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“Figuring Out How to Make A Difference”: The Role of Civic Skills Instruction in the Generation Citizen Program

> Boston Civics Day, 2009. Several hundred students, teachers, and community members fill the elegant City Year headquarters to hear about the work of students who have spent the fall participating in the action-based civics program, Generation Citizen. Through a curriculum led in high-school classes by college mentors, Generation Citizen strives to “close the civic education gap by promoting civic engagement among underrepresented youth” (Generation Citizen, 2009, p.4).
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> One group gets up to present, hailing from a school whose population is 80.5 percent low-income, 21.5 percent Limited English Proficient, and 94.1 percent non-White (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2009). Some students choose only to introduce themselves with a shy “Hi” or a stylized “What’s happening?” but after some nervous giggles and a whispered discussion of who will go first, a few begin to read off PowerPoint slides about their issue, teen pregnancy. I have trouble understanding their presentation, but from what I hear, it is clear they have substantial knowledge of the programs available to support teen parents and how those programs are funded. The audience applauds.
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> Another group presents, this one coming from a school that is 55.1 percent low-income, 9 percent Limited English Proficient, and 65 percent non-White (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2009). Using humor, facts, and even impromptu references to a speech Peter Levine (director of CIRCLE, the nationally-recognized Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) made earlier in the afternoon, this group professionally describes their issue, civic pride, and their plan of action, prompting a smile and nod from Levine and more applause from the crowd.

Researchers have identified five potential benefits of integrated civic education programs such as Generation Citizen: the growth of civic and political knowledge, civic attitudes, political participation, community participation, and civic and political skills (Carnegie Corporation of New York & CIRCLE, 2003). In an earlier paper, I argued how Generation Citizen’s approach helps to build knowledge, attitudes, and participation, as illustrated in the anecdote above. Both groups of students were motivated to take action on an issue that concerned them, and both groups had used knowledge gained from Generation Citizen's curriculum, personal experience, data from surveys and interviews, and research literature to support their work. However, there is an evident difference between the two groups; the second group had mastered the civic skill of effectively presenting one's ideas in a public forum, while the first group had not. While the giggles, whispers, and stilted reading of slides are common behaviors of novice presenters, they limit the group's ability to convey their message, and thus their ability to effect change. When combined with demographic data, this purely anecdotal evidence reflects a disturbing nationwide trend; Americans who are White and have higher incomes have more opportunities to develop skills needed for civic participation (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). As Verba et al. (1995) write, this pattern has important consequences for democracy.

> Meaningful democratic participation requires that the voices of citizens in politics be clear, loud, and equal: clear so that public officials know what citizens want and need, loud so that officials have an incentive to pay attention to what they hear, and equal so that the democratic ideal of equal responsiveness to the preferences and interests of all is not violated…The public's voice is often loud, sometimes clear, but rarely equal (p. 509).

Verba et al. argue that the development of civic skills is an integral part of the "process that amplifies the voice of some citizens and mutes the voice of others by differentially endowing citizens with the…capacity to be active" (p. 2)

By providing students with an authentic context for engaging in civic action, Generation Citizen has the potential to develop the capacity of low-income youth and students of color through the acquisition of civic knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, *and* skills. However, I argue that, without the explicit teaching of civic skills, Generation

Citizen will do little to close the civic engagement gap, and may, at times, even magnify it. Through this paper and the attached skills toolkit, I present a rationale for and approach to the deliberate teaching of civic skills in the Generation Citizen program.

What are civic skills?

