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Promoting Civic Engagement and Knowledge Amongst Middle School Adolescents Through Simulation Based Teaching Models

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Dissertation

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Abstract

Public schools, and education in general, were founded on the principles of preparing young people to participate in civic life as active and informed citizens. Yet, civic competency scores are consistently low and demonstrate that students are not prepared for the civic engagement required of them when they leave school. The purpose of this quasi-experimental mixed methods study is to determine if participation in simulations and utilizing experiential learning theory while teaching the government standards will lead to a greater understanding of civics, and a positive improvement in students' beliefs and values regarding civic engagement beyond the classroom. While the study provides depth and texture to the existing body of research, it was ultimately inconclusive as to the effectiveness of legislative assembly simulations on civic knowledge and attitudes, as measured by civic beliefs and values.

Key Words: civic engagement, action research, civic education, mock assembly, Legislative simulation

Promoting Civic Engagement and Knowledge Amongst Middle School Adolescents Through Simulation Based Teaching Models

By Karrie L. Palmer

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Chapter One: Introduction

Growing up, I hated social studies classes. They always felt boring and irrelevant to my life and experiences. It seemed there were countless dates to remember, a lot of dead people to talk about, and events that had long since passed. However, if there was one thing I thought was worse than the boring history lessons, it was the government and civics units. There were words and phrases I did not understand, and I had a challenging time seeing the relevance of learning how the government operates to my own life. Afterall, I was not planning to go into politics. My opinion about history shifted, in part, thanks to an amazing high school history teacher, who engaged his students with inquiry-based activities, hands-on learning, and fascinating stories from the past. His teaching inspired me to become a social studies teacher myself. Despite my teacher's inspiration, civics and government still felt dull and tedious to teach. It seemed reading from a textbook, taking notes, and memorizing what felt like pointless information, was the only way to get through the dry subject matter. My goal is to make the critical government and civic standards interesting, exciting, relevant, and concrete for students. In history and geography, artifacts, guest speakers, and historical video clips of exciting events are easy to find, and there are many ways to get students out of their seats and involved in the learning process. However, civics and government are still often taught by utilizing traditional methods including teacher directed instruction and discussion, textbook passages, and a passing on of knowledge from the educator to the students (Staker & Horn, 2012).

Not surprisingly, civic and government knowledge is not very thorough or widespread. A 2018 report by the National Center for Education Statistics found that just twenty percent of high school seniors were proficient in civic knowledge (Shapiro & Brown, 2018). A 2017 report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities highlights a decrease in civics instructional time due

to decreases in educational funding (Leachman et al., 2017). Factors such as a focus on standardized tests in other subjects (Baustell & Glazier, 2018), lack of a clear national curriculum or guidelines for civic education (National Council for the Social Studies, 2016), and the increasing workload on teachers all lead to a decline in in-depth civics instruction (Nieto & Mittleman, 2001). However, the problem this creates is students are struggling to understand and engage with civics which affects their future participation in society and civic life.

Statement of the Problem

In 2022, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) showed a decline in eighth grade students' civic proficiency for the first time since the test was first administered in 1998 (Mervosh, 2023). The percentage of students performing at or above the basic level of civic proficiency, as determined by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), was only twenty-two percent of eighth grade students. This is two percentage points lower than the 2018 result of twenty-four percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). While this is not a statistically significant decrease, it points to a larger concern: less than one quarter of our nation's youth are proficient in civics at the most basic level.

These national statistics are confirmed by my own observations. I have noticed that my students, in the past, have struggled to grasp the civics and government standards. They are complicated, abstract and tend to bore students. Historically, the eighth-grade students I teach have performed worse on the civics and government strand of state mandated testing than any other element. As it was for me, civics seems to be the discipline of the social studies that they are the least interested in and put forth the least amount of effort into grasping.

However, civics, in my opinion, is one of the more important aspects of the social studies disciplines. Civics is how students take what they learn in history, geography, economics, math,

reading, and science and apply it to the world in which they live. Students go to school to become productive and active members of the world. Therefore, I decided to focus my research on promoting civic knowledge and attitudes towards civic engagement in adolescents through a legislative assembly simulation. I believe educators need to help students understand their part in society and what it means to be active and involved citizens. Research, as outlined in my literature review, demonstrates the importance of practicing civic engagement in a safe and structured environment so that students can apply what they have learned to the larger community, state, nation, and global society. By having students engage in simulations of debates and mock legislative assemblies, they can experience civic discourse under the guidance of a teacher with issues they personally care about. Students will be able to see they have a voice and a place in their communities that they can get involved in and make a difference. As students engage in the simplified processes of government and civics simulations, they will more fully grasp the complex processes our government uses. In turn, it is my hope that students will feel more prepared to get involved and understand why they should take an active interest in their community.

