

Applied Civics

The Potential of Civic Education to Transform American Political Engagement

BY

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INTRODUCTION

A. Introduction to Theory

The last two years of political activity in the United States has been nothing short of baffling to a large portion of political scientists. With the rise of Trump, the fracturing of both the Republican and Democratic parties, endless stagnation of the legislative branch, and general dysfunction running rampant in the American political system, it is hard not to ask the question “What is wrong with our political system?”. Over the past fifteen years, we have seen multiple government shutdowns, multiple failed military actions abroad, contentious and unprecedentedly expensive election cycles, and multiple missed opportunities for legislators and executives to work together to produce meaningful and helpful public policy for the American people. It takes only a few minutes of listening to the news, flipping through a newspaper, or briefly partaking in a conversation about the current state of American politics to deduce that Americans are widely dissatisfied with the functionality of the American political system and this dissatisfaction is not without reason. In March of 2018, only 28% of Americans felt as though they were satisfied with the direction the country is headed.¹ Only 18% of Americans approve of the work of congress,² and in 2017 Americans identified the most important problem of the nation broadly as “the government.”³ Scholars in the fields of

¹ Gallup, Inc. "Satisfaction With Direction of U.S. Down in March." Gallup.com. March 15, 2018. Accessed May 04, 2018.

[http://news.gallup.com/poll/230174/satisfaction-direction-down-march.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=TOPIC&g_campaign=item_&g_content=Satisfaction With Direction of U.S. Down in March.](http://news.gallup.com/poll/230174/satisfaction-direction-down-march.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=TOPIC&g_campaign=item_&g_content=Satisfaction%20With%20Direction%20of%20U.S.%20Down%20in%20March)

² Gallup, Inc. "Snapshot: U.S. Congressional Job Approval at 18%." Gallup.com. April 18, 2018. Accessed May 04, 2018.

[http://news.gallup.com/poll/232553/snapshot-congressional-job-approval.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=TOPIC&g_campaign=item_&g_content=Snapshot: U.S. Congressional Job Approval at 18%.](http://news.gallup.com/poll/232553/snapshot-congressional-job-approval.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=TOPIC&g_campaign=item_&g_content=Snapshot:%20U.S.%20Congressional%20Job%20Approval%20at%2018%)

³ Gallup, Inc. "The American Public in 2017: What We Learned." Gallup.com. December 28, 2017. Accessed May 04, 2018.

sociology, anthropology, psychology, and economics, as well as political science, have endeavoured to diagnose what they view to be the paramount problem responsible for America's governmental woes. These determinations of the end-all-be-all of political problems range from the nature of the Republican party in congress, to the entire baby boomer generation, to racism.

My theory is that our greatest hope for political improvement is not a constitutional amendment, not a new political party, and not even a strengthened executive. Instead, I propose a solution that seeks to heal the most foundational fissures of the inputs to our political system through a new approach to civic education. Just like any other systemic institution, American government is made up of two main components: the structure and the inputs. In our case, the structure consists of institutions like our constitution, laws, the three main branches of government, state government systems, and various government offices. Essentially, any office, individual, group, or document that has the ability to produce or enforce policy could be considered a portion of the structural component of American politics and government. The inputs to our system, then, are simply the actions of the American public to engage with different facets of the structural component. Examples of an input to the system would be actions such as voting, attending town meetings, communicating with governmental representatives, and filing constituent complaints among many others. Without inputs of this sort, the structure of the system has no substance to chew on and consequentially churn out policy. A lack of inputs not only causes the system to halt, but it creates a gap

[http://news.gallup.com/poll/224717/american-public-2017-learned.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=TOPIC&g_campaign=item_&g_content=The American Public in 2017: What We Learned.](http://news.gallup.com/poll/224717/american-public-2017-learned.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=TOPIC&g_campaign=item_&g_content=The American Public in 2017: What We Learned)

that can be filled by unintended influences, a concept I will elaborate on later in this piece.

Assuming that the Framers did an adequate job creating the structural portion of our political system, all signs point towards the “input” portion of our system as the area where improvements can be made to significantly increase the efficiency and efficacy of the system. Having a population who, by-and-large, participate in the aforementioned actions such as voting requires certain conditions to be made possible. To be brief, a citizen must have some political knowledge, as well as some concept of the importance of their individual participation in politics in order to feel prompted to take part in input-producing actions. Combine this fact with the need for a super-majority of the population to be subject to these conditions, and the next logical conclusion is that American students must be taught, via the public education system, that their participation is key to the survival of their society. Enter a nationally-syndicated, federally mandated civic education curriculum which meets the objectives of imparting upon students the significance of public policy while providing them with the resources to engage with the system.

B. The Research Question

The research into modern civic education and its relationship to civic engagement has not, in my opinion, been extensive enough to indicate an unequivocal causal relationship. A causal relationship would manifest as a scenario where, after having been exposed to a civic education curriculum, students understand the impact that government has on their daily lives, understand the importance of their participation on the

functionality of a democratic society, and have access to the resources that would allow them to participate in engagement actions. This brings us to the central research question of this study: Does the application of a civic education curriculum increase the desire to be politically engaged amongst high school students?

Answering this question will open the doors for political scientists, educators, and policy makers alike to be able to pursue a viable solution to the political chaos we all currently reside in. If it is possible to verify that, in fact, a certain pedagogical approach to civic education will produce engaged citizens, the next steps of arguing the necessity of these types of citizen-actors in a democratic society will come naturally, yielding a path forward to positive implementation of a program that could produce a generational shift in how our populace interacts with its governmental system.

D. A Look Ahead

This paper will begin by providing a background on the state of civic education today and throughout history. It will also provide supporting literature to the theory put forward before going into an extremely detailed account of the research design and measurement parameters. From there, we will engage in an analytical discussion of the results followed by a conclusion-drawing section. Throughout this paper, you can expect to see results that show variation. In some cases of specific questions, we find that the treatment did in fact seem to have the intended effect. However, in other instances this is not the case, which leads to questions of spuriousness. There are areas of the results of this study that are highly encouraging, but those aspects that are less encouraging will prompt swift and thorough critiques of the study design.

SHORTCOMINGS AND HOPES FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

The belly of my theory rests on the assumption that political participation, en masse, is absolutely necessary in order for the American Political System to work as intended. It also assumes that this level of necessary participation is currently absent from our political landscape. In political science, it is a widely accepted notion that political participation constitutes one of the most important mechanisms that democratic citizens have to exert their deserved influence over their government and retain an adequate level of accountability.⁴ In fact, the very foundation of Democratic Theory assumes that man should be, by nature, politically interested.⁵ There are now countless aversions to this statement, with scholars arguing exactly the opposite, that in fact man is by nature apathetic towards politics.⁶ Whether or not political participation is infused into the nature of man, it is nonetheless an imperative component for a functional democratic system. This means that scholars and public servants should be taking up the task of deducing a strategy to ensure that the value of political participation is instilled into the American public whether or not it is a notion that is contrary to nature. It is also important to note that for the purposes of this theory and analysis, political participation is conceptualized in a multisubjective manner as any form of engagement, be that physically or intellectually. This could take the form of protest, attending town council

⁴ Mayer, Alexander K. "Does Education Increase Political Participation?" *The Journal of Politics* 73, no. 3 (August 03, 2011): 633-45. Accessed April 20, 2018. doi:10.1017/s002238161100034x.

⁵ Gans, Herbert L. "Political Participation and Apathy" *Phylon* 49, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 277-282. Accessed April 20, 2018.

⁶ Achen, Christopher, and Larry Bartels. "Democracy for Realists: Holding up a Mirror to the Electorate." *Juncture* 22, no. 4 (2016): 269-75. Accessed February 13, 2018. doi:10.1111/j.2050-5876.2016.00873.x.

meetings, donating to campaigns, voting, or simply watching the nightly news and staying informed.⁷

In order to perpetuate this theory, a bridge must be built between the established need for political participation and engagement, and the premise that the acquisition of political knowledge will predicate those states. It is in fact well accepted that the more political knowledge an individual possesses, the higher their propensity will be to participate politically. Likewise, if an individual possesses a low level of political knowledge, they are then less likely to participate politically.⁸

Amongst all scholars who have dealt with the issue of civic knowledge in the past 60 years, one point is absolutely in agreement: civic knowledge, along with political participation has not improved whatsoever and in many cases it has declined despite the massive increase in overall levels of schooling in America.⁹ Even the most base levels of civic knowledge, like having a sense of how the structural aspects of government work, are at dismal levels. In 2003, 62% of respondents could not name the three branches of American government. Even more troubling, more respondents could name all three stooges than could name all three branches of government.¹⁰

In 1998, the only major national standardized test in civics (NAEP) reported that a

⁷ Schwartz, Joel D. "Participation and Multisubjective Understanding: an Interpretivist Approach to the Study of Political Participation" *The Journal of Politics* 46, no. 4 (November 1984): 1117-1141. Accessed April 20, 2018.

