about the nature of a constitutional form of government, classical Republicanism, and the federalist elements of American government. Participants read and interpreted quotations from John Locke about the rule of law, and a quotation from the Declaration of Independence outlining unalienable rights and protections against tyranny. The survey covered items on checks and balances in the Supreme Court justice nominating process and the Constitutional amendment process. Students also were asked questions about the debate at the 1787 Constitutional Convention, and the purpose of a bicameral legislature.

Bill of Rights

The survey contains five questions that gauge students' knowledge of the Bill of Rights. They were asked questions about the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, the purpose of the Bill of Rights, and the historical circumstances surrounding the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment. Participants read a quotation from correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and John Jay about freedom of the press, and interpreted the importance of this right. The additive index representing knowledge of the Bill of Rights ranges from 0 to 5.

Government Institutions

Knowledge of the three branches of government was ascertained by a fourteen item index (range 0-14). Students answered questions about the constitutional authorities of the President, presidential succession, and the executive's role in foreign policy. They were asked about checks on presidential power as outlined in the War Powers Act and the legislative requirements to overturn a presidential veto. The study includes basic questions about the number of senators in the U.S. Congress, the term of office of members of the House of Representatives, and the number of Supreme Court justices. Respondents were surveyed about representative role of the House as a voice of the people. Knowledge items covered the fate of most bills introduced in the House of Representatives, and historical uses of the filibuster by southern Senators in the 1950s and 1960s. They were required to select the definition of judicial review as set out in *Marbury v. Madison*, and understand the implications of the Supreme Court case of *United States v. Nixon*.

Political Parties and Elections

Students were tested on their understanding of the role of political parties and elections in the American system of government. This knowledge dimension consists of twelve items (range 0-12). Students were asked about the philosophical role of political parties according to James Madison in Federalist 10, and the current role of the political party in American politics. Knowledge of parties and elections covered state voter requirements, revising the Electoral College, political party's role in nominating presidential candidates, and the impact of third parties. Participants were asked the definition of a political action committee (PAC), and how PACs have contributed to weakening political parties. They were questioned about the outcome of the Supreme Court case *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*. This dimension also covered characteristics of proportional representation in voting as well as muckraking and television's role in elections.

Race and Politics

A five item additive index (range 0-5) taps students' knowledge of race and politics. Respondents were surveyed on their knowledge of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the definitions of affirmative action and multiculturalism, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s call for non-violent protests from his followers. Students read a quotation about America as a melting pot from Israel Zangwill to gauge comprehension of the notion of assimilation.

Table 2
Knowledge Measures Reliabilities
(Cronbach's α)

Measure	Wave 1 α	Wave 2 α
Constitutional Principles	.605	.655
Bill of Rights	.555	.619
Government Institutions	.735	.775
Political Parties and Elections	.612	.654
Race and Politics	.504	.578

Teacher/Class Type

The teacher/class type variable designates the comparison and the intervention groups. The analysis examines the knowledge scores of three categories of students: 1) students who took a traditional civics/social studies/American government class with a teacher who had gone through *We the People* professional development (n=277); 2) students who took a *We the People* class with a teacher who had WTP PD (n=386); and 3) the comparison group of students in a traditional civics class whose teacher did not have WTP PD (n=351). Teacher/class type is a fixed factor in the analysis.

Grade Point Average

We control for students' grade point average (GPA) in this study. GPA is measured on a 4 point unweighted scale. The mean GPA of the comparison group (\bar{x} =3.14) is slightly lower than the GPAs of the WTP PD teacher/traditional class (\bar{x} =3.54) and WTP PD teacher/WTP class (\bar{x} =3.55) groups which are virtually identical. The difference of mean GPAs between the comparison group and both of the WTP PD teacher groups is statistically significant ($p \leq .01$). GPA has been shown to be positively associated with factual knowledge gain from traditional social studies classes (Botsch

and Botsch, 2001; Champney and Edleman, 2010). Statistically significant positive linear correlations exist between GPA and the five knowledge measures in this study.

Analysis

A hierarchical linear model was estimated using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to determine the effects of *We the People* teacher professional development and class type on students' acquisition of the five dimensions of political knowledge. A random factor representing the schools in the sample accounts for clustering of students within schools. The three category teacher/class type measure is a fixed factor in the model. The WTP teacher groups and the comparison group scores on the knowledge indicators were not equivalent at baseline. A statistical adjustment was made, with pretest knowledge scores entered as covariates. Students' grade point averages also were included as covariates (Garson, 2013). Effect size is estimated using Hedge's g . It is computed for the control group and the WTP PD teachers/WTP class intervention, as the difference of means between these groups is largest in most instances (Durlak, 2009), an assumption that is consistent with our second hypothesis.