Purpose of the Study

In the last quarter century, beginning with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001 and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, schools have de-emphasized social studies instruction, especially civics and government (Godsay et al., 2012; Palmer, 2015; Rebell, 2018). High stakes testing in reading and math have severely diminished, and in many cases eliminated civic instruction from public education. Rebell (2018) states, “what gets tested is what gets taught… schools have substantially reduced the time students spend engaged in these areas” (Rebell, 2018, p. 21). Much of the marginalization that is taking place in civics “can be linked to

the accountability measures placed on schools to perform well on tested subjects under NCLB" (Palmer, 2015, p. 18). The Advancement Project (2010) states that these policies are "at odds with what may be the most important purpose of the American public education system: to ensure that every child is prepared to become a full participant in our democracy" (Advancement Project, 2010, p. 12). This study asks what can be done at a classroom level in such a discouraging context for civic education. Using quasi-experimental mixed methods, it seeks to determine whether participation and active involvement in experiential learning in the form of a state legislative assembly simulation can improve eighth grade students' civic knowledge and attitudes towards civic engagement.

Significance of the Study

This study adds to the literature available on civic engagement and instruction in the classroom. Much of the available research on civic engagement points to the "lack of knowledge and interest in politics and political systems" (Manning & Edwards, 2013, p. 22) that students exhibit both while they are in school and once they leave school. Pontes et al. (2019) see this phenomenon as a purposeful withdrawal from democratic participation. Cicognani et al. (2014) address the fact that participation in community life and organizations is intrinsically good and necessary to "promote social change, to improve the social, economic, political, and environmental conditions of the community, to strengthen social bonds among citizens and their sense of belonging to the community, and to enhance individual and collective well-being" (Cicognani et al., 2014, p. 26). However, for students to participate in civic life, they must first have a strong understanding of what civic engagement is and how they can get involved. This is where a strong civic education can help to bridge the gap between knowledge and participation.

It is through instruction in civics that students understand exactly what it means to participate in society. If people are going to actively participate in the society in which they live and continue the values and ideology we have in our democratic nation, civic learning must be present within our schools (Gould et al., 2011).

Research Questions

1. How, if at all, does eighth-grade students' civic knowledge change as a result of participation in a legislative simulation?
2. How, if at all, do eighth grade students' attitudes—as measured by their beliefs and values, towards civic engagement—change as the result of participation in a legislative simulation?

Definition of Key Terms

Citizen - A person who is granted the full rights and responsibilities given to any community, state, or nation (Wex & McCarthy, 2022).

Civic Beliefs and Values - Significant shared beliefs about what types of behaviors and actions are considered acceptable or unacceptable in a society. The values a society holds help to establish accepted norms of behavior and help to maintain a social order (Buharil, 2022).

Civic Discourse - Communication with other people or groups to improve the understanding of issues or concerns within a community. Civic discourse is a respectful back-and-forth discussion between people that may have different opinions or beliefs about potentially controversial topics (Horton, n.d.).

Civic Engagement - The actions taken by individuals and groups to identify and address specific needs and concerns within society. This encompasses a wide range of behaviors that are done for

the collective good of a community, state, or nation (Carpini, 2009). For this study's purpose, engagement tendencies will be measured as an individual's civic beliefs and values.

Civic Knowledge - The understanding of how government is structured and functions, civic rights and responsibilities, and the processes by which a society's policies and laws are created and upheld (Winthrop, 2020).

Simulation - A simulation is a pedagogical activity that reflects real-life actions, events, and processes. In a simulation, the outcome is dependent on the participants and is not predetermined by a teacher or facilitator (Wright-Maley, 2015).

Researcher Positionality

I am motivated to engage in this research because it is my hope that when students today grow into adults, they have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to participate as responsible citizens in their communities and beyond. Responsible citizens are informed and thoughtful about their decisions; they understand how their decisions affect others; they have an appreciation for the fundamental processes of our American democratic system; they are aware of various political and public issues; they know how to think critically and seek out information; and they can have respectful and civil conversations with others that have opposing viewpoints (Levinson, 2012). In addition, they participate in their communities, show empathy and concern for others, demonstrate tolerance, and respect, and have a belief that they can make a difference (Levinson, 2012).

As a pragmatist, this study is influenced by my own strong personal values surrounding social studies and civic learning. John Dewey defines pragmatism as a naturalist approach to acquiring knowledge. Rather than passively observing the world and how others interact with it, people need to interact and participate with the world themselves (Field, 2020). I tend to look for

practical solutions that I can put into action to help my students learn. For instance, I often look for topics that are of interest and that address real-life problems or issues for my students to solve (Peterson, 2021). David Kolb's idea of experiential learning is a response "to John Dewey's call for a theory of experience to guide educational innovation" (Kolb & Kolb, 2019, para. 3). Using this philosophy, I feel like my students will gain more by experiencing the learning themselves rather than reading how others do things and solve problems.