⁸ Howe, Paul "Political Knowledge and Electoral Participation in the Netherlands: Comparisons with the Canadian Case." *International Political Science Review* 27, no. 2 (April 2006): 137-166. Accessed April 20, 2018.

⁹ Galston, William A. "Civic Education and Political Participation" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37, no. 2 (April 2004) 263-266. Accessed June 24 2016.

¹⁰ Dudley, Robert L. and Gitelson, Alan R. "Civic Education, Civic Engagement, and Youth Civic Development" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 2 (April 2003) 263-267. Accessed June 24, 2018

whopping 74% of high school students scored below proficiency on the test.¹¹ In 2001, that lack of proficiency increased to 89% of high schoolers.¹² It is known that the more people know about civics, politics, and government, the more faith they will have in the public sphere.¹³ Another troubling fact is that college students are entering their first year of undergraduate studies with less and less interest in politics - indicating a failure at the secondary education level.¹⁴ Only 34% of college freshmen in 2004 believed that politics are important, with only 22% saying that they discuss politics frequently.¹⁵

One of the most direct indicators of political participation is voter turnout. This too, has declined significantly among young citizens. In 1970 50% of 18-29 year-olds turned out to vote. In 2000, this dropped 17 percentage points to 33%. While those years were major presidential elections, the numbers are even more dismal for the midterms with only 20% (a 13 point drop) of that age cohort voting in 2002.¹⁶ One statement which sums up the situation very succinctly and powerfully comes from William A. Galston - a giant of civic education research - saying: "Every significant indicator of political engagement has fallen by about half."¹⁷ Similarly, many scholars attribute the state of political apathy to a lack of understanding of the connections between politics and

¹¹ Dudley, Robert L. and Gitelson, Alan R. "Civic Education, Civic Engagement, and Youth Civic Development" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 2 (April 2003) 263-267. Accessed June 24, 2018

¹² Paige, Rod "Civic Education in America" *The Phi Delta Kappan* 85, no. 1 (September 2003) 59. Accessed June 24, 2016

¹³ Dudley, Robert L. and Gitelson, Alan R. "Civic Education, Civic Engagement, and Youth Civic Development" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 2 (April 2003) 263-267. Accessed June 24, 2018

¹⁴ Kedrowski, Karen M. "Civic Education by Mandate: A State-by-State Analysis" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 2 (April 2003) 225-227. Accessed June 24 2016.

¹⁵ Galston, William A. "Civic Education and Political Participation" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37, no. 2 (April 2004) 263-266. Accessed June 24 2016.

¹⁶ Galston, William A. "Civic Education and Political Participation" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37, no. 2 (April 2004) 263-266. Accessed June 24 2016.

¹⁷ Galston, William A. "Civic Education and Political Participation" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37, no. 2 (April 2004) 263-266. Accessed June 24 2016.

quotidien life.¹⁸

For most scholars who present malaise over the state of civic knowledge and political participation in this country, the consensus is that the solution is to undertake efforts to increase civic knowledge. Acquisition of higher levels of civic knowledge has been shown to correlate highly to the promotion of democratic values, political participation, definition of individual civic interests, trust in public institutions, and consistency of views.¹⁹ Approaching high school civic education is additionally attractive because that age of late adolescence is particularly pertinent to developing “socio political orientations”.²⁰ Even Thomas Jefferson agrees that in order to preserve a functional state of liberty, one must thoroughly educate the people.²¹ Clearly, if political engagement is the outcome needed to sustain a democracy, political knowledge must be the intermediary outcome we strive for to produce such an environment.

It should be noted that political knowledge is not the same thing as simply knowing the structural cornerstones of the American governmental system. In fact, we have seen that students who possess this type of knowledge without some sort of deeper understanding of philosophical and rational underpinnings rarely show any higher levels of civic engagement. Therefore, the political knowledge that courses are imbuing onto students must be a knowledge of a higher order - not simply memorization and

¹⁸ Pratte, Richard “Civic Education in a Democracy” *Theory Into Practice* 27, no. 4. (Autumn 1988) 303-308. Accessed June 24, 2016.

¹⁹ Galston, William A. “Civic Education and Political Participation” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37, no. 2 (April 2004) 263-266. Accessed June 24 2016.

²⁰ Kahne, Joseph, and Chi, Bernadette, and Middaugh, Ellen “Building Social Capital for Civic and Political Engagement: The Potential of High School Civics Courses” *Canadian Journal of Education* 29, 2 (2006) 387-409. Accessed June 24 2016.

²¹ Paige, Rod “Civic Education in America” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 85, no. 1 (September 2003) 59. Accessed June 24, 2016

identification.²² Citizens and young people are increasingly less able, and less willing, to rely on traditional media sources, such as newspaper and television news, to provide adequate access to everyday political knowledge.²³ Consequentially, our current situation is one where students are unable to glean political or civic knowledge from independent, reliable media sources, parents are less inclined to educate their children on matters of citizenship, and the status of American civic and political life has progressed well past the bounds and scope of the civics curricula created in the 1970's. Given this circumstance, it is evident that the treatment of civic education in public schools must be elevated to the status of "imminently necessary" so that these many areas of inadequacy might be compensated for in a constructive manner, before the holes turn into cracks in the foundation of each and every American political institution.

For over a decade, organizations such as the American Political Science Association have been taking note of the civic education epidemic in the US. Task forces have been constructed and calls to action have been released. While these efforts seem to have yielded only minimal, if any, improvements to the situation, at the very least they illustrate that there is no disagreement on this issue - civic education must be a main focus moving forward.²⁴ Researchers have even reaffirmed the pertinence of specifically high school level civic education programs by finding evidence that there is a stronger link between adult political engagement and civic participation during the high school

²² Cornbleth, Catherine "The Changing Faces of Civic Education" *Theory Into Practice* 10, no. 3 (December 1971) 323-327. Accessed June 24, 2016

²³ Galston, William A. "Civic Education and Political Participation" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37, no. 2 (April 2004) 263-266. Accessed June 24 2016.

²⁴ Dudley, Robert L. and Gitelson, Alan R. "Civic Education, Civic Engagement, and Youth Civic Development" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 2 (April 2003) 263-267. Accessed June 24, 2016

years than there is between adult political engagement and early childhood attempts at political socialization.²⁵ In the past, it seems as though the perceived costs of acting on calls for change in civic engagement (costs such as political backfire, partisan aggravations, etc) have hindered prominent political figures from pursuing any substantive policy on the issue.²⁶ Unfortunately, we have now reached a point where the cost of not acting may well in fact be of much greater consequence. However, the price of no movement on civic education would not come about as costs to an individual, but rather costs to the collective. It would no doubt take the form of a slow crumbling of the ideals that hold up key American institutions. This consequence is both intangible and easy to ignore - meaning there will undoubtedly be some difficulty in converting this forthcoming consequence into action.

Fortunately, experts have ideas as to how the state of civic education might be improved, potentially improving the overall state of political participation in America. One of the large questions that educators, curriculum designers, and political scientists must grapple with is whether or not students are capable of working through a rational thought process to arrive at the conclusion that politics is, in fact, important - or whether it is necessary to introduce some “sentimental” elements to lessons, such as focusing heavily on the admirable qualities of American historical figures or honorable actions taken by the state through military action, in order to pique interest.²⁷ As far as what is

²⁵ Andolina, Molly W. et al. “Habits from Home, Lessons from School: Influences on Youth Civic Engagement” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 2 (April 2003) 275-280. Accessed March 22, 2018.

²⁶ Dudley, Robert L. and Gitelson, Alan R. “Civic Education, Civic Engagement, and Youth Civic Development” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 2 (April 2003) 263-267. Accessed June 24, 2018

²⁷ Callan, Eamonn “Beyond Sentimental Civic Education” *American Journal of Education* 102, no. 2 (February 1994) 190-221. Accessed June 24, 2016.

required to be included in a civic education, state mandates are extremely vague.²⁸

One fairly large-scale quasi-experimental study found promising results when employing curricular techniques such as simulations, role models, and service learning. In fact, this study (executed by Joseph Kahne, Bernadette Chi, and Ellen Middaugh in 2006) takes on a very similar research design to my own. This type of experimental design is rare to see in the field of civic education research because of traditionally held doubts about the validity of administering survey instruments to children and students.²⁹ Fortunately for the body of research in this field, Kahne et al. endeavoured to break this stereotype and in fact found promising results regarding the use of a student-centered civic education curriculum. While this experimental design was testing specifically for changes in levels of social capital, many of the metrics match up with my own research and thus hopefully provide a solid foundation for this research to build off of.³⁰

The National Education Association's Committee on Social Sciences issued a set of suggested improvement for civic education prior to 1971 - amazingly enough (yet not altogether surprisingly), most of these suggestions have not been heeded. The first of these suggestions was to create a separate course entirely for the study of civics, as opposed to lumping the subject in with other courses such as American History and Government. Secondly, it was recommended that the study of civics incorporate interdisciplinary activities, drawing on information from history and political science as

²⁸ Kedrowski, Karen M. "Civic Education by Mandate: A State-by-State Analysis" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 2 (April 2003) 225-227. Accessed June 24 2016.