Kirlin (2003) is one of the few authors who addresses a central problem: "The wide use of the term [civic skills] and the surprising lack of information about what civic skills are, how to measure them, and when they begin to be developed" (p.3). Many programs, including Generation Citizen, claim to teach civic skills, but few clearly delineate which skills are prioritized or how they are taught or assessed. Kirlin (2004) identifies four domains of civic skills: communication, organization, collective decision-making, and critical thinking (see Appendix A); I will use this framework in constructing Generation Citizen's skill toolkit. Moreover, many organizations require students to self-report their skill level (Comber, 2003); for example, in a pre- and post-survey, Generation Citizen asks students about their ability to develop action plans, lobby, write press releases and opinion letters, run meetings, organize petitions, conduct research, and give speeches. However, as Verba et al. (1995) note, "subjective feelings of efficacy" (p. 305) are not the same as skills; as one of Kirlin's (2002) students notes, "Everyone thinks they know how to be involved, but I didn't really know until I did it" (p. 574). Objective measures of student skill levels are necessary in order to ascertain if youth are actually gaining the capacities needed for effective civic participation.

How can we teach civic skills?

In order to understand how to teach civic skills, it is important to look at several characteristics of skills in general. To illustrate, I will analyze a common skill, tying one's shoes, and discuss its relationship to civic skills instruction.

First, skills are processes that, to the novice, can seem overwhelming; thus, a skillful teacher must break the skill into understandable parts that relate to a student's prior knowledge. Teaching a child to "make bunny ears and cross them" or "bring the rabbit around the tree and then into the hole" are common ways of making the shoe-tying process ordered and understandable. Processes such as writing a letter, conducting a survey, or organizing a meeting are significantly more complex. Without support in understanding and breaking down the processes behind these skills, some students may become overwhelmed and quit, or may complete the process to the best of their ability but be missing some important components. Generation Citizen mentors and teachers need to be able not only to demonstrate competency in civic skills themselves, but also to break the skills down in ways that are meaningful for high-school students.

In general, the process of learning a skill involves four parts: explanation, demonstration, scaffolded practice, and application (Learning for Life, n.d.). For instance, a young child watches adults tie his shoes for him, then begins to tie them with decreasing degrees of adult support and coaching, and eventually is able to tie them completely independently. In the classroom, one common way of teaching skills (often used in reading and writing workshops) is through a short think-aloud mini-lesson, in which a teacher demonstrates a new skill for students while explaining what she is doing. Students then work as a class, in small groups, and finally individually to practice the skill and apply it to an assignment. Another common strategy, employed by the Highlander Democracy Schools Initiative, involves pairing direct instruction with scenarios, followed by application to actual situations (Westheimer & Kahne, 2003). Generation Citizen provides an excellent opportunity to develop skills because the real-world application component is more engaging and relevant than other potential applications, such as an in-class test. However, it is critical not to bypass the other steps of skill development; doing so can exacerbate the civic engagement gap. Some (disproportionately White, middle- and upper-class) students may already have had opportunities to observe and practice desired skills through attendance at speeches, meetings, and community events with their families, involvement in extracurricular activities, or other venues. As Delpit (2008) states, "Children who appear to learn the basic skills presented in school quickly typically learn most of them…at home…What we seldom realize is that middle-class parents are masters at 'direct teaching' long before their children ever enter school" (p. 128-129). If teachers fail to actually teach civic skills, only the students who have prior experience will be able to apply the skills effectively. In Generation Citizen classes I observed preparing for Civics Day speeches, one mentor declared "We'd rather have someone who wants to do it [present the project]" while another stated "Those four will be fine" (implying that the group's limited practice time would not affect their performance). In another class, a teacher did Internet research for a group of students while they watched. Boyte (2008) argues that such actions actually hinder the development of civic agency; he cites a letter to new mentors in the Public Achievement program, in which Leanne Bird writes, "Your role is to coach these students while holding them accountable, but the end goal is for the students to develop the confidence and skills to do public work independent of a coach" (p. 13). By allowing students to self-select for leadership roles, doing work for students, and providing minimum support in skill development, Generation Citizen misses opportunities to close the civic engagement gap by ensuring that all students develop skills such as public speaking and research and thus, civic agency. Clearly, teaching skills (and especially complex civic skills) takes time, and Boyte contends, additional support for mentors and teachers. Over a one-semester class, it may be impossible to teach more than two or three skills well. However, only by prioritizing a few skills and working with mentors and teachers to plan for clear demonstration and explanation, scaffolded practice, and real-world application, Generation Citizen can ensure that all students will improve their capacity for civic action.