There is a problem in our country today with the way students are engaging with civics and government standards. I believe that schools could do more to prepare students for participation in real world civic life. Students need the knowledge and skills required for citizenship. According to Levinson (2012), "Education is the single most highly correlated variable with civic knowledge, civic skills, democratic civic attitudes, and active civic engagement" (Levinson, 2012, p. 52). Therefore, I hope to utilize my extensive experiences as an elementary and middle school teacher to guide my thinking and actions throughout this study as I seek to determine if participation in mock simulations will increase both civic knowledge and attitudes towards civic engagement, as measured by civic beliefs and values, when compared with traditional methods of instruction.

According to national test scores released on May 3, 2023, only twenty-two percent of eighth grade students were proficient in civics performance. This number is down from the previous twenty-four percent reported in 2018 (Mervosh, 2023). While the two percent decline seems nominal considering the tests were administered in a post-pandemic education system, it is still alarming that less than one quarter of the future voting population has proficient civic knowledge to carry into adulthood. Beyond eighth grade, most students are required to complete one, semester-long course in civics and government before they reach voting age and enter the

adult world where we expect them to act as educated and engaged members of society (Shapiro & Brown, 2018).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

Civic education can be broken down into three main components or processes; knowledge, civic values, and civic behaviors (Cohen, 2010). First, knowledge about government and citizenship must be passed on to students. Students need to have this knowledge to make sense of the world around them. This knowledge should encompass "many subjects, including history, politics, economics, science, and technology (Rebell, 2018, p. 21). It should be a combination of procedural knowledge (how things are done, the rules and practices of institutions) and substantive knowledge (definitions, principles, and structures of society, etc.) (Cohen, 2010). "People's capacities for civic empowerment are simply greater if they know about political structures and institutions as well as contemporary politics than if they don't" (Levinson, 2012, p. 33). Second, values and beliefs must also be taught and instilled in children through societal practices. Schools have a unique position to help instill common societal values (Rebell, 2018). They play a fundamental role not only in imparting academic knowledge but also in cultivating ethical values and principles. "Our schools not only reflect our current values as a nation, but also reveal the values that we anticipate passing along to the next generation of Americans." (Kahlenberg & Janey, 2016, para. 16). Third, and perhaps most important, civic behaviors are not inherent to children. These are taught by watching others engage in daily civic life and by practicing behaviors experientially. Together, knowledge and values, along with skills and experiences can lead to the development of civic behaviors (Rebell, 2018).

Theoretical Research

When Europeans first began to settle in the new world, the Puritans placed a strong emphasis on religious instruction and moral behavior. Due to the theocratic society of the

Puritans, civic engagement was restricted for a focus on religious adherence (Morgan, 2003). Similarly, the 19th century Catholics placed an emphasis on religious education and obedience rather than engaging in civic practices (Feingold, 1992). Therefore, it is helpful to look to the work of classic pragmatist, John Dewey, experiential learning theorist, David A. Kolb, and their followers. This work, when considered together, could have practical applications in the social studies classroom. Dewey believed children learn when they are engaged in societal practices (Hopkins, 2018). Kolb believed children learn through their engagement in practices and that true learning comes from the experiences one goes through to acquire knowledge (Kolb, 1984). When taken together, a pragmatic experiential learning model could improve content knowledge, beliefs, and values regarding civics.

John Dewey, one of the three original philosophers of pragmatism, believed that democracy and civics were inherently connected to education and the theory of inquiry (McDermid, 2020, p. 1). As part of his pragmatism, Dewey saw that the classroom should be an extension of the wider community and not a stand-alone entity. According to Hopkins (2018), Dewey believed, “Democracy is not something that happens when a student turns into a citizen at 18. Children learn to work together, discuss, and argue over common themes and problems encountered daily as part of their educational experiences” (Hopkins, 2018, p. 435). In this regard, Dewey was an advocate for the child-centered approach to education, giving students a voice and allowing them to make valid and concrete connections between the things they do and the things they learn (Hopkins, 2018). He felt that there was no comparison between the judgment and attention an individual could gain by living and experiencing life instead of just reading or listening to information. Learning through living gives more than knowledge, it provides an “increase in toleration, in breadth of social judgment, the larger acquaintance with

human nature, the sharpened alertness in reading signs of character and interpreting social situations, greater accuracy of adaptation to differing personalities, (and) contact with greater commercial activities" (Dewey, 1899, p. 36).