The estimated impacts of WTP PD on students' acquisition of political knowledge appear in Table 3. We report the unadjusted posttest mean knowledge scores and standard deviations and the estimated mean outcomes and the standard errors for the comparison and WTP PD teacher groups. (Pre and posttest means and standard deviations for the entire sample are depicted in Appendix B.) We also present the difference of means between the comparison group and the two WTP PD teacher groups along with the related significance tests. Post hoc analysis was performed with a Bonferroni adjustment. We computed the Benjamini-Hochberg correction for multiple comparisons to counter inflated estimates of statistical significance; an asterisk indicates that the mean difference remains significant after the correction. The effect size (Hedge's g) for each knowledge dimension is reported in the last column of Table 3.

Students' political knowledge increased over the course of the semester for the entire sample. After adjusting for the baseline knowledge scores and GPA, there are statistically significant difference ($p \leq .05$) in the posttest scores based on teacher/class type for four of the five dimensions of knowledge: the Constitution, Bill of Rights, parties and elections, and race. The impact of WTP PD and the WTP curriculum is greatest for knowledge of the Constitution. The findings generally support H_1 as students taught by teachers with WTP PD had significantly higher adjusted mean scores than students in the comparison group for the four knowledge measures. There is more

qualified support for H₂. Students enrolled in the *We the People* class had the highest scores in the study for knowledge of the Constitution. The differences in the adjusted means between the WTP PD teacher/WTP class group and both the comparison and WTP PD teacher/ nonWTP class groups are statistically significant ($p \leq .00$). However, WTP students' scores are very similar to those of students taking a traditional civics class with a WTP PD teacher for knowledge of the Bill of Rights and race. WTP students scored lower than students taking traditional civics with a WTP PD teacher on knowledge of parties and elections. The effect size is highest for the four knowledge measures falls into the low moderate to moderate range (Cohen, 1988). Knowledge of the Constitution has the largest effect size followed by race, Bill of Rights, and parties and elections. Teacher professional development and type of class had no influence on knowledge of government institutions.

Table 3
Estimated Impacts of WTP Teacher PD and Class Type on Political Knowledge

	n	Unadjusted \bar{x}	SD	Adjusted \bar{x}	SE	\bar{x} Difference	p	Effect size
Constitution								
Comparison	352	5.13	2.43	5.72	.15			
Non WTP Class	277	6.72	2.51	6.48	.16	.76	.01*	.40
WTP Class	386	7.10	2.58	6.74	.11	1.02	.00*	
Bill of Rights								
Comparison	351	2.46	1.42	2.84	.09			
Non WTP Class	277	3.41	1.41	3.32	.10	.47	.01*	.35
WTP Class	386	3.59	1.35	3.33	.07	.49	.00*	
Government Inst.								
Comparison	351	7.81	3.24	9.12	.17			
Non WTP Class	277	9.68	2.87	8.95	.19	-.17	1.00	.04
WTP Class	386	9.72	3.02	9.01	.13	-.11	1.00	
Parties and Elections								
Comparison	351	4.91	2.40	5.23	.15			
Non WTP Class	277	6.47	2.50	6.22	.16	.93	.00*	.33
WTP Class	386	6.27	2.56	6.03	.11	.75	.00*	
Race								
Control	351	2.39	1.23	2.56	.08			
Non WTP Class	277	3.13	1.30	2.99	.09	.43	.01*	.38
WTP Class	386	3.15	1.31	3.05	.06	.49	.00*	

*The estimated impact is statistically significant at $p \leq .05$ after applying the Benjamini-Hochberg correction for multiple comparisons.

Conclusion

The *We the People* program has figured prominently in civic education for almost thirty years. A handful of studies and reams of anecdotal evidence suggest that WTP teacher PD and the WTP program curriculum work to enhance students' civic learning. This research demonstrates that WTP teacher professional development and, to a somewhat lesser extent, class type positively impact students' acquisition of political knowledge. Students of teachers who have participated in WTP PD scored higher on tests of their knowledge of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, political parties and elections, and race and politics than students in the comparison group. The influence of WTP PD on teacher effectiveness in conveying political knowledge is evident for students enrolled in either a WTP or traditional class. The WTP curriculum is especially successful in imparting knowledge of the U.S. Constitution, which is a goal of the program.

Notes

¹ An ANCOVA model was run to determine if there are statistically meaningful differences in knowledge levels for students taking *We the People* as a required or an elective class. There are no statistically significant differences for any of the five dimensions of knowledge analyzed in this study.

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Appendix A

Dimensions of Political Knowledge

Constitutional Principles

--John Locke states: "Absolute arbitrary power, or governing without settled laws, can neither of them be consistent with the ends of society and government."

Which of the following statements is most consistent with the Locke quotation above?

--Which of the following did critics of the Articles of Confederation consider the document's greatest flaw?

--"We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; . . ." This quotation is evidence that some of the basic ideas in the Declaration of Independence were...

--A constitutional government ALWAYS includes...

--Which characteristic serves as a long-term protection against tyranny and is a foundation of liberty in the United States?