Moreover, as shoe-tying demonstrates, there are often multiple ways to teach a skill; some children "make bunny ears," some "bring the rabbit around the tree," and some learn to tie their shoes without any references to rabbits. The use of varied instructional strategies can facilitate the learning of diverse students, but can also, at times, lead to wasted time or confusion. Generation Citizen mentors should collaborate with teachers in order to decide which approaches will work best in their class, but also speak with teachers in other subject areas to learn if students have already learned applicable skills that they may be able to transfer. For example, many students learn persuasive techniques in English class, but may need prompting to apply them to speaking or writing components of their Generation Citizen project. If Generation Citizen mentors intentionally and explicitly use the same methods and language students have seen in other content areas, students will both learn to apply existing skills to the civic purposes and gain time that can be used to develop new skills.

Finally, it is critical to recognize that tying shoes, like shaking hands, looking people in the eye when you talk, speaking standard English, and starting meetings on time, is a culturally-specific skill. As an adult woman who is often expected to dress "professionally," I actually apply my shoe-tying skills relatively rarely (as do many others around the world, for various reasons). However, like the other skills listed, it is a skill that has important social and civic consequences; for example, a child in the United States who cannot tie her shoes will have difficulty participating equally in organized sports, just as a teenager who does not shake hands firmly or look adults in the eye will have a difficult time gaining their trust. Delpit (2008) argues that "what we call basic skills are typically the linguistic conventions of middle-class society and the strategies successful people use to access new information" (p. 117). She advocates specific teaching of skills in order to provide minority students with access to the "culture of power" (Delpit, 1988). However, she also draws attention to two caveats, which I too want to emphasize. First, she maintains that "the teacher cannot be the only teacher in the classroom. To deny students their own expert knowledge *is* to disempower them…Both student and teacher are expert at what they know best" (p. 288). Secondly, she stresses that "merely adopting direct instruction is not the answer" because work "for real audiences and real purposes is a vital element in helping students understand that they have an important voice in their own learning processes" (p. 288). By building upon existing student knowledge while simultaneously incorporating skills instruction into the real-world approach that Generation Citizen provides, mentors and teachers can both value and challenge students' existing perspectives and abilities.

Why are civic skills important in closing the civic engagement gap?

As noted earlier, there is a well-documented gap among adults in civic skills based on race and social class. Verba, et al. (1995) find that opportunities to develop the skills of attending and planning meetings, writing letters, and making speeches or presentations are highly stratified. In both workplaces and in non-political organizations, Whites have significantly more occasions for civic skill development than Blacks or Latinos, and those with incomes over $125,000 are about three times as likely to practice civic skills than those with incomes under $15,000. Churches play an important role in providing some Blacks with opportunities to develop civic skills. However, differences in education level, job status, and participation in non-political organizations have a stronger influence on civic skills, exacerbating the inequitable distribution of the "arsenal of resources" (p. 331) that can be used for civic action.

Levinson (forthcoming) details what the gap in civic skills can look like for young people and their families:

> I contended almost daily with this gap during my eight years as an urban middle school teacher. My eighth grade students, for example, frequently struggled to negotiate conflicts without getting into fights; they interacted ineffectually with authority figures and get themselves into trouble despite their best intentions not to; and in at least one case a few years ago (in 2006), they relied on me to teach them how to use a phone book to call up career exemplars to shadow for career day because they had never seen or used a telephone book before. Similarly, I frequently watched in frustration (and assisted when I could) as deeply committed and caring parents failed to advocate effectively for their child in meetings because they didn't have the communication skills (for a compelling account of this problem, see Lareau, 2000, 2003). This gap in civic knowledge and

> skills thus impacts not just individuals' interactions with government officials or politicians but their everyday experiences at school and in the community as well.