Dewey believed school could act as a society in and of itself, therefore, students need to be involved in the work taking place within the school on a day-to-day basis (Thorburn, 2020). Unfortunately, "the tragic weakness of the present school is that it endeavors to prepare future members of the social order in a medium in which the conditions of the social spirit are eminently wanting" (Dewey, 1899, p. 38). Children have no motive to learn because they cannot see the connections to life. The day-to-day activities taking place within the school system are separate from real-world actions. This means the place we send children every day to learn to be active and participating members of society is the one place where it is the most difficult to get the experiences they need to learn (Dewey, 1899).

Dewey believed "Democratic thought and action (citizenship) must be learned" (Stanley, 2005, p. 282). This is not to say that he believed we should tell students what to think, rather we should help them have experiences that allow them to think and make informed choices similar to those they will make after they finish school. Dewey rejected the idea of indoctrination of theories of social welfare and certain economic systems presented by George Counts in the 1930's. Similarly, he rejected the ideas of the conservative approach to education whereby students should only be given a knowledge of history and cultural literacy presented by Walter Lippman during the same time. According to Stanley (2005), Dewey believed there was a middle ground between indoctrination and the avoidance of pressing and provoking questions. Instead, he believed

> *schools should participate in the general intellectualization of society by inculcating a method of intelligence (that) would provide students with a critical competence for reflective thought applied to the analysis of social problems (and to) prepare individuals to take part intelligently in the management of conditions under which they will live* (Stanley, 2005, p. 283).

As an example of pragmatism in democratic education, Paulo Freire spent much of his life championing adult literacy projects and trying to link participatory democracy with education. Like Dewey, he championed experiential learning by rejecting what he called the banking concept of education; an education in which students are seen as empty repositories to be filled by teachers and educators (Gadotti & Torres, 2009). At best, most people, especially marginalized groups, in his home country of Brazil were subjected to this "banking education" (Gadotti & Torres, 2009, p. 1259) where the teacher demands students follow the rules, are disciplined, punctual, and meet the minimum requirements to enter and exit each grade level. In contrast Freire felt teachers and students should engage in dialogue and problem-solving solutions together. Rather than the educator as the holder of all knowledge, Freire believed teachers should put faith in students' abilities to figure things out. Furthermore, he believed that everyone, including students, brought knowledge and past experiences that were relevant and applicable to every situation or problem they faced. A teacher could help students utilize their own knowledge to understand and approach problems differently than others (Freire Institute, 2023). He believed learning and education should make it possible for "people to fearlessly discuss their problems… (it) should orient people in their lives, (and) help people reflect" (Gadotti & Torres, 2009, p. 1260).

Freire proposed the idea of the "escola cidadã" or citizen school. In this new type of school Freire envisioned an atmosphere where knowledge is created, and meaning is constructed from experiences rather than imparted to students by teachers. Citizen schools should be about building human and social relationships while their citizens debate knowledge and learn to respectfully live and work together in society. "The Curriculum has to be intimately related to the life project" (Gadotti & Torres, 2009, p. 1263) of its members. However, Freire's proposed citizen schools were not about creating new spaces and curriculums; instead, it was a remaking of the schools we already have. "The future is not the annihilation of the past, but its improvement" (Gadotti & Torres, 2009, p. 1263).

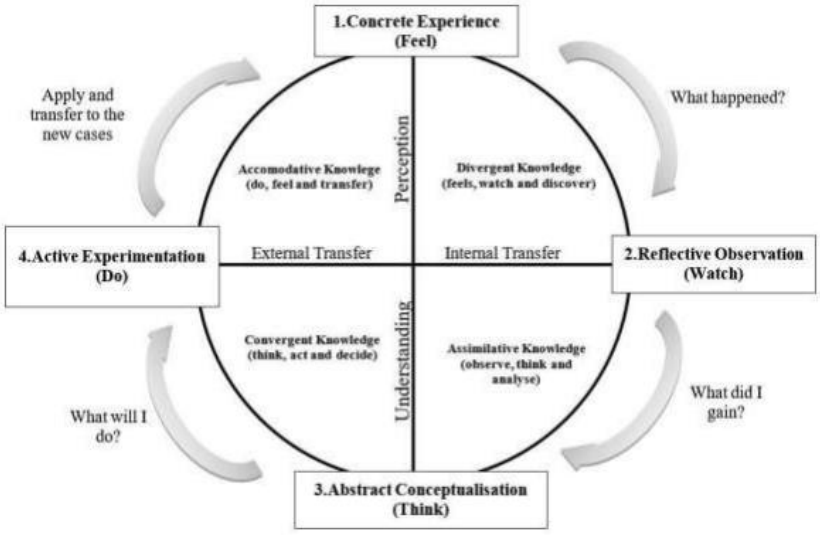
Like Dewey and Freire, Kolb believed "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). Utilizing neuroscience, Kolb developed an experiential learning theory, whereby the focus of learning is on the adaptation of ideas rather than content and outcomes. He outlines learning as focused on the processes one goes through to acquire new knowledge rather than what facts or skills are being learned. To Kolb (1984), learning requires an integrated approach that involves behavior, thinking, feeling, perception, and cognition. To this end, true learning can only occur with experiences because it requires human adaptation. He sees learning as something that takes place in all settings that humans interact with. The traditional educational setting focuses on learning as an internal process that happens with the use of a teacher, books, and a classroom. However, Kolb argues that learning happens everywhere and requires a person to interact with their environment.

