



Democracy: From Theory to Practice

Pilot Study – Fall 2018

- Course implemented at 5 Universities across Ukraine
- 9 Instructors
- Students ranged from 2nd year to 4th year
- Various majors: Medicine, Political Science, Journalism, Law, Math, IT, International Relations



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Data Source	Number
Teacher Interviews	7
Teacher Surveys	9
Students Focus Groups	8 (N = 96)
Student Surveys	96
Classroom Observations	10
Pre-Tests	394
Posttests	541



Students gained deeper understandings of the role of individuals in a democracy

- “We thought that democracy was something far above, but thanks to the course, it became clear that democracy begins with each of us and we can influence it.” (Course Student)
- “After the course I understand that everyone can do something, change something at the local level and then perhaps, on the state level too.” (Course Student)
- “While working on the projects, we realized that we are not dependent on government bodies, because through civic organizations, volunteering and direct participation you can change a lot.” (Course Student)



Students practiced skills associated with effective democratic participation

- “We learned to express opinions, listen to others, find compromises.” (Course Student)
- “We had to think critically and apply our knowledge.” (Course Student)
- “In addition to skillful use of facts, their discussions started to show the ideas, their thoughts became more profound...they learned to express themselves more freely.” (Course Instructor)
- “Through the Action Project the students developed the ability to research, analyze information, suggest alternative ideas and work as a team” (Course Instructor)



Attitudes and values that support a healthy democracy developed among students

- “They became more open, willing to share their thoughts and more respectful to each other, willing to compromise and listen.” (Course Instructor)
- “I learned you are a part of society, and sometimes it makes sense to give up some rights for the broader, large-scale goals of civil society.” (Course Student)
- “Before the course I thought voting changed nothing, now I see that if you don’t use your vote, others will use it for themselves”. (Course Student)



Developing Identities as Civic Actors

- “Understanding that you must be an active citizen and young people can change at least something, because now we understand how to do it not only through rallies”.
- “Now I understand that you need to have the knowledge of how to influence the authorities, because without knowledge, you do not know how to make a statement”
- “Our society is sick with lack of confidence in the success, because we think that everything is rotten at the top spheres of power; but you can do a lot yourself, you just have to start.”
- “We can hold government accountable - people need to be engaged - ex. Monitor how money is spent”



Student actions to make changes

- Worked with local authorities to have a bus route reinstated
- Worked with administrators to bring legal education to a secondary school
- Created an anti-bullying program to implement in elementary schools
- Developed a campaign to increase recycling
- Created a video and put on YouTube to advocate for changes to testing requirements for medical students
- Filed a request for public information as part of their Action Project
- Presented proposal to university administration to install filtered water sources for the students
- Led information sessions on the course and democracy

Project Citizen

- A Center for Civic Education Program
- A project-based, interdisciplinary curriculum
- Designed to teach individuals how to monitor and influence public policy
- Promotes participation in local and state government.
- Can be used in upper elementary through post-secondary education





Project Citizen – 5 Steps

1. Identifying a problem in their community that requires a public policy solution
2. Gathering and evaluating information on the problem
3. Examining and evaluating alternative solutions
4. Developing a proposed public policy to address the problem
5. Creating an action plan to get their policy adopted by government



Program Impact

- October, 2007 Study conducted by the RMC Research Corporation
- A pre- and posttest study with matching control groups, 409 Project Citizen participants and 341 comparison students from Michigan, Oklahoma, and Colorado were surveyed, tested, and interviewed.
- Included middle and secondary school students



MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN PROJECT CITIZEN DEMONSTRATED GAINS IN:

- Knowledge of public policy
- Knowledge of democracy
- Public policy problem-solving skills
- Ability to articulate, research, and advocate policy solutions in essays addressing public policy problems



HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT CITIZEN STUDENTS DEMONSTRATED SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER GROWTH THAN COMPARISON STUDENTS IN THEIR:

- Persuasive writing ability
- Knowledge of public policy
- Public policy problem-solving skills
- Civic discourse skills
- Ability to articulate, research, and advocate policy solutions in essays addressing public policy problems



Student Comments:

“Sometimes as a teenager, you can be looked down upon. Project Citizen gives you a chance to speak out and to make a difference.”

“We learned about rules, laws, ordinances, and policies and what level of government was involved with each one.”