²⁹ Dudley, Robert L. and Gitelson, Alan R. "Civic Education, Civic Engagement, and Youth Civic Development" *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 2 (April 2003) 263-267. Accessed June 24, 2018

³⁰ Kahne, Joseph, and Chi, Bernadette, and Middaugh, Ellen "Building Social Capital for Civic and Political Engagement: The Potential of High School Civics Courses" *Canadian Journal of Education* 29, 2 (2006) 387-409. Accessed June 24 2016.

opposed to simple encyclopedic facts. Thirdly, it was considered imperative that there be active student participation in lessons through simulations, discussions, and field work.³¹ Scholars have also noted that the state of political culture at any particular school might have a heavy influence on the salience of a civic education. The quality of maintaining an “open classroom climate” where students feel empowered and comfortable to speak their minds and explore foreign concepts in the presence of their peers is an incredibly important factor.

These recommendations have not by any stretch of the imagination been taken up by either the federal Department of Education or its statewide counterparts. At a nationwide level, currently a total of 42 states (plus Minnesota who has partially adopted) have adopted the Common Core State Standards. While not technically federally-mandated standards, these standards were developed by representatives from across the nation and were recommended at the national level. These standards focus exclusively on English Language Arts and Mathematics. Within the English Language Arts standards, there is a small collection of standards dedicated to History and Social Studies, but these standards only include literacy-based objectives as opposed to including objectives that might require students to develop other skills besides being able to adequately read and analyze different types of primary and secondary sources.³² There are additional sets of standards and guidelines that have been developed by other national organizations, but are in no way endorsed by the federal government. These other

³¹ Cornbleth, Catherine “The Changing Faces of Civic Education” *Theory Into Practice* 10, no. 3 (December 1971) 323-327. Accessed June 24, 2016.

³² "Preparing America's Students for Success." English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Informational Text » Grade 5 | Common Core State Standards Initiative. Accessed May 04, 2018. <http://www.corestandards.org/>.

standards are simply independent guidelines, but schools have no real incentive to adopt them.³³

In Maine, where this research was carried out, we see some improvement with the state level standards. The curriculum itself that is set forth by the state of Maine requires that social studies teachers cover only a full scope of American History. However, within this is a set of learning objectives that are specifically geared towards knowledge surrounding civics and government. These standards include two subsections which focus on factual knowledge as well as conceptualizations around the idea of citizenship, supplemented by a subsection that targets a global comparative view of government. For high school level students, there are a total of 12 standards that are applicable. Below are the standards that I would identify as particularly well-crafted and align nicely with what political scientists and educators have defined as best practice in civic education:

“Evaluate how people influence government and work for the common good including voting, writing to legislators, performing community service, and engaging in civil disobedience.”

“Explain the relationship between constitutional and legal rights, and civic duties and responsibilities in a constitutional democracy.”³⁴

In sum, on paper the Maine state civics standards are not too far off the mark from the desired objectives. The problem then with these state standards is their implementation and their lack of any pedagogical guidance or subject coverage time

³³ "National Social Studies Standards & Frameworks." General Hunting Laws: Hunting Laws & Rules: Hunting & Trapping: Maine Dept of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Accessed May 04, 2018. <http://www.maine.gov/doe/socialstudies/standards/national.html>.

³⁴ "Maine DOE - Standards." Social Studies: Standards: Maine Department of Education. Accessed May 04, 2018. <http://www.maine.gov/doe/socialstudies/standards/index.html>.

requirements. Unfortunately, these standards tend not to materialize in the classroom in any substantive way, as can be confirmed by my personal experience as well as the data collected in this study. Instead, teachers are often pressured to focus on the subjects that they know their students will be getting tested on, of which civics is not one.

As I mentioned previously, the Maine state learning standards for social studies do include some subject matter requirements, but only for the topic of American History. I would argue that although the civics standards are a step in the right direction, there is still a gap that needs to be filled with a more comprehensive set of teaching and learning benchmarks, such as a flexible curriculum model.

That is exactly where my research will pick up. While it's been established that an increase in political participation is necessary for the health of American Democracy, that a bolstering of political knowledge is likely to lead to such an increase, that civic education has the potential to be an incredibly efficient mechanism for raising levels of political knowledge for a large population, and that current approaches to civic education have failed to meet objectives; the testing of a new approach to civic education, and particularly the guidance of instructors, is the frontier that must be more heavily breached in this realm.

HYPOTHESES

In order to weigh the merits and drawbacks of this theory, it is necessary to introduce the following set of hypotheses.

H1: The civic education curriculum guidelines mandated by state learning standards is inadequate.

In this case, inadequacy is referring to the inability of the current civic education curriculum standards to produce a pedagogy that results in students not only having the desire to engage with their government, but also having knowledge of institutions and the access to resources in order to do so. This hypothesis will be measured by analyzing the results of the pretests administered to students in both the treatment and control groups.

H2: An augmented civics curriculum that instills the importance of government, makes efforts towards personalization, and emphasizes the role of the individual will be successful in achieving adequacy.

This hypothesis will be tested by analyzing the differences between the pretests and posttests of both the treatment group and control group of students. In the curriculum module that was presented to students, the three objectives listed above were incorporated into the pedagogy by allowing students to identify their own policy interests, creating connections between actions students can take and response of the government, as well as outlining the ways in which government actions deeply affect different communities.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A. Implementation

The process of implementing the following curriculum began in the Spring of 2017 by securing a collaborating high school, administrator, and instructors. A high

school in Maine was chosen as a collaborator. This particular high school was chosen primarily because of its availability to the author. This high school serves roughly 800 students in grades 9 through 12, has test scores that are slightly above average, and is not particularly racially diverse. This lack of diversity is of course not ideal for making a judgement applicable to the entire country, however the demographics of this school are representative of the state of Maine and can thereby maintain some external validity.³⁵

Over the summer of 2017, the curriculum and lesson materials were created under the consultation of the collaborating educators and the project was submitted to the Institutional Research Review Board for approval. Upon approval, informed consent and assent forms were sent out to the students who would be in the participating classes of the collaborating educators. Both forms had to be approved in order for each individual student to be able to participate in the study. These forms went out to a total of 5 classes and 86 individual students. Of these 5 classes, two acted as the control group consisting of 41 students. The three remaining classes acted as the treatment group with 46 students present.

The collaborating high school works with a block scheduling system, meaning students attend four 80-minute classes per day, repeating the same class schedule every other day. As a result, completing pretests, eight lessons, and posttests requires a total of eleven class periods - 5 weeks from start to finish. During our pilot of this study, our collaborating school experienced some severe weather that left the school without power for over a week. This combined with other instances of canceled school due to snow

³⁵ "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Maine." United States Census Bureau. Accessed May 06, 2018. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/ME>.

meant that our timeline was extended by about three weeks.

The pretest was administered to each of the five classes on October 19th and 20th of 2017. Two classrooms comprised the control group, while three classrooms comprised the treatment group. Instructor A only taught 1 classroom included in the control group, while Instructor B taught the remaining 4 classrooms, including one control classroom and all of the three treatment classrooms. As a result, the control group was slightly smaller than the treatment group and the two groups were not matched. Between being administered the pretest and the posttest, the control group classes simply received the course material that would be taught in any iteration of the course. The treatment group, on the other hand, received the civic education curriculum module in addition to their regular course material. This regular course material, for the treatment group, was a curriculum titled World Studies II, a general global history course designed for Sophomore (second-year) students. The control group was made up of one section of an Economic Skills course designed for multiple grade levels (Sophomore, Juniors, and Seniors) and one section of an Academic (standard level) American History course designed for Juniors. These age, quantity, and course material exposure variations between and within the groups do certainly add a level of questionable validity to the groups themselves. At the very least, it is evident that different circumstances as far as group designation would have been ideal - particularly groups with balanced numbers, ages, and external course material exposure. Please find full lesson plans in Appendix C.

B. The Curriculum

Lesson 1 Students began their first lesson on October 18th and 19th of 2017.

These were the classes directly following the class period where they completed the initial pretest. The first lesson focused on the importance of politics, and spanned a duration of about 25 minutes. To begin the lesson, the instructor posed the question “When you hear the word government, what do you think of? Give me some descriptive words that come to mind.” The students then gave responses to this question, and their responses were recorded on the board. This was chosen as the initial question because the goal was to start students off with some sort of recognition of their original attitude towards their conception of government and politics. In addition to responses consisting of vocabulary words such as “president” “cabinet” and “judicial,” students also identified descriptive words such as “corruption” “confusion” and “idiocy.”