Experiential Learning theory states learning takes place in the frontal lobe of the brain in four different areas and moves through a cyclical pattern. It begins with experiences coming into

the sensory cortex; followed by reflection of those experiences in the back integrative cortex. Next, the frontal integrative cortex makes abstract conceptualizations of experiences and reflections. This is the thinking part of experiential learning theory. Finally, all of this is put into action through the motor cortex and the cycle begins again (Kolb & Kolb, 2019). (Figure 1)

Figure 1

David A. Kolb's Learning Styles Model and Experiential Learning Theory (Uzun & Uygun, 2022, p. 29).



James Zull (2004) expanded on Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory by stating, "If teachers provide experiences and assignments that engage all four areas of the cortex, they can expect deeper learning than if they engage fewer regions" (Zull, 2004, p. 72). He supported Kolb's theory with the use of neuroscience that reflects modern understandings of how neural synapses grow and change with experience. Zull believes that reflection and practice are crucial to learning, however, students will not engage in these steps of the process unless conditions

have been managed so that they care about what they are learning; this requires experiences and active engagement. “Ultimately, the learner is in control” (Zull, 2004, p. 72). As educators, we must give them that control.

According to Levinson (2012), “schools need to teach young people knowledge and skills to upend and reshape power relationships directly, through public, political, and civic action” (Levinson, 2012, p. 13). This is in line with Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy that problems of a moral and a social nature must be identified and solved within a social context (Field, 2020), and in this case, that social context is education. This Deweyan philosophy can be seen when we allow students’ personal interests and experiences to become a part of the learning process within schools. Schools should provide a culture where students are required to solve practical, social, and moral problems by working together and making decisions as a group, the way things are done in society (Fielding, 2007; & Hopkins, 2018). “Schools are themselves civil societies, for good and ill. They exert a profound effect on students’ and adults’ civic experiences, identities, and opportunities—even when they have no intention of doing so” (Levinson, 2012, p. 56).

Together, Dewey, Kolb, and the other pragmatic theorists have ideas that could profoundly impact the problems in civic education today. Yet, researchers have not conducted many studies on the connection between experiential learning and civics specifically. However, what is available is promising. Colorado offers a program called the Judicially Speaking program. Participation in the program is voluntary, but it offers students an opportunity to use “interactive exercises and firsthand experience” (Shapiro & Brown, 2018, p. 5) to learn about the judicial system and how judges utilize civic knowledge to make decisions on cases they hear. Colorado is the only state in the nation to offer the Judicially Speaking program. This may be one of the reasons the state has a “youth voter participation rate and youth volunteerism rate

which is slightly higher than the national average" (Shapiro & Brown, 2018, p. 6). Another promising program utilizing experiential learning theory is the iEngage Action Civics summer program in Texas. Participants attend a voluntary camp for students who are interested in civics and government. While at the camp, participants utilize action-civics to research and act upon issues in their local community. The iEngage program conducted a study that found students who participated in the camp showed "gains in planned community engagement" (Blevins et al., 2021, p. 150), and significant gains in potential political engagement and interest in activism (Blevins et al., 2021).

Ultimately, we need to involve students in the processes that they will experience in the larger society so that they can gain knowledge and experience to apply in a real-world setting. Many schools accomplish this through various extracurricular activities such as student government and National Beta Club, a service-learning organization. The problem with these being the only models used to engage students in civic practices, is it drastically limits access to quality experiences that will increase knowledge and a tendency to be engaged later in life. Students who participate in student government or who are invited to join the National Beta Club tend to be at the top echelon of the school system academically. These programs, while valuable, will do little to increase civic knowledge and participation on a grander scale. To provide access to the same types of civic experiences for minority populations, underserved communities, and students who are not academically at the top of their class, educators need to provide opportunities to all students within the curriculum.