--The proposal at the Constitutional Convention that membership in the House of Representatives would be based on proportional representation and that Senate membership would be based on equal representation is called...

--At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, a bicameral legislature was proposed as a solution to the disagreement over...

--The Constitution requires that the President's nominations to the Supreme Court be approved by the Senate. This is an example of...

--What is the last step in amending the U.S. Constitution?

--In the United States, what occurs when state and national laws are in conflict?

--Federalism: A way of organizing a nation so that two or more levels of government have authority over the same land and people. Which fact about American government reflects the above definition of federalism?

--The federal system encourages the growth of organized interest groups by

Bill of Rights

--The primary purpose of the Bill of Rights was to...

--The establishment clause in the First Amendment says that...

--Thomas Jefferson wrote the following to John Jay in a letter in 1786: "... our liberty, which cannot be guarded but by freedom of the press . . ." Why should freedom of the press be guarded?

--The Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States . . . are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." Under what historical circumstances was the Fourteenth Amendment passed?

--In the Supreme Court case of *Schenck v. The United States* (1919), Schenck was prosecuted for having violated the Espionage Act of 1917 by publishing and distributing leaflets that opposed the military draft and United States entry into the First World. The court ruled in favor of the United States. Below is an excerpt from the majority opinion.

"We admit that in . . . ordinary times the defendants . . . would have been within their constitutional rights. But the character of every act depends upon the circumstances in which it is done. The most

stringent protection of free speech would not protect a man in falsely shouting fire in a theater and causing a panic. . . . The question in every case is whether the words used are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger that they will bring about the evils that Congress has a right to prevent.”

The decision reflects the tension between...

Government Institutions

--What is one responsibility that modern Presidents have that is NOT described in the U.S. Constitution?

--Which of the following is a power of the President...

--After the Vice President, who is next in line for the U.S. presidency?

--The War Powers Act was an attempt by Congress to check the power of the President because...

--To override a presidential veto, how much of a majority is required in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives?

--In the area of United States foreign policy, Congress shares power with the...

--The authors of the United States Constitution believed that the voice of the people should be heard frequently. Which part of the Government was instituted to respond most directly to the will of the people?

--How many Senators are in the U.S. Congress?

--How long is the term for members of the House of Representatives?

--What happens to most of the bills introduced in the House of Representatives?

--Filibusters were used by United States Senators from the South in the 1950s and 1960s to...

--How many justices serve on the U.S. Supreme Court?

--In *Marbury v. Madison* (1803), the Supreme Court established judicial review which is...

--What lessons did future U.S. leaders learn from the 1974 U.S. Supreme Court case *United States v. Nixon*?

Political Parties and Elections

--Which of the following statements represents James Madison's views about political parties as expressed in Federalist 10

--In order to register to vote, some states require that citizens...

--To revise the Electoral College system for selecting the President, changes must be made to...

--United States citizens choose the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates by...

--Which of the following statements is NOT true about American presidential elections?

--The major role of political parties in the United States is to...

--Traditionally third parties have had the greatest impact on American politics by...

--A political action committee (PAC) is...

--In the case of *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (2010), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a split 5-4 decision that...

--Which of the following is NOT a characteristic of a system of proportional representation in voting?

--Investigative journalists of the early 20th century who exposed social and political corruption were known as...

--Which of the following is a direct result of television's role in elections?

Race and Politics

--Which U.S. Supreme Court case ordered an end to segregated schools "with all deliberate speed"?

--In *The Melting Pot* (1908), Israel Zangwill states, "America is . . . the great Melting Pot! Here you stand, good folk, think I, when I see them at Ellis Island, here you stand in your fifty groups, with your fifty languages and histories, and your fifty blood hatreds and rivalries. But you won't be long like that, brothers . . . Into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American."

Which of the following phenomena does the passage celebrate?

--What is the term associated with an appreciation of the unique cultural heritage of ethnic and racial groups?

--When necessary to achieve justice, Martin Luther King, Jr., urged his followers to...

--Affirmative action refers to efforts enforced by government to...

Economic Principles

--Which statement identifies a characteristic of a free-enterprise economic system?

--Which of the following beliefs and values are NOT associated with American political culture...

Foreign Policy

--What is one important difference between international politics and domestic politics?

--The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan represented attempts by the United States to deal with the...

Appendix B

Means and Standard Deviations of Knowledge Measures for Entire Sample

	\bar{x}	Standard Deviation
Constitutional Principles		
Wave 1	6.28	2.52
Wave 2	6.32	2.65
Bill of Rights		
Wave 1	2.91	1.41
Wave 2	3.15	1.48
Government Inst.		
Wave 1	7.94	3.23
Wave 2	9.05	3.19
Parties and Elections		
Wave 1	5.28	2.43
Wave 2	5.86	2.59
Race		
Wave 1	2.62	1.30
Wave 2	2.88	1.33

N=1,015