Following this, the instructor transitioned to asking students about their daily routine - what types of simple activities do they partake in each day? This brought up items such as brushing your teeth, driving to school, eating food, using the internet, etc. After writing these terms on the board, the instructor helped students to form connections between the things they do every day and the actions of the government. For instance, brushing one’s teeth is related to water toxicity standards and the EPA. Eating food is connected to the USDA, nutrition standards, and agricultural subsidies.

From here, the class transitions to their next activity which focuses more on big picture issues rather than the micro. At this point, students are broken up into groups of 3 or 4 and asked to form a list of all of the big, seemingly unconquerable issues that they wish could be solved in the state, the country, or the world. This list would consist of

items such as “cure cancer,” “feed the hungry,” etc. After making their lists, each group shared back with the entire class. Once everyone had shared, the instructor asked students if they knew of any steps to take to begin remedying these issues in the real world. This question was meant to initially stump students, then allowing the instructor to point to some instances of success on these issues, and how the government was an integral part to this success. This information was provided to the instructor in advance.

Lesson 2 The second lesson of the module - administered to the treatment groups on October 20th and 23rd - was centered around critical thinking in the context of politics. This lesson largely consisted of modeling the activity, to be carried out independently by students during the following lesson. The objectives of this lesson (and Lesson 3) were for students to a) be able to make foundational observations about the nature of political advertising, b) ask relevant questions about the motivations behind political advertising, and c) to accumulate the skills necessary to think critically about politics.

The lesson begins by projecting a short video for the entire class to see. This video was a campaign ad from Eliot Cutler’s (I) 2014 Maine gubernatorial campaign. Students were then instructed to take notes on what they observed from this advertisement. The ad lasts about 3 minutes, and includes scenic shots of Maine as well as clips from interviews with voters and a bit of monologue from the candidate himself.

After viewing the ad, students work through a series of critical thinking questions aloud as a group. These questions asked students to identify the message that the ad was trying to get across, pinpoint what statements the ad was marketing as facts, observe any

tools (music, scenery, extras) that the ad was using to make their message more appealing, and finally to make a judgement call about that things in this ad they thought were true, and what things they thought might be less than true.

This exercise appeared to be quite successful, with students able to make some shrewd observations such as noting the use of repetition as a tool to convince viewers of a statements truth value, the use of a diverse group of actor-citizens to appeal to a diverse group of voters, and the lack of concrete statistics or fleshed out plans.

To finish the lesson, the instructor divided the class into two groups, assigning each group a political advertisement to watch for next class, when each group would work through the same process independently.

Lesson 3 The third lesson works off of the model established in the second lesson, this time prompting the students to think independently of the instructor. To begin, students break off into the groups that were made during the previous class period. One group was assigned to watch an ad in support of US Senator Susan Collins' (R) reelection campaign in 2014 entitled "Our Senator." The second group was assigned to watch an ad for Janet Mills' (D) 2018 gubernatorial campaign. Note that both of these candidates are running for offices representing Maine.

In their groups, students work on the Critical Thinking Worksheet as it applies to this add. The Critical Thinking Worksheet contains the same questions that students worked through as a class during the previous period. After making their observations, the class comes back together and each group shares a brief summary of their ad as well as their critical commentary. To finish, students took up a discussion of what the

similarities and differences were between each of the ads, and why those similarities and differences might be present. At the close of the class period, the instructor collected the unnamed worksheets.

Lesson 4 On the 26th and 27th of October, students were exposed to the fourth lesson. The topic of this lesson was “Engagement Training.” The objectives of the lesson are that, first, students will be able to identify the best way to make their voice heard on an issue depending on the context; second, students will be able to develop the tools necessary to contact elected officials and activist groups; and third, that students will be able to articulate the ways in which they are individually able to effect change in their communities.

The lesson begins with the instructor asking students if they have any ideas about how to make their voices and opinions heard on local, statewide, and national issues. If the students have answers, they are written up on the board. Following this, the instructor splits up the class into groups of three or four, and hands out one issue slip to each group of students. These slips say things like “I think that there needs to be easier access to affordable childcare in Maine.” or “I think that more needs to be done to support veterans in Maine.” Each group is also provided with an information packet that includes all of the names and contact information for every elected (and some appointed) official that represents Brunswick, any district containing Brunswick, or Maine at the local, state, and national level. Additionally, there is also an information packets containing names, contact information, and brief descriptions of most prominent Maine-based activist groups. Based on the issue given on their slip, students are then asked to take a few

minutes to browse through the information and choose one elected official and one activist group to contact about their area of interest.

Once students have chosen who to contact, they write up short letters to each different venue, choosing their language and writing style accordingly. Finally, the group formulates a short paragraph briefly explaining why they chose who they chose. For instance, if their issue slip specified that the problem in question was in Brunswick (as opposed to Maine or Cumberland County), then the students might say that they chose a locally-based organization or a town council member for that reason.

With any time remaining, the class will reconvene and groups will share what they wrote with the entire class.

Lesson 5 The fifth lesson of the module was administered to students on October 30th and 31st. This lesson is centered around current events. Specifically, the objective of this lesson are to ensure that students are able to locate credible sources, make connections between current events, the government, and their own lives; and ensure they are able to articulate questions left unanswered by a particular story and find ways to investigate those questions.

To begin the lesson, the class is broken up into four groups of students. From there, each student is given a news story to analyze. In each small group, students read the story collaboratively - identifying any unknown words or question-raising lines via annotation. After having read the story in full at least once, the groups begin to fill out the current event worksheet. This worksheet asks students to identify the main idea of the article, to briefly summarize the events or opinions outlined in the article, to identify

questions that the author failed to answer, to list three things that they learned, and finally, to articulate how the subject of this article affects their daily life. The news stories that were used covered topics such as the release of the “JFK Files,” a local referendum on marijuana legality, government approval of recreational drones, and the passage of a budget through congress. These articles appeared on platforms such as the *New York Times*, state and local papers, and the *Washington Post*.

Once students completed the worksheet, each group reported back to the class about their article and shared their answers.

Lesson 6 The sixth lesson of the module focuses on media literacy. After having gone through this lesson, students should be able to identify instances of media bias, and should also be able to identify any statements made by an author that they find questionable, and know how to find the correct information to rectify those statements.

To begin, students once again are broken into small groups of about four. Each group is given a different “problematic” (potentially non-factual) media story. At the back of each story is listed the name of the author, the date published, and the source of the article. Additionally, students are given a media literacy worksheet. After reading through their stories, students fill out the worksheets - answering questions like “Are there aspects of this story that seem suspicious or not truthful to you? Which ones?” and “Why did those statements seem false to you?” After filling this out, students were directed to check the fact checker sheet at the back of their article to see if they were correct. The point of this was not only to prime students to constantly be asking probing and critical questions while reading news, but also to allow them to draw connections

between certain sources and a level of trustworthiness. For example, the article published by “The Onion” was clearly not true, and students were meant to take note of this.

Once again, after completing their tasks, students came back together as a class to share their findings. This lesson purposely used a similar structure to the current events lesson in order to increase the ability of students to work independently as their level of comfort with the activity structure increases.

Lesson 7 In the seventh lesson, students gained a brief introduction to the constitution, interpreting legal language, and the philosophy of American foundational documents. The objectives for this lesson were for students to be able to make their own interpretations of constitutional texts as well as for them to be able to debate different textual interpretations, and explore definitions of terms in order to select their most accurate interpretation.

This lesson begins with the class working as one large group. The instructor starts by handing out the text of the preamble to each student, and asking the class if anyone recognizes the document or can share what they believe the purpose of a preamble is. After this, the whole class collectively works through each word and phrase of the paragraph, rewriting the entire piece on the board in plain English based on the interpretation of the class. In order to do this, students have to present different options for how to rewrite a section, and somehow come to consensus about the best course of action as a group.

After completing this, the class is split into four smaller groups and each group is given a portion of a subsequent article of the constitution. Over the next fifteen minutes,

each group “translates” as much of their article as they possibly can, using the same techniques as they did with the full class. Students use outside resources such as dictionaries and thesauruses in order to aid them in this. After students have completed this, they will share their new texts with the entire class, time allowing. This activity is meant to not only provide students an opportunity to feel more comfortable with legal language, but also to give them a chance to familiarize themselves with the content of perhaps the most important document in the history of American government.

Lesson 8 The eighth and final lesson of the module deals with the analysis of policy platforms set out by candidates. After having been exposed to this lesson, students should be able to evaluate claims made in political platforms, to compare the pros and cons of various policy proposals as they apply to his or her own life, and will be able to develop the skills necessary to investigate the feasibility of policy claims. For this activity, students are split into three groups. Each group is provided with a policy proposal from a different Maine state political candidate or elected official. In this case, these policy proposals all cover each candidates proposed approach to healthcare but realistically any issue area could be chosen. The name of the individual who is attributed to each policy proposal is intentionally left out, so as to not color the students analyses of the policy itself.