Fortunately, research on simulation-based teaching practices in many other areas of the curriculum are more robust and the results are promising. There are examples throughout the research of simulations being used in history, economics, science, mathematics, sports, the

judicial system, information processing, and even the art of negotiation. In history education, teachers are using simulations to help students understand the past while also building excitement, peer interaction, decision making skills, rationalization, and historical thinking (Arnold, 1998; Browning, 2009; McAndrews, 1991; & Stallbaumer-Beishline, 2012). In economic education, computer-based simulations are being utilized to teach students about the market economy and capitalism. Gradinaru et al. (2021) states simulations allow economic educators and employers to "stay ahead of the learning curve and gain substantial competitive advantages" (Gradinaru et al., 2021, p. 737). In science, simulations can help students gain an understanding of abstract concepts that are otherwise difficult for them to grasp (Cock et al., 2022). Simulations are utilized in helping to promote global empathy across cultures and nations (Bachen et al., 2012), decision making and the art of negotiation (Boyne, 2012; & Druckman & Ebner, 2013), and even a deeper understanding of the judicial system through mock trials at all levels of schooling from elementary to grad-school (Ahmadov, 2011; Beck, 1999; Glancy, 2016; MacKay, 2000; March et al., 2011; Miller & Seidler, 2019; & Smagorinsky, 1994).

Experiential learning opportunities like simulations can be an important supplement to traditional methods of teaching, such as lectures (Miller & Seidler, 2019). Simulations are a form of experiential learning that provide students unique opportunities to practice real-world skills and apply knowledge to situations that would otherwise be difficult to bring into the classroom (Skillicorn & Braund, 2021). "Simulations promote critical thinking or thinking outside the box by presenting a series of problems to students and pushing them to experiment with, adapt, and alter in-game strategies and apply knowledge learned in lectures to find solutions" (Glasgow, 2015). Civics educators need to find creative and innovative ways to bring civic experiences, normally reserved for the gifted and privileged, into the general classroom with all populations.

Students need to have opportunities to get involved in realistic and applicable processes so that they know how to get involved when they are older (Miller & Seidler, 2019). Other disciplines like math, science, reading, and economics have shown it is possible. Instead of reading from a textbook or listening to a lecture, Kolb and Dewey would suggest getting students involved in the learning process by bringing the real world into the classroom and allowing them to interact with it in a meaningful way while in a safe environment. Educators can use real-world issues and events to instruct students about civic discourse, media literacy, human rights, and the benefits of getting involved. All of this can be accomplished through debates, Socratic seminars, service-learning projects, and even simulations. Students need authentic meaningful practice to carry with them into the world beyond the classroom.

Historical Significance of Civic Education

Civic education can be thought of as the processes that alter an individual's beliefs and actions as members of any given community (Crittenden & Levine, 2018). The way an individual goes about acquiring the beliefs and actions that make them a citizen is debated across time and place. However, in American public schools the idea of civic education really took hold in the 1830's with Horace Mann's "common school" model, in which each child would be educated in a common or uniform way regardless of their background. Besides educating all children, Mann had a goal to make sure all children could participate and thrive within the democratic system of America (Crittenden & Levine, 2018). He stated, "under our republican government, it seems clear that the minimum of this education can never be less than such as is sufficient to qualify each citizen for the civil and social duties he will be called to discharge" (Massachusetts Board of Education & Mann, 1849, p. 17). Horace Mann called public education "the great equalizer of the conditions of men." (Mann, 1998, para. 4).

However, even before Mann began pushing for a public school system that prepared students for civic participation in our democratic society, our founding fathers recognized a need to prepare citizens for life in a society "that would demand more of citizens, and grant more rights than the empire from which they had declared independence" (Crittenden & Levine, 2018). In *Federalist 23*, Alexander Hamilton declared the government should have the right to "an unconfined authority in respect to all those objects which are entrusted to its management" (Gutman, 1987, p. 187). Civic education was one of the "objects" Hamilton felt should be entrusted to the federal government. Additionally, in 1781, Thomas Jefferson wrote about the need for schools to instill the first elements of morality in students. When referencing education, Jefferson stated, "The influence over government must be shared among all the people if… the government will be safe" (Jefferson, 1832, pp. 146-147). This early push for civic education was mirrored in nearly every state constitution by establishing the duty of public education to reach civic goals (Levinson & Solomon, 2021). Following these early pronouncements by the founding fathers, other prominent figures contributed to the push for civic education. Noah Webster believed it was essential for a functioning democracy to have an informed citizenry. He advocated for including topics like the Constitution, government structure, and citizens' rights and responsibilities in educational curriculum in the early to mid-nineteenth century (Hyman, 2012). Catherine Beecher pushed for instilling civic values in women through education so that these values could be passed down to their children (Schwartz, 2010). The common school movement pushed for fostering civic values and building a responsible citizenry throughout much of the nineteenth century (Kernell, 1995). In 1916, John Dewey published *Democracy and Education. He* explained that "a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated (Dewey as cited by

Kahlenberg & Janey, 2016, para. 11).” Later, Franklin Delano Roosevelt upheld these beliefs when he announced his mission for schools was to educate children for citizenship. He stated, “That schools make worthy citizens is the most important responsibility placed on them” (Roosevelt as cited in Crittenden & Levine, 2018). In 1952, United States Supreme Court Justice, Felix Frankfurter stated education had been the “basis of hope” (Frankfurter, 1952, para. 21) for the continuation of America’s democracy from Thomas Jefferson onward.