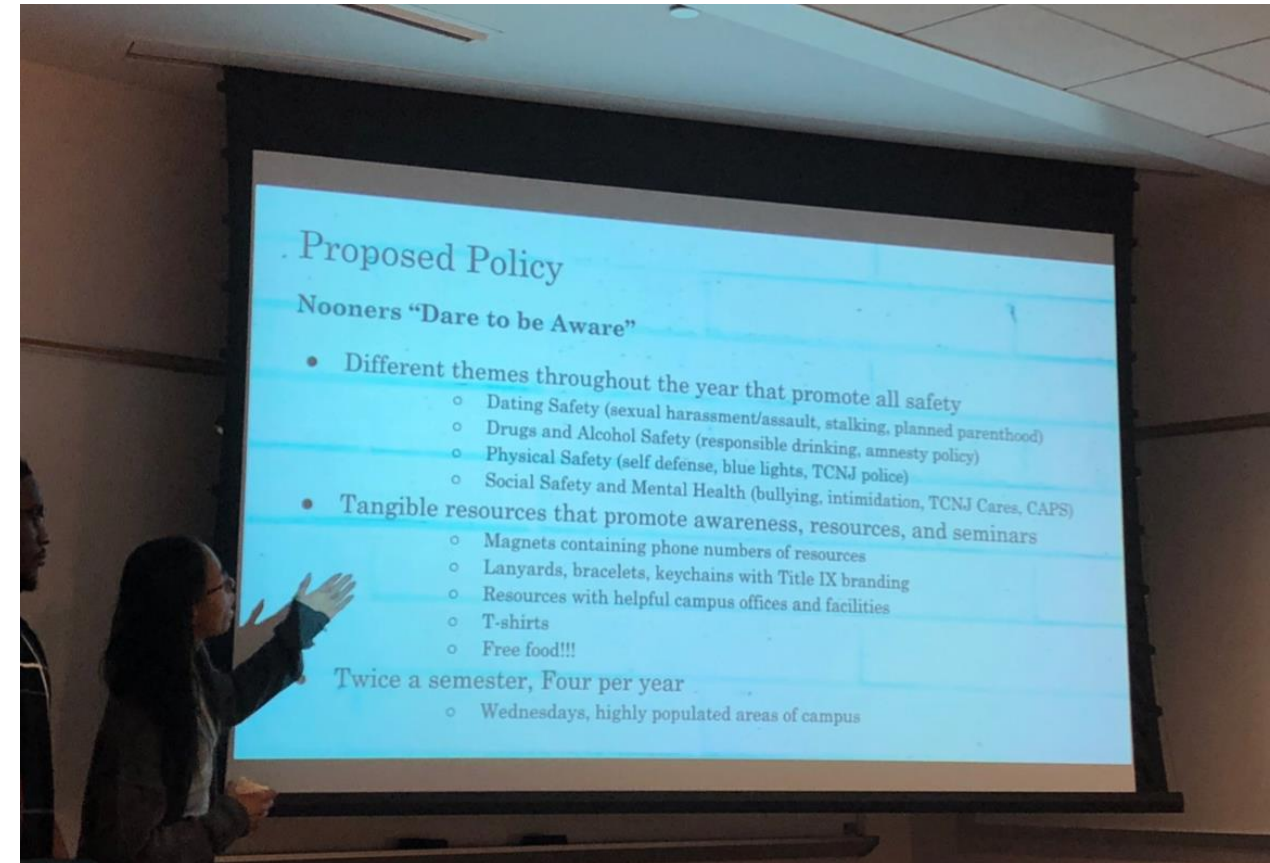
“Citizens – I thought they just sat around and paid taxes – but they have to help make decisions.”



My Students, Fall, 2018

Students practiced and strengthened many research skills:

- The ability to access, assess and interpret multiple sources
- Analyze qualitative and quantitative data
- Draw conclusions based on the data analyses
- Use evidence to build an argument
- collaborate with peers Present findings to an audience.





Student Reflections:

“For me, the turning point in the semester was reviewing the data from the surveys we sent out.”

“The fact that this project required us to seek outside help, pushed me past my comfort zone. I have never felt comfortable talking to authority figures, and in this project, the majority of our research required data from experts.”

“The collaboration allowed us as a group to voice our opinions, allow for differing views, and bring ideas together to formulate a solution. As a person who prefers being independent, I felt I struggled with collaboration and expressing my voice; however, this project gave me the chance to use my voice and see how my voice and my ideas can formulate and grow amongst the voices and ideas of others.”