After reading through their proposals, each group fills out a policy evaluation worksheet. On this worksheets, students are asked to identify what they believe to be the goal of this policy, how they think the proposing individual might be able to carry out the execution of this policy, what benefits might be offered to the public if this policy was

accomplished, as well as any potential negative effects. Finally, students are asked to justify why they believe that this particular policy could realistically be enacted or not.

After completing this, one representative from each group will present their policy proposal to the class as if they believe it is the best possible proposal. Of course, this is done under the assumption that students by no means necessarily actually agree with their assigned proposal. The hope is that this lesson not only allows students to interact with the proposal of relevant local candidates, but also exposes them to different approaches to solving issues.

Module Background I created each of these lesson plans as well all lesson materials during the Summer of 2018. With consultation from the collaborating instructors, we ensured that each plan was exhibiting best practices for Social Studies pedagogy. I chose each of these topics because I judged them to be the most foundational aspects for a well-rounded civic education. I consulted other curricula during the development process, and tried to fill the gaps that I judged present in those examples by focusing heavily on small group work and collaborative critical thinking.

C. Variables and Measurements

To accomplish the task of measuring any changes in political knowledge and desire for political engagement amongst students, we chose to use a survey intervention. I chose to use a pretest/posttest measurement model for a number of reasons. To begin, it was evident that this style of assessment would be one that students were familiar with, thus reducing any potential skepticisms of the intervention and ensuring that students would be able to complete the assessments without any particular difficulty associated

with learning a new testing style. The fact that this intervention would also take minimal time from class, and allow for the instructor to administer the intervention as opposed to the researcher were additional benefits.

The survey itself contained a total of twenty-five questions, all of which were substantive and none of which were demographic. Each question was carefully chosen to satisfy one of three areas of inquiry; either knowledge, engagement, or tangential. Questions that asked students to identify the answer to factual questions regarding government and politics contributed to the measurement of political knowledge. Questions which inquired into how students conduct themselves within the political sphere, or how they perceive any aspect of the political sphere, helped to satisfy the need to measure levels of political engagement or desired political engagement in each individual. Finally, extra questions that sought to deduce levels of political self-efficacy or parental political engagement were included because they were in fact tangentially relevant to the hypotheses, but primarily because I was interested in seeing if any of these measurements would correlate strongly with the core measurements of political knowledge and engagement.

The question wording and response option wording was considered very carefully, especially with regards to ensuring the reading level would be adequate for all students, no terms or phrases were introduced that would be outrageously beyond the scope of students' educations, and ensuring that social desirability bias was minimized in all cases. The pretest and the posttest were absolutely identical. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix B of this document.

In order to ensure anonymity in this data collection process, each instructor was tasked with independently assigning each student an individual case number which was not shared with any member of the research team, and subsequently labeling and distributing the pretests and posttests accordingly. After an assessment was administered, the instructor retained the paper documents until I physically retrieved them from the school, digitally coded each test, and stored them in a safe space. The instructor also passes along any worksheets that the students completed over the course of the module, none of which included the names of the respondents. Additionally, teachers also submitted photos of the classroom blackboard for certain lessons.

For each multiple choice question, the response was simply recorded by indicating which letter the student had chosen (i.e. A. Strongly Agree, B. Agree, etc). For open-ended knowledge questions, it was recorded whether or not the respondent answered each individual question correctly, which was indicated in a numerical fashion.

ANALYSIS

After analyzing the results of the surveys, it has become clear that the effects of the curriculum module were not by any means contiguous. While there are some hypothesis-reinforcing results in some areas, there are also some contrary results in others. The analysis focused especially on comparing the difference between treatment group pretests and treatment group posttests, keeping in mind instances where the control group contributed an extra layer of insight into the underpinnings of the results. Please refer to Appendix D for a full record of data collected.

There ended up being a robust group of questions whose pretest responses showed great support for the notions put forth in **H1**. For example, when students were initially asked “Would you say you are interested in politics?” only 39% of all respondents answered in the affirmative (Figure 1, Appendix A). Further, when students were asked in the pretest if they felt as if they themselves were knowledgeable about politics, only 21% of all respondents answered “Yes”. Numbers only grew more troubling from there. For instance, upon asking students whether or not they feel like they can “make a difference in the world” only 13% said they felt as if they could (Figure 1). Measuring this facet of efficacy was amplified by the results from question number 13 which asked whether or not students felt like being involved in politics was an effective way to make a difference in their communities. In response to this students exhibited that they overwhelmingly felt that this was not a viable option with only 8% of both treatment and control groups answering in the affirmative. This shows that there has been some commonality in the socialization of the grand majority of these students that has promoted this type of cynicism. Additionally, when asked if the student felt like they had “learned a lot about politics and government as a result of classes” taken in middle school and high school, only 1 respondent out of 84 answered yes. Taken together, these results seem to confirm that at the very least, the implementation of state-mandated civic education standards are woefully inadequate and clearly not achieving their objectives.

The knowledge-measuring questions echoed these findings, especially when questions narrowed to address facets of local government and locally-elected officials. In fact, of the 4 knowledge questions that focused on local government, the proportion of

respondents who answered the question correctly in the pretest never rose above 6% for any one item. Overall, the distribution of knowledge in the treatment pretest and treatment posttest were very encouraging for our second hypothesis. The distribution across knowledge scores (number of questions answered correctly) was quite normal in that there were short tails on either side with the majority of data points being recorded towards the center of the data set. We see a statistically significant change in the distribution of knowledge scores between the treatment pretest and posttest (Figure 2), with the trend shifting scores more to the higher end indicating that political knowledge in students did in fact increase after having been exposed to the module. Additionally, these results are encouraging because the balanced score distribution indicates that the questions did in fact do an adequate job of measuring political knowledge.

In regards to the second hypothesis, **H2**, we see quite a few favorable results. Within the treatment group, the proportion of students who reported that they were interested in politics was 10 percentage points greater after having been exposed to the treatment module. Additionally, the number of students who considered themselves knowledgeable about politics went up 7 percentage points on the posttest. On question number 14, which asks students if they feel like they've learned more about politics and government in this class compared to other courses they have taken, the number of students who answered 'yes' rose a whopping 20 percentage points. When looking at the knowledge based questions, more students answered correctly on 5 out of the 10 questions following exposure to the treatment module. For example, after receiving the treatment module, 93% of students in the treatment group could match the name "Susan

Collins” with the correct identifier of “Maine Senator,” as opposed to the 82% of the group who were able to make this identification prior to being exposed to the treatment. In comparison, the control group actually decreased in their ability to identify Susan Collins. Similarly, the proportion of the treatment group who was able to come up with the correct identifier for the name “Mattie Daughtry” (who is the state representative for the town that the high school serves) elevated from 11% pre-treatment to 26% post-treatment. These same types of results were seen when students were asked who represents their neighborhood on the town council, and to name the Speaker of the Maine House of Representatives. These results show that there must have been something that happened to the treatment group between taking the pretest and posttest that did not happen to the control group that resulted in the treatment group being able to answer knowledge questions correctly in a higher proportion. Presumably, this “happening” was the civic education module. Of course, there are certainly other possibilities to explain this phenomenon, including the course content received outside of the module. However, it seems fairly likely that these particular results should be as a direct result of the curriculum, which is heartening for the fate of **H2**.

Finally, it is worth noting the multitude of instances where the data yielded results that either contradicted the hypotheses or indicated something completely unexpected. For instance, the number of students reporting that they find learning about politics and government actually went down, not up as was hoped. There was also one instance where **H2** was negated in its entirety. As was previously mentioned, when students were asked whether or not they feel as though they can make a difference in the world, only 13% of

pretest respondents from both the control and treatment groups responded in the affirmative. When this question was asked again in the posttest, the proportion of affirmative answers actually decreased in both the control and the treatment groups. While this difference doesn't seem to be statistically significant, I think it is an interesting finding worth mentioning. In addition, there were also some knowledge questions that were actually answered incorrectly at a higher level which was unexpected. Questions 16, 17, 20, and 22 were all answered incorrectly more frequently by the treatment group in the posttest than in the pretest. These changes were for the most part very slight, but still contrary to the hypothesis.