Comber (2006) finds that civic education can enhance civic skill development (specifically the skill of interpreting political messages on the 1999 International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement Civic Education survey), and that the effects of civic education were most pronounced for Black and Latino students. In her analysis of low-income, predominately minority students at an urban middle school, Rubin (2007) identifies two types of students, "empowered" and "discouraged." Both groups of students experience a disjuncture between the civic ideals of the United States and their lived experiences, but "empowered" students champion civic action as a potential solution to problems while 'discouraged' students are "resigned to the ineffectiveness of working for social change" (p.473). Rubin attributes the differences between 'empowered' and 'discouraged' students to "certain classroom practices, as well as family role models, [that] seemed to nudge students into a more hopeful and engaged orientation" (p. 473) and encourages school to provide a "forum for analyzing these disjunctures and the key skills and knowledge they will need to navigate them" (p.474). Delpit (1995) eloquently expresses why this balance of skills development and critical reflection on lived experiences is critical to both individual success and civic agency.

> Let there be no doubt: a 'skilled' minority person who is not also capable of critical analysis becomes the trainable, low-level functionary of the dominant society, simply the grease that keeps the institutions which orchestrate his or her oppression running smoothly. On the other hand, a critical thinker who lacks the 'skills' demanded by institutions of higher learning can aspire to financial and social status only within the disenfranchised underworld. Yes, if minority people are to effect the change which will allow them to progress we must insist on 'skills' *within the context* of critical and creative thinking. (p. 19)

Intentional skills development, within Generation Citizen's engaging and authentic approach to civic education, is essential to equalizing the civic capacity of all young people. According to Verba, et al. (1995)

> Acquisition of skills depends upon the level of skill opportunity provided by the domain; the extent to which involvement in the domain is socially structured; and the extent to which opportunities for skill development are social structured among those affiliated (p. 320).

Generation Citizen provides significant "skill opportunity," or (as Kirlin (2004) concludes in her evaluation of YMCA Youth and Government programs) "the happy accident seems to be that program design allows for the opportunity to practice several civic skills" (p. 16). However, in order to close the civic engagement gap, more than a "happy accident" is needed; purposeful structuring of civic skill instruction into the Generation Citizen curriculum can ensure that all students have opportunities to develop, practice, and apply civic skills.

Purpose of the civic skills toolkit

In an effort to support Generation Citizen in incorporating explicit skills instruction into its programming, I have created a civic skills toolkit. The toolkit (Appendix B) includes several model strategies for skills instruction, accompanying assessment rubrics, and a short list of additional resources. The model strategies are designed not as discrete lesson plans, but as approaches to skills instruction that can be integrated with existing Generation Citizen lessons. Likewise, the rubrics provide criteria for assessing the identified civic skill, but can be incorporated into existing assessments or projects and aligned with any kind of grading system. The toolkit is designed to be a continually adaptable work in progress; ideally, an online version could facilitate

Generation Citizen mentors and teachers sharing their own ideas for teaching civic skills. I have outlined one specific strategy for three of the overarching classroom-based civic goals Generation Citizen (2009) has identified, aligning the goal to a domain in Kirlin's (2004) framework; further work could provide different strategies for teaching these skills or approaches to teaching project-specific skills, such as writing a press release or an opinion letter.

At Boston Civics Day 2009, Generation Citizen Executive Director Scott Warren advised students:

> While it's important to learn about math, science, history, and everything you learn in school, there's also something else I feel it's important you learn. It's harder, it's less concrete, and for these reasons, it's not usually taught in schools. It's the subject of being a "citizen", of figuring out how to participate in society, of figuring out how to make a difference.

Warren is right; civic skills are "harder" and "less concrete" than many aspects of other content areas. However, for this reason, it is essential that students, and especially underrepresented youth, have school-based opportunities to develop, practice, and apply civic skills. Through intentional teaching of civic skills to students, and instruction for mentors and teachers in how to teach them, Generation Citizen can empower the next generation of young people in "figuring out how to make a difference."