> *To regard teachers in our entire educational system, from the primary grades to the university, as priests of our democracy is therefore not to indulge in hyperbole. It is the special task of teachers to foster those habits of open-mindedness and critical inquiry which alone make for responsible citizens who, in turn make possible an enlightened and effective public opinion* (Frankfurter, 1952, para. 22).

Decline of Civic Education

While civic education was praised and assumed to be a central function of public schooling, there has been a systematic devaluing of civic education. The intersection between public schooling in America and civic education regarding how funds and resources are allocated has become murky. By the start of the twentieth century some educational advocates began pushing for differentiation in education rather than uniformity for all students (Crittenden & Levine, 2018). This research study assumes that more civic instruction will translate into better citizen preparation.

Since the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001 the focus in education has shifted towards competency in literacy and mathematics and away from history, civics, economics, and geography as taught by the social studies (Rebell, 2018). Things were only made

worse when Race to the Top and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) were passed, giving even more weight to standardized testing in schools (Godsay et al., 2012). In the middle part of the 20th century, it was common for students to complete no less than three civics related courses while they were attending high school. Today, the civics requirements have largely disappeared; some states require no civics courses and others only require a half a year of civics to graduate (Rebell, 2018). Since social studies subjects are not counted in states' accountability measures, "schools have substantially reduced the time students spend engaged in these areas" (Rebell, 2018, p. 21).

To be lasting for students, civics instruction needs to be at the forefront of education and should be integrated into every social studies classroom beginning in pre-kindergarten through grade twelve. "Civic Education is something that sticks with us from cradle through career, and it's a constant educational experience" (Sparks, 2022, p. 3). It seems absurd that American public schools think that they can offer civic education just a few times over the course of students' educational careers and then expect children to become active, engaged citizens when they grow up. "There is a reason that we require students to take English and math every semester of every year of elementary and secondary school: mastery takes time and practice" (Levinson, 2012). We demand American students engage in ongoing learning and coaching with regard to reading, literacy, and math, yet "civic learning has been an afterthought during the era of school reform" (Levine & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2017, p. 3). The United States Department of Education recognized this problem in a 2012 report when they stated:

> *Unfortunately, civic learning and democratic engagements are add-ons rather than essential parts of the core academic mission in too many schools and on too many college campuses today. Many elementary and secondary schools are pushing civics and*

> *service-learning to the sidelines, mistakenly treating education for citizenship as a distraction from preparing students for college-level mathematics, English, and other core subjects* (US Department of Education as cited in Rebell, 2018, p. 3).

Yet, despite acknowledging the problem, little progress was made to rectify the situation (Rebell, 2018). The reactivation of the Every Student Succeeds Act was signed into law by President Obama on December 10, 2015 (US Department of Education, n.d.). In theory, ESSA was supposed to ease some of the accountability measures placed on schools in reading and mathematics. However, the act only succeeded in increasing pressure on schools to increase achievement in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and now Science (Rebell, 2018; & Shapiro & Brown, 2018). Little room was left for increases in social studies.

Consequences of Declining Focus on Civics

Despite a public education system whose very premise was built on civic education, students and young adults are less knowledgeable and informed about civic responsibilities than ever before. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is given every four years to students in eighth grade. When the National Center for Education Statistics released the results from the 2018 assessment, they showed only twenty-four percent of eighth grade students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018) "demonstrated solid academic performance and competency in civics and government" (Hansen et al., 2020, para. 2). In fact, achievement levels had remained stagnant since 1998 when the country began assessing civic performance (Shapiro & Brown, 2018). However, the scores from the 2022 administration of the NAEP indicated the first ever decline in the percentage of students demonstrating competency (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). Digging deeper into the scores from the 2022 assessment, most student groups had similar results from the 2018 assessment, including all racial and ethnic

groups and in all regions of the country. However, scores were lower and statistically significant for students in public schools when compared to previous years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). This evidence correlates to a decreased instructional focus on social studies in America's public school system.