There are a whole host of reasons, most of which lie in the research design, that could explain why we might have seen data that yields results contrary to either hypotheses. First, I would say that the duration of the module was a significant drawback. When it comes down to it, there is only so much students can glean from 8 25-minute lessons. This was further exacerbated by the fact that the treatment period was interrupted by various school closures, thus inhibiting the topical flow of the module and leaving students with elongated periods of time without exposure to the material. These time constraints also prevented lessons from exploring topics in any real depth. In a perfect world, students would have had the opportunity to be exposed to 80-minute lessons for at least an entire semester. Secondly, I think that there were not enough opportunities for students to interact with their community provided by this module. That could also be remedied by allowing for a more robust and time-consuming curriculum. As I've already mentioned, I think the imbalance between treatment and control groups certainly stripped

the study of a certain level of validity, and simply having more total participants would helped with this issue greatly. Additionally, I think it's possible that the focus on critical thinking in the lesson plans could have led students to develop a higher capacity for criticism of the current political state, thereby potentially prompting a negative political socialization that could have been reflected as disinterest.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The entirety of this study was predicated on the assumption that there is a piece missing from American political culture that is causing the entire system to produce unfavorable outcomes, followed soon after by public distaste. My diagnosis identified civic education as this missing piece. There was a time in American education philosophy when creating a functioning citizen capable of making civic contributions was one of the chief reasons for having an education system at all. With the global economy growing rapidly, this objective has been lost amidst a sea of standardized test scores and falling graduation rates. Now more than ever, when voting rates are at 40-year lows and false information swirls daily, it is imperative to call attention back to civic education and its ability to bolster a democratic society.

Overall, the results of this study offer plenty of new avenues to explore. As expected, **H1** seems to have been almost entirely confirmed by the results with the caveat that perhaps the deficiencies of state-mandated civic education curriculum guidelines lie not with the guidelines themselves, but with the implementation and lack of sufficient support for those objectives to be realized in the classroom. This suggests, again, a need

for some type of supplemented guidance on this issue at the state or even federal level.

H2 seems to have been partially confirmed, however less than ideal survey design and grouping conditions lead me to be highly skeptical of these results. While there were certainly some positive changes to be seen amongst the treatment group, especially when it comes to the political knowledge facet, these positive changes were not seen across the board and expose some obvious gaps in the treatment.

From an aerial view, we have learned a few important things. For one, the assumption that civic education in Maine, and potentially across the country, is inadequate is presumably true. Secondly, we've learned that civic education, particularly aligned with the pedagogy used in this module, has the ability to increase political knowledge in high school students. Keep in mind, we were able to see these increases in knowledge with such a small intervention as only 8 25-minute lessons, so imagine what the effect could be with a treatment of a larger scope. This brings up a whole host of potentialities for further research in the area. The most important facet to deduce, in my opinion, is what changes are necessary to the treatment module to induce the effect of increased engagement along with increased knowledge? Perhaps this lies simply in expanding the duration of the treatment, or perhaps it would be necessary to cover an additional set of concepts or cover concepts in more depth. Whatever the solution, it is clear that more research is necessary (and possible) to answer this question.

Taken as a whole, this study certainly contributes to the existing body of work that asserts that civic education in America is deficient. I believe that the findings of this study also create strong openings for further research into a curricular approach to

solving this problem. While the Applied Civics curriculum model is absolutely not going to be the end-all-be-all of civic education, it can act as a jumping off point and a supplement to already existing curricula that have been developed by various independent organizations. The idea that the civics curriculum must be flexible enough to be easily tailored to each individual student is not without merit, and can absolutely be explored in a potential second iteration of this study, given a broader scope.

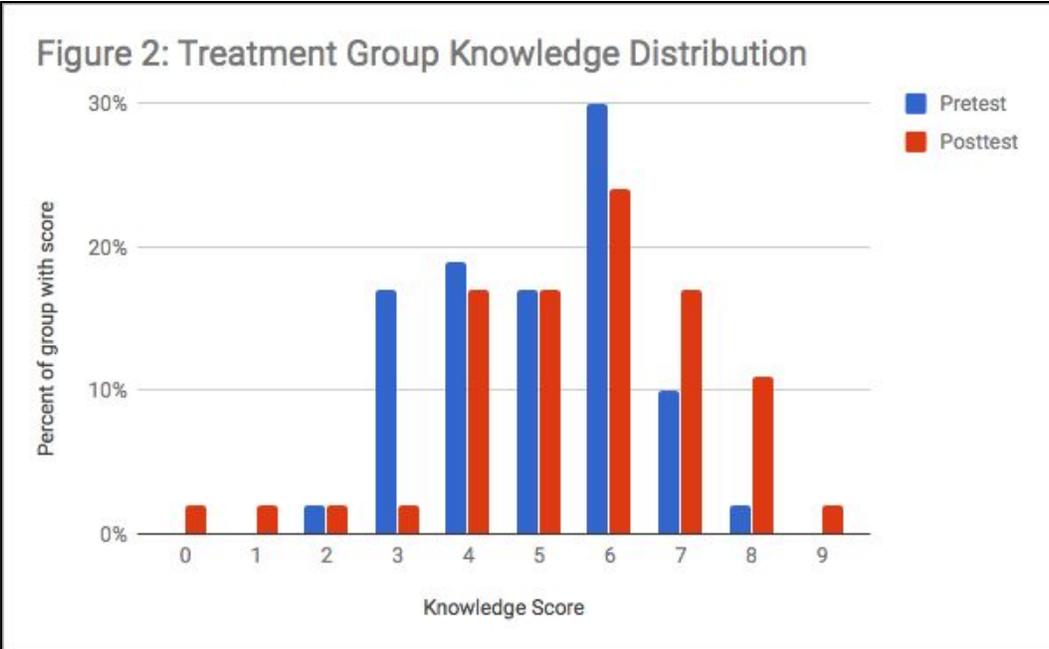
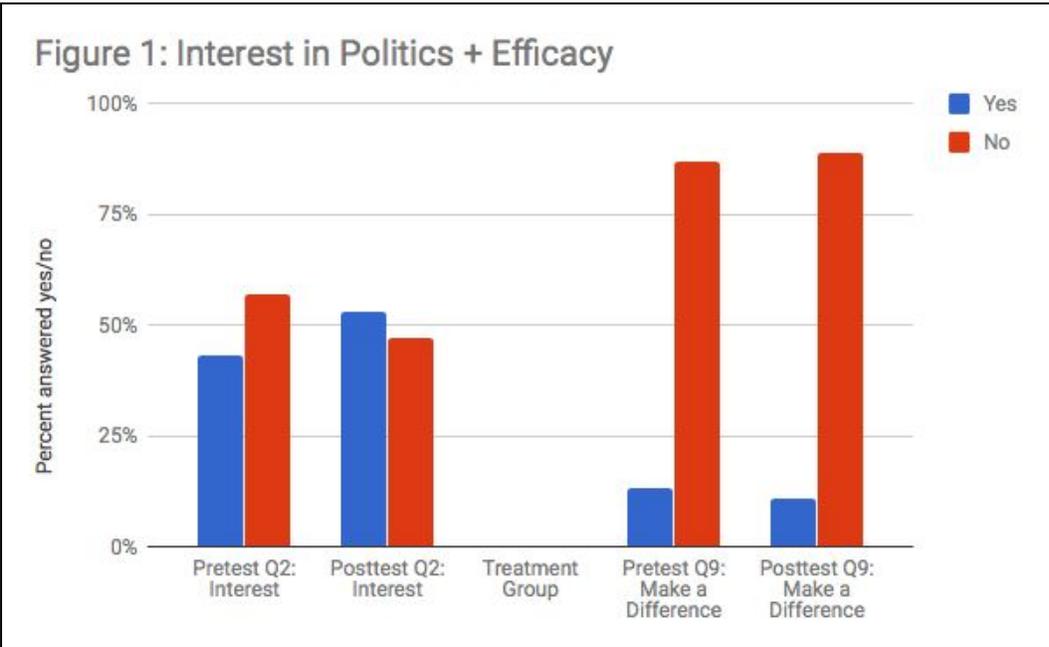
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APPENDIX A: FIGURES



APPENDIX B: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Pretest and Posttest:

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. If the question is multiple choice, choose the answer choice that best aligns with your views.

Choose the answer choice that best reflects your feelings:

1. Do you think politics are important?:
 - A. Yes
 - B. Not particularly
 - C. Maybe, I'm not sure

2. Would you say you are interested in politics?
 - A. Yes
 - B. Not particularly
 - C. Maybe, I'm not sure

3. Do you consider yourself to be knowledgeable about politics?
 - A. Yes
 - B. Not particularly
 - C. Only a little

4. Do you find learning about the government and politics interesting?
 - A. Yes
 - B. Not particularly
 - C. Only a little

- 4a. If B or C, what part about learning about politics and government do you find boring?
 - A. I just don't like the subject.
 - B. I don't feel like I'll ever need the knowledge in real life.
 - C. I don't like class lectures.
 - D. Other: _____

5. Are you excited to vote when you turn 18?
 - A. Yes
 - B. Not particularly
 - C. I don't plan on voting

6. Would you say that you have decided what your viewpoints are on some political issues?
- A. Yes, I know what my stance is on a few or more issues.
 - B. I have feelings about a few political issues, but I don't feel very strongly about them.
 - C. No, I haven't given much thought to what my feelings are on any political issues.
- 6a. Do you find it upsetting when someone else strongly disagrees with you on a political issue?
- A. Yes, it is upsetting when someone strongly disagrees with me on a political issue.
 - B. I don't enjoy when someone disagrees with me politically, but it doesn't upset me.
 - C. No, it doesn't bother me at all when someone disagrees with me politically.
 - D. I'm not sure.