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Appendix A (from Kirlin, 2004)

Table 1. Civic Skills and Groups Emerging from Literature

Communication	
Summary of communication skills identified in existing literature	**Core communication skills**
Proficiency with language, vocabulary, letter writing, making a public speech or presentation, communicating ideas effectively to leaders and peers.	• Written communication (letters, memos, arguments) and oral communication (persuasive speech to individuals and/or groups)

Organization	
Summary of organization skills identified in existing literature	**Core organization skills**
Knowledge of how to cope in an organizational setting, plan strategies and projects and have real responsibilities, organize.	• Plan the strategies for action • Organize tasks required to accomplish strategy • Acquire resources to implement strategy

Collective Decision Making	
Summary of collective decision making skills identified in existing literature	**Core collective decision making skills**
Listening, understanding and interests of others in the community, achieve compromises and solve problems when conflict occurs, work in a team, perspective taking skills, interact with other citizens to promote personal and common interests	• Express own opinion • Understand others opinions • Be able and willing to compromise your own preferences for the collective good

Critical Thinking	
Summary of critical thinking skills identified in existing literature	**Core critical thinking skills**
Identifying and describing, analyzing and explaining, synthesizing and explaining information. Evaluating, taking, and defending positions on public events and issues. Thinking critically about conditions of political and civic life and thinking constructively about how to improve political and civic life	• Understand, explain and take positions. • Identify constructive ways to improve complex situations.

Appendix B: Generation Citizen Civic Skills Toolkit

Toolkit Strategy 1: Respecting Varied Viewpoints and Perspectives

Students will demonstrate respect for varied viewpoints and perspectives of fellow students.

Civic Skills Domain: Collective Decision Making

Opportunities for Instruction and Practice: Lesson 2(An Introduction to the Dialogue), Lesson 3 (The Dialogue Continued), Lesson 4 (Public Policy or Civil Society?), Lesson 9 (Picking An Issue), Lesson 11 (Researching the Issue), Lesson 14 (Influencing Legislators), Lesson 16 (Taking Action)

Description: Based on the Public Issues model, this strategy allows students to precisely identify how ideas differ and use analysis and discussion to negotiate diverse ideas (Singleton, n.d.). Students learn to distinguish between three different types of sub-issues – definitional, factual, and ethical – and apply that understanding to clarify and negotiate points of disagreement (Singleton, n.d.; Hess, 2002).

Procedures:

IMPORTANT- Before beginning to implement this strategy, ensure that students have developed and are adhering to norms for respectful discussion (see Lesson 2). Reviewing norms before classroom discussions, and reflecting upon them afterwards, can be a helpful means of creating a safe and participatory classroom environment and supporting skill development.

1. Explanation/ Demonstration: As a whole-class, define definitional, factual, and ethical sub-issues. Then, begin reading a short article (at a reading level that all students can access) about an issue of interest. As you read, use a different color of highlighter to mark each type of sub-issue. Display your thinking using a projector.
2. Practice: Give students time to finish reading and coding the article for definitional, factual, and ethical sub-issues. Work individually with students who may be confused. Then, as a class, discuss the article. What arguments is the author making? On what grounds do you agree and/or disagree with the author (definitional, factual, and ethical)? In order to take action on this issue with the author, what disagreements do you need to respectfully negotiate? How would you negotiate them?
3. Application: Gather articles addressing the class' chosen issue from a variety of perspectives, at appropriate reading levels for each student. Assign each student an article, which they will use to code for definitional, factual, and ethical sub-issues and list key arguments the author is making.

As a class, discuss: What are the main arguments being made about our issue? What sub-issues (definitional, factual, and ethical) underlie these arguments? How can these sub-issues be negotiated? What consequences does understanding these sub-issues have for how we frame the issue and mobilize others to act?

Assessment: The rubric below outlines criteria for assessing a student's skills in respectfully analyzing and discussing controversial ideas. However, it can be difficult to use this rubric in "real time" classroom discussion in large classes. Consider using a tally sheet with all students' names, self-evaluations, or a fishbowl format in which half the class discusses the issue while the other half evaluates their skills. Teachers may be understandably hesitant to count self- or peer-evaluated work as a grade, but it can provide valuable feedback on skill development.