In addition to the NAEP, a survey released by the Annenberg Public Policy Center found that only 26 percent of American adults surveyed could name the three different branches of the United States government (Shapiro & Brown, 2018). This same 2016 survey showed that civic engagement, specifically "individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern" (Carpini, 2009, para. 2), is at an all-time low. The overall trust in government by the public is at only 18 percent and "voter participation has reached its lowest point since 1996" (Shapiro & Brown, 2018, p. 1). During the 2016 presidential election only 56.8 percent of registered voters showed up to cast their ballots, meaning close to 100 million Americans opted not to vote (Rebell, 2018). The group least likely to cast a ballot are the youngest voters, aged 18 to 24. Voting rates for this age group "have dropped from 50.9% in 1964 to 38.0% in 2012" (Rebell, 2018, p. 20). According to the United States Census Bureau (2021), voter turnout was at an all-time high for the 2020 presidential election; 66.8% of registered voters cast a ballot. However, even with the record number of voters heading to the polls, "the percentage was lowest among those ages 18 to 24 at 51.4%" (US Census Bureau, 2021, para. 2) of voters in the age range casting a ballot.

It is not surprising that civic discourse and participation has reached a critically low level considering the declines in civic knowledge; however, it is not yet hopeless to make a change if swift and efficient steps are taken. In addition to navigating the challenges that modern technology and fake news pose, educators are also facing obstacles figuring out what exactly the

swift and efficient steps should be to swing the pendulum of knowledge and action in the other direction. Research on programs or curriculum that supports both civic knowledge and engagement is almost non-existent. Without research-backed methods to implement in the classroom, teachers are left floundering as they try to teach civics standards and increase engagement and future participation.

Standards and State Requirements

Civics standards are built into all grade levels beginning with kindergarten through twelfth grade through the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). However, the question of what states should require in terms of civic education is controversial at best. This is, in large part, because there isn't one agreed upon definition that outlines the actions and ideologies of a good citizen. All fifty states and the District of Columbia have individual state standards for social studies (Godsay et al., 2012). However, social studies is a much broader topic that encompasses history, geography, civics, and economics. When you dig further into the data on civics specifically, only eight states and the District of Columbia require students to complete a year of United States government or civics to graduate from high school, while thirty states require one semester (Jeffrey & Sargrad, 2019). During the 2012-2013 academic year only nine states required students to obtain a passing score on a civics exam to earn a high school diploma. Georgia was among these nine states, however plans to phase out the exam had already begun and was no longer required by the 2013-2014 academic year (Godsay et al., 2012). As of 2019 twenty states required a civics exam for graduation, Georgia was not one of them (Jeffrey & Sargrad, 2019). There are eleven states that have no civics course requirements for high school graduation (Jeffrey & Sargrad, 2019).

Despite this alarming data, however, one state's success in promoting youth civic engagement stands out. In Maryland, each grade from pre-kindergarten through grade twelve has specific civic standards that need to be met. It is among the eight states that require a full year of civics and government to receive a high school diploma. In addition, Maryland is the only state that requires students to complete community service as part of their graduation requirements (Jeffrey & Sargrad, 2019). Looking at how this translates to test scores and later civic engagement, there is a clear indicator. The average score on the Advanced Placement United States Government exam taken by Maryland students is a three, placing it among the top fifth of states in the country with regards to AP exams (Jeffrey & Sargrad, 2019). "Maryland's strategy to incorporate active civic engagement through service-learning shows that civic education should turn into civic action" (Jeffrey & Sargrad, 2019, p. 7).

Strategies for Enhancing Civic Education

There have been many calls for improved civics instruction and increased student engagement with political and civic life. Blevins et al. (2021) states civic education "will likely shape the way they (young people) engage in both community and political processes" (2021, p. 147). Jagers et al. (2017) believe positive experiences in civic education could promote youths' abilities to contribute to their communities and civic life when they get older. Šerek et al. (2017) even point to the psychological aspects that political participation can have on young people. During adolescence, political attitudes and beliefs are still being formed, therefore "young people's positive attitudes toward political behavior and their political efficacy beliefs positively predict their political participation" (Šerek et al., 2017, p. 347). These positive attitudes and feelings of efficacy towards political involvement can only be shaped through civic education and helping students understand the need for engagement in civic life. Šerek et al. (2017) point to

the practice of performing civic behaviors to change beliefs and attitudes about the behavior. If young people participate in civic and political life, it makes sense that their interest in and self-efficacy for these activities would also increase.

As a nation, our educational system is failing our students in civics and government. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) suggests a list of seven activities for students to participate in to gain civic knowledge. Of these seven activities most students reported that they never or rarely engaged with five of them, including participation in field trips, mock trials, political debates, community involvement, and class presentations (Hansen et al