Fill in answers to each question to the best of your abilities:

7. Name three ways by which you are personally affected by the government or politics on a daily basis.
- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
8. Name the three political issues that are most important to you:
- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

Choose the answer choice that best reflects your feelings:

9. I feel like I can make a difference in the world:
- A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Strongly Disagree
10. I feel like I have learned a lot about politics and government as a result of classes I've taken in middle school and high school.
- A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Strongly Disagree
11. My parent(s)/guardian(s) are interested in politics.
- A. Strongly Agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral

- D. Disagree
- E. Strongly Disagree

12. I feel like I am as informed, if not more informed, about politics than my parents.

- A. Strongly Agree
- B. Agree
- C. Neutral
- D. Disagree
- E. Strongly Disagree

13. I feel like being involved in politics is an effective way to try to make a difference in my community.

- A. Strongly agree
- B. Agree
- C. Neither agree nor disagree
- D. Disagree
- E. Strongly disagree

14. Compared to other history courses I have taken, I feel like I have learned more about politics and government in this class than in others.

- A. I strongly agree, I feel that this class was more informative on those subjects.
- B. I agree, but I don't think that the difference is very large.
- C. I'm not sure
- D. I disagree, I don't think there's been any difference.
- E. I strongly disagree, I think I learned less about politics and government in this class.

15. I plan to lead a politically active life.

- A. I agree, I want to make sure I'm always politically engaged.
- B. I disagree, I don't see the value in being politically active.
- C. I'm not sure.

Please fill in the answers to these questions to the best of your abilities:

16. What is the name of the Governor of Maine?: _____

17. In what year is the next Presidential Election?: _____

18. Who is Susan Collins?: _____

19. Who is Chellie Pingree?: _____

20. What government structure does the town of Brunswick use?

- A. We have a mayor, as well as a board of directors.

B. We have a town council who appoints a town manager.

C. We have a representative from each neighborhood, who all meet like a senate.

21. Who is Mattie Daughtry? _____

22. What is the name of the Vice President of the United States? _____

23. Who represents your neighborhood on the Brunswick Town Council? _____

24. Name one person who is running for Governor of Maine in 2018: _____

25. Who is the Speaker of the House in Maine? _____

APPENDIX C: LESSON PLANS

Lesson Plans

Applied Civics Lesson Plan #1: Importance of Politics and Government

Date:

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to grasp the extensive scope of government.
2. Students will be able to identify how government directly affects them personally.
3. Students will be able to comprehend the role of government and politics as a vehicle for change.

Time: 25 Minutes

Materials:

1. Daily Routine Guide Sheet (For Teacher)
2. Paths to Moonshot Solutions Guide Sheet (For Teacher)
3. Moonshot Solutions Success Stories (For Teacher and Students)
4. Whiteboard and Markers

Procedure:

1. Open with the question: “When you hear the word government, what do you think of? Give me some descriptive words that come to mind.”
2. Write responses up on the board - take a picture or record and some way for reference.
3. If a word comes up along the lines of “unnecessary, far away, irrelevant, ineffective, confusing” etc. - use that as your transition into the next section. Say: “Okay, we’ve got the word ineffective up here. Let’s dive into that. Who can tell me what the first thing is that they do in the morning?”
4. Have students proceed to outline their daily routines, helping if necessary and recording ideas on the board. Presumably, these routines will include things like “brush my teeth, drive to school, be in school all day, go to sports practice” etc.
5. After you’ve outlined multiple daily activities, ask students to pick out at what point during the day they are affected by the government. If students have answers, begin to circle the affected activities. If students do not have answers, circle all areas yourself (refer to guide sheet).
6. Next, explain (or if students identified the activity have students do this) exactly how the government touches those activities (refer to guide sheet).
7. Ask students if they are surprised by this.

-- If time is an issue, stop here. --

8. Transition to the next section by stating that while the government deals with everyday issues, big picture issues are also prominent.

9. Break students off into groups of 3 or 4. Have each group make a list of “moonshot” problems in the US that they wish could be solved.

Ex. Cure Cancer

**preface that not ALL problems will be solvable, but you might be surprised at what can be.

10. Go around the room and have each group share their moonshot problems.

11. Ask the class if they have any ideas of how to take steps towards solving any of those problems. If yes, record. If they are stumped, start outlining examples of “successfully solved” problems (utilize guidesheet).

12. After this, go through the listed problems and outline how the government could be an integral part in solving this problem.

Note: if you could snap a picture of the board at the end of this, that would be awesome!

Applied Civics Lesson Plan #2: Critical Thinking and Politics (Pt. 1: Modeling)

Date:

Objectives:

1. Students will make foundational observations about the nature of political advertising.
2. Students will be able to ask relevant questions about the motivations behind political advertising.
3. Students will accumulate the tools necessary to think critically about politics.

Time: 25 Minutes

Materials:

1. Projector
3. Pen and paper
4. Whiteboard and Markers
5. Critical Thinking Worksheet

Procedure:

1. Show via projector a political ad for an Independent candidate.

Info: Eliot Cutler ran for Governor of Maine in 2010 and 2014. This is a video from his 2014 campaign.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGqRCjFYfC8>

2. Have students take detailed notes on the ad.
3. As a full class, orally work through the questions on the Critical Thinking Worksheet and write answers on the board. (If you could snap a picture of the board, that would be great!)
4. Split the class into two groups for next time and provide them with a link to their next ad - to be watched before next class.

Group 1, Susan Collins: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POZTPUCNamU>

Group 2, Janet Mills: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptr6ZXsajVg>

Applied Civics Lesson Plan #3: Critical Thinking and Politics (Pt 2)

Date:

Objectives:

1. Students will make foundational observations about the nature of political advertising.
2. Students will be able to ask relevant questions about the motivations behind political advertising.
3. Students will accumulate the tools necessary to think critically about politics.

Time: 25 Minutes

Materials:

3. Pen and paper
4. Whiteboard and Markers
5. Critical Thinking Worksheet

Procedure:

1. Split student up into their two groups that were decided on last class period.
2. Hand out the Critical Thinking Worksheet. Allow students to review their ad, discuss, and fill out the worksheet.
3. Have groups come back together and give a brief summary of their ad and their findings - as well the parts of their ad on which they aren't sure are true. Invite students to look into this after class.
4. Collect the worksheets (No names).

Applied Civics Lesson Plan #4: Engagement Training

Date:

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to identify the best ways to engage on a variety of political issues.
2. Students will be given the tools to contact elected officials and activist groups.
3. Students will be able to articulate the ways in which they can individually affect change.

Time: 25 Minutes

Materials:

1. Full list of local, state, and national representatives
2. Full list of bipartisan activist groups
3. Individual Issue slips to be distributed
4. Paper and Pen

Procedure:

1. Ask students if they know of ways to make their voices heard on the national, state, or local political/government stage.
2. List the answers on the board.

3. Split the class into groups of two or three.
4. Have each group randomly choose an issue slip from a pile.
5. Hand around both of the informational sheets.
6. Have students look over the elected officials and activist groups listed, and choose 1 of each category to “contact” about resolving their issue.

Ex. If their chosen issue was “homelessness in Maine,” perhaps they would choose Preble Street as an organization to contact and the Speaker of the Maine House.

7. Have each group write up why they chose who they chose.
8. Finally, have the group write a short (3-4 sentence) letter to the chosen elected official to ask them to help resolve the issue at hand.

10. Have as many groups as possible share their letters and write-ups with the class and collect those sheets. (No names on sheets)

*issues will vary from local to national to global, influencing what type of groups students should choose

Applied Civics Lesson Plan #5: Current Events in Politics and Government

Date:

Time: 25 min

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to locate credible sources for current events.
2. Students will be able to make connections between current events, past events, governmental institutions, and their own lives.
3. Students will be able to articulate questions about current events and investigate their answers.

Materials:

1. Current Newspapers/Magazines
2. Scissors
3. Current Event Worksheet
4. List of reputable online media sources

Procedure:

1. Break students up into groups of 4-5.
2. Allow students to look through the provided newspapers and magazines and print-outs of online articles to find a story that interests them. This story should be related to politics or government in some way.
3. Have each group cut out or print out their chosen story.
4. Staple the story to the Current Event Worksheet (one per group) and begin to fill it out.
5. Have class reconvene and a representative from each group can share their findings.
6. Collect the worksheets. (No names)

Applied Civics Lesson Plan #6: Media Literacy

Date:

Time: 25 min

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to identify media bias.
2. Students will be able to identify questionable statements and rectify them through investigation.