Assessment Rubric: Respecting Various Viewpoints and Perspectives

	Score	Something great!	Something to work on…
Student **identifies key arguments and underlying sub-issues**.			
Student **supports statements** with evidence, reasons, and/or explanations.			
Student **negotiates disagreements** by synthesizing ideas**,** stipulating definitions or facts, or recognizing ethical conflicts			
Student **directly responds to others**, building upon or challenging the accuracy, relevance, or logic of their comments.			
Student **engages and does not discourage** other participants by inviting others to speak and avoiding distracting statements, interruptions, monopolizing, or personal attacks.			

Resources:

Hess, D. (2002). Discussing controversial public issues in secondary social studies classrooms: Learning from skilled teachers. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 30* (1), 10-41.

Hess portrays three successful teachers who use discussion of controversial public issues to build civic skills and knowledge. Each profile includes a rich description and analysis of how each teacher structures instruction.

Singleton, L. (n.d.) *Discussing controversial issues: Why is discussion important to civic education?* Retrieved from http://www.lawanddemocracy.org/discussion.html

This comprehensive web module for teachers provides clear instructions for teaching and assessing discussion skills using several different models. Highly recommended!

Toolkit Strategy 2: Public Speaking

Students will improve public speaking skills through talking about important public issues.

Civic Skills Domain: Communication

Opportunities for Instruction and Practice: Lesson 9 (Picking An Issue), Lesson 10 (Grassroots Advocacy), Lesson 12 (Framing the Issue), Lesson 15 (Getting Ready for Action)

Description: This strategy empowers students to identify persuasive strategies and incorporate them into their public speaking as a tool for mobilizing others.

Procedures:
1. Explanation/ Demonstration: As a whole-class, review the strategies frequently used to persuade others. The Persuasive Strategy Definitions and the Persuasive Strategy PowerPoint Presentation found at http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=56 are helpful tools. Ask students to give examples of how they can be used (and misused) in a familiar situation, such as getting permission to do something at home or getting an extension on an assignment from a teacher. Which of these strategies are students most comfortable using? Which strategies do they find most persuasive?

Watch a clip of a public speech (This should be one that you find to be persuasive, but can be someone famous or not-so-famous, and about any issue that students find engaging). As students watch, they should mark persuasive strategies on the "Observations and Notes" page and record examples of the strategies, as well as other characteristics of effective speaking (i.e. volume, eye contact, etc.) in the notes section. During the first few minutes of the recording, pause the video several times to talk about what you notice or ask students what strategies/behaviors they see; then allow students to track the rest on their own. When the video finishes, discuss the strategies you found and the other effective behaviors students noticed, creating a list for future reference.

2. Practice: Divide students into small groups. Give students in each group copies of a small written segment of a speech about a social issue (see attached examples). First, have students identify the persuasive strategies being utilized (they can use the first row of the attached table). Then, give students 5-10 minutes to practice delivering their speech persuasively in small groups. Encourage students to critique and encourage each other, using the effective behaviors list students developed previously.

Have students present their speeches, either in small "jigsaw" groups (with one member from each of the practice groups), or by randomly selecting one student from each of the practice groups to present to the whole class. As students present, their classmates should record the persuasive strategies they hear and evaluate their effectiveness (see attached table).

3. Application: Use students' understanding of persuasive strategies and effective public speaking behaviors to guide public speaking opportunities within the Generation Citizen curriculum and provide specific individual feedback. Ensure that all students have at

least one opportunity to give a planned speech to the entire class.

Assessment: The rubric can be adapted to any public speech in the Generation Citizen curriculum.

Assessment Rubric: Public Speaking

	Score	Something great!	Something to work on…
Student's speech presents a **clear claim**			
Student supports claim with reasons and evidence, **using at least three different persuasive strategies**			
Student **utilizes effective public speaking behaviors** (see class list)			

Resource:

Manning, E. (n.d.). *Can you convince me? Developing persuasive writing.* Retrieved from http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=56

Although this lesson plan is designed for 3rd-5th grade students, the resources are well-designed and can be used effectively by all ages.

Speech segments:

The day will come when the politicians will do the right thing for our people out of political necessity and not out of charity or idealism. That day may not come this year. That day may not come during this decade, but it will come someday. And when that day comes, we shall see the fulfillment of that passage from the Book of Matthew in the New Testament: "The last shall be first, and the first shall be last."
Cesar Chavez, 1984

Once here, illegal immigrants live in the shadows of our society. Many use forged documents to get jobs, and that makes it difficult for employers to verify that the workers they hire are legal. Illegal immigration puts pressure on public schools and hospitals, it strains state and local budgets, and brings crime to our communities. These are real problems. Yet we must remember that the vast majority of illegal immigrants are decent people who work hard, support their families, practice their faith, and lead responsible lives. They are a part of American life, but they are beyond the reach and protection of American law.
George W. Bush, 2006

My first job after college was as a teacher in Cotulla, Texas, in a small Mexican-American school. Few of them could speak English and I couldn't speak much Spanish.

My students were poor and they often came to class without breakfast and hungry. And they knew even in their youth the pain of prejudice. They never seemed to know why people disliked them, but they knew it was so because I saw it in their eyes.

I often walked home late in the afternoon after the classes were finished wishing there was more that I could do. But all I knew was to teach them the little that I knew, hoping that I might help them against the hardships that lay ahead. And somehow you never forget what poverty and hatred can do when you see its scars on the hopeful face of a young child.

- Lyndon Johnson, 1965

As much as 30 percent of Northern California's garlic harvesters are under-aged children. Kids as young as six years old have voted in state-conducted union elections since they qualified as workers. Some 800,000 under-aged children work with their families harvesting crops across America. Babies born to migrant workers suffer 25 percent higher infant mortality than the rest of the population. Malnutrition among migrant worker children is 10 times higher than the national rate. Farm workers' average life expectancy is still 49 years --compared to 73 years for the average American.
- Cesar Chavez, 1984

The only question left to be settled now is: Are women persons? And I hardly believe any of our opponents will have the hardihood to say they are not. Being persons, then, women are citizens; and no state has a right to make any law, or to enforce any old law, that shall abridge their privileges or immunities. Hence, every discrimination against women in the constitutions and laws of the several states is today null and void, precisely as is every one against Negroes.

Susan B. Anthony, 1873

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.
Martin Luther King, Jr. - 1963

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could

get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?
Sojourner Truth, 1851

Listening Recording Form: Persuasive Strategies

Speaker	Claim	Persuasive Strategies Used	Examples	Are they effective? Why or why not?

Toolkit Strategy 3: Asking Probing Questions

Students will ask probing questions to elicit information and critically examine speakers' claims and conclusions.

Civic Skills Domain: Critical Thinking

Opportunities for Instruction and Practice: Lesson 11 (Researching the Issue), Lesson 14 (Influencing Legislators), Lesson 15 (Getting Ready for Action)

Description: In school, students are regularly expected to answer questions at a variety of thinking levels, but may rarely be expected to ask them. Harvey and Goudvis (2000) introduce the concept of thin and thick questioning to help students distinguish between smaller clarification questions and larger global ones. By extending their technique of thin and thick questioning to spoken language, students can ask a variety of questions needed to understand a speaker's perspective and take action.

Procedures:

1. Explanation/ Demonstration: With students, discuss the various ways questions can be used in civic action; for instance, questions might be designed to solicit factual information in order to determine a plan of action, they might be intended to open dialogue among diverse constituencies, or they might be designed to press a public figure's thinking on an issue. Introduce the concept of thin and thick questions. Give students a stack of sticky notes (Harvey and Goudvis (2000) suggest using different sizes for thick and thin questions) and, together, watch an 8-10 minute clip of a public news show, such as *Meet the Press*. Students should record each question they hear on an individual sticky note. During the first few minutes, pause the video after each question to show what you are writing down, then let each student make their own set of sticky notes. When the clip is finished, organize your set of sticky notes in order from thinnest to thickest (from Paquette and Kaufman, 2008), discussing aloud why you put the questions in that order and the purpose you think they had in the discussion. (Do this on an opaque projector or smartboard (or gather students around) so all students can see you model your thinking).
2. Practice: Watch the clip again, but this time use the sticky notes to write any questions you have during the discussion (for any of the participants, including the facilitator). During the first few minutes, pause the video when you write a question to share it with students (try to model a mix of thin and thick questions). Then, let students continue identifying questions on their own. When the clip is finished, again model placing your questions in order from thinnest to thickest, discussing your thinking aloud. Finally, choose the 2-3 questions that you would ask if you had a chance to meet with the participants, modeling your thinking (For example, which questions could you answer more easily through research, and which need to be asked in-person? Are these the right people to ask? Have I already figured out the answer to some of my questions? Who else would you want to ask these questions to in order to fully understand the issue? What follow-up questions do I anticipate needing to ask?). Ask students to order their own questions, and then pick 3 they would ask. Students should stick these three sticky notes

on a sheet of paper and, next to the sticky note, explain why they selected that question and follow-up questions they anticipate needing to ask.
Hint: For students who may have difficulty forming questions at varying levels of "thickness," such as English Language Learners, question starters based on Bloom's Taxonomy can help. An example is available at https://camcom.ngu.edu/Education/.../Blooms%20Question%20Starters.doc.
3. Application: Provide feedback on student's questioning as they participate in discussions and presentations by guest speakers, conduct surveys and interviews, and hold lobbying meetings. While students may demonstrate the skill in different ways, ensure that each student has an opportunity to apply the skill.

Assessment: While this skill may be evaluated individually, its assessment may also be incorporated into a larger project.

Assessment Rubric: Asking Probing Questions

	Score	Something great!	Something to work on…
Student uses **both thin and thick questions** to get desired information and perspectives			
Student **selects appropriate source(s)** to answer questions			
Student **utilizes follow-up questions** to clarify or augment data			
Student **uses data from questions to inform thinking and action**			

Resources:

Harvey, S. & Goudvis, A. (2000). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance understanding.* Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Commonly used by literacy teachers, this "how-to" book provides a wealth of reading comprehension strategies. Like other skills, the authors advocate teaching comprehension skills through the process of modeling, scaffolded practice, and application.

Paquette, K., & Kaufman, C. (2008). Merging civic and literacy skills. *The Social Studies*, *99* (4), 187-190.

This short article identifies five common literacy strategies that can be combined with civic skills. The authors argue that improving comprehension and organizing and expressing ideas can have important academic and civic purposes.

Additional Resources for Teaching Civic Skills

Lewis, B. (1998). *The kids' guide to social action.* Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing.

This book clearly explains dozens of civic skills, from writing petitions and news releases to serving on boards and councils to lobbying. The book includes over twenty pages of photocopiable tools as well. Everything is written in kid-friendly language that is accessible even to low-level readers. However, it is also comprehensive and not condescending, so it works for high-schoolers, too.

http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/ac-citizenship
http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/ac-facilitator

These citizenship training programs for AmeriCorps members include lessons on skills such as evaluating policies, polling, searching news stories, planning solutions, and valuing differences.

http://www.pbs.org/teachers/vote2008/secondary.html

These lessons from PBS are appropriately scaffolded to develop skills such as asking effective questions and creating an advocacy video. Some are geared towards the 2008 elections, but can be modified.

http://www.civiced.org/index.php?page=resource_materials

These guides are designed to support students with low reading skills participating in the *We the People* program. However, several versatile graphic organizers can support students in developing civic skills such as taking and supporting a position.

http://www.lions-quest.org/program/grade_level_options.php
Lions Clubs International and Quest International (1995). *Skills for action.* Baltimore, MD: Quest International.

This service-learning curriculum includes a skills bank with options for teaching, reinforcing, and enriching twenty-six skills in the areas of Cultural Awareness, Interpersonal Communication, Personal Management and Responsibility, and Study and Writing. Attendance at a Lions-Quest training is required in order to get a copy of the curriculum.