Materials:

1. A collection of problematic (non-factual) media stories.
2. Fact Checker Sheet

3. Media Literacy Worksheet

Procedure:

1. Split students into groups of 2 or 3.
2. Randomly pass out one problematic media story to each group.
*These will either be published stories that have been confirmed as false, or factual stories that have been edited to include non-factual statements.
3. Have each group read through their story, and then fill out their Media Literacy Worksheet accordingly using their Fact Checker Sheets.
4. Have the class reconvene and briefly share findings.
5. Collect worksheets (No names).

Applies Civics Lesson Plan #7: The Constitution 101

Date:

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to make their own interpretations of constitutional texts.
2. Students will be able to debate different interpretations, and explore definitions of terms in order to select their most accurate interpretation.

Time: 25 min.

Materials:

1. Printouts of The Preamble for each student.
2. 2-3 Printouts of 1-3 of the first sections of each following Article of The Constitution.
3. Dictionaries.
4. Pen and Paper.
5. Whiteboard/Blackboard.

Procedure:

1. Handout the Preamble to each student.
2. Pose the question(s): Who knows what this is? What is the purpose of a preamble?
3. Proceed to collectively rewrite the preamble in plain modern english on the board. Begin with the first phrase, and allow students to offer different wordings and interpretations until a consensus is reached.
4. Alternatively, split the paragraph into phrases, and take one volunteer for each phrase to rewrite based on their individual thinking.
5. Split class into groups of 2-4 students each. Hand out the beginning sections of each of the other articles to the groups.

6. Have each group rewrite as much of their article as they can in 15 minutes by debating correct wordings/meanings amongst themselves.

7. Collect the rewritten pieces. (No names)

Applied Civics Lesson Plan #8: Analyzing Policy Platforms

Date:

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to evaluate claims of political platforms.
2. Students will be able to compare the pros and cons of various policy proposals.
3. Students will gain the skills necessary to investigate the claims of policy proposals.

Time: 25 min

Materials:

1. Hat/bowl and paper slips.
2. Policy Platform Excerpts.
3. Policy Evaluation Worksheet.

Procedure:

1. Have students pick a name out of a hat/bowl. Each piece of paper will list a candidate or political party.

*Preferably, at this point in the fall, Maine 2018 Gubernatorial candidates will have published platforms which will be utilized here.

2. Students should then gather with the other students who chose the same name.

3. Provide each group with the policy proposal or platform of their chosen party/person. This will not be the full platform but rather one section from each. (i.e. each candidate's approach to energy policy)

4. Have students discuss their policy proposal and fill out their Policy Evaluation Worksheet.

5. After 15 minutes or so, have a representative from each group briefly argue for why their policy proposal is the most beneficial. Students will do this under the assumption that they do not necessarily agree or disagree with their chosen policy, but are arguing for it for the sake of debate.

6. Collect worksheets (no names).

Applied Civics Lesson Plan #9: Local Government in Action (*Not Conducted*)

Date:

Objectives:

1. Students will form a tangible connection between their community, their individual lives, and their local government,
2. Students will gain knowledge about how real people are involved politically in communities.

Materials:

1. Pre-crafted questions for guest speaker
2. Pen and paper
3. Info Prompts (on speaker) for students

Procedure:

1. Introduce guest!
*Potential speakers are local elected officials, government workers, community activists, or candidates
2. Guest gives talk on what they do and how their job connects to students. (40 min)
3. Speaker will take questions from students, potentially ask students questions. (20 min)
4. Close with how to get involved.

APPENDIX D: RESULTS**1. Do you think politics are important?**

Pretest Control: Proportion answered YES: 25/38, 66%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered YES: 27/37, 72%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 44/46, 95%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 43/45, 95%

2. Would you say you are interested in politics?

Pretest Control: Proportion answered YES: 13/38, 34%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered YES: 10/37, 27%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 20/46, 43%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 24/45, 53%

3. Do you consider yourself to be knowledgeable about politics?

Pretest Control: Proportion answered YES: 6/38, 16%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered YES: 5/37, 13%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 12/46, 26%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 15/45, 33%

4. Do you find learning about the government and politics interesting?

Pretest Control: Proportion answered YES: 14/38, 37%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered YES: 14/37, 37%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 31/46, 67%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 27/45, 60%

4a: Why not? Text Responses:

Pretest Control: *I don't fully understand it, There is too much controversy, It is frustrating, I feel the subject brings a lot of negative vibes, Complicated, Learning function of branches is not real politics, Some is interesting but some is boring, The material I was presented with was dry, unengaging, and non-interactive.*

Posttest Control: *Don't know much about it, Don't understand a lot of it, My family is not interested, Causes unnecessary fighting, Complicated, I don't like the way it's taught, Boring, Constantly given unengaging lessons, I don't think it matters.*

Pretest Treatment: *provokes strong emotion, Can't Vote, No time, Not focused on it, Will in future, Partisan arguments.*

Posttest Treatment: *Concepts I don't understand, Complicated, Lost cause, Can be made more complicated than it needs to be, I'm just not very interested, It doesn't affect me, Not my thing, Makes me angry, I never know what's entirely true or biased.*

5. Are you excited to vote when you turn 18?

Pretest Control: Proportion answered YES: 25/38, 66%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered YES: 27/37, 72%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 38/46, 82%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 38/45, 84%

6. Would you say that you have decided what your viewpoints are on some political issues?

Pretest Control: Proportion answered YES: 27/38, 71%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered YES: 25/37, 67%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 37/46, 80%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 37/45, 82%

6a. Do you find it upsetting when someone else strongly disagrees with you on a political issue?

Pretest Control: Proportion answered YES: 1/38, 2%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered YES: 2/37, 5%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 9/46, 19%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 6/45, 13%

9. I feel like I can make a difference in the world:

Pretest Control: Proportion answered YES: 5/38, 13%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered YES: 2/37, 5%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 6/46, 13%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 5/45, 11%

10. I feel like I have learned a lot about politics and government as a result of classes I've taken in middle school and high school.

Pretest Control: Proportion answered YES: 1/38, 2%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered YES: 1/37, 2%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 0/46, 0%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 3/45, 6%

11. My parent(s)/guardian(s) are interested in politics.

Pretest Control: Proportion answered YES: 6/38, 16%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered YES: 5/37, 13%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 14/46, 30%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 12/45, 26%

12. I feel like I am as informed, if not more informed, about politics than my parents.

Pretest Control: Proportion answered YES: 2/38, 5%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered YES: 2/37, 5%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 1/46, 2%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 4/45, 8%

13. I feel like being involved in politics is an effective way to try to make a difference in my community.

Pretest Control: Proportion answered YES: 3/38, 8%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered YES: 2/37, 5%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 4/46, 8%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 5/45, 11%

14. Compared to other history courses I have taken, I feel like I have learned more about politics and government in this class than in others.

Pretest Control: Proportion answered YES: 6/38, 16%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered YES: 6/37, 16%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 11/46, 24%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 20/45, 44%

15. I plan to lead a politically active life.

Pretest Control: Proportion answered YES: 7/38, 18%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered YES: 10/37, 27%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 19/46, 41%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered YES: 22/45, 48%

16. What is the name of the Governor of Maine?

Pretest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 32/38, 84%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 33/37, 89%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 45/46, 98%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 43/45, 95%

17. In what year is the next Presidential Election?

Pretest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 32/38, 84%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 34/37, 91%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 43/46, 93%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 41/45, 91%

18. Who is Susan Collins?

Pretest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 28/38, 74%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 25/37, 68%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 38/46, 82%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 42/45, 93%

19. Who is Chellie Pingree?

Pretest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 13/38, 34%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 13/37, 35%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 18/46, 39%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 27/45, 60%

20. What government structure does the town of Brunswick use?

Pretest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 27/38, 71%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 25/37, 67%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 35/46, 76%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 30/45, 66%

21. Who is Mattie Daughtry?

Pretest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 3/38, 6%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 3/37, 8%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 5/46, 11%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 12/45, 26%

22. What is the name of the Vice President of the United States?

Pretest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 26/38, 68%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 19, 51%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 41/46, 89%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 39/45, 87%

23. Who represents your neighborhood on the Brunswick Town Council?

Pretest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 3/38, 6%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 3/37, 8%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 3/46, 6%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 6/46, 13%

24. Name one person who is running for Governor of Maine in 2018

Pretest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 2/38, 4%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 1/37, 3%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 1/46, 2%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 5/45, 11%

25. Who is the Speaker of the House in Maine?

Pretest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 2/38, 4%

Posttest Control: Proportion answered CORRECT: 2/37, 5%

Pretest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 1/46, 2%

Posttest Treatment: Proportion answered CORRECT: 4/45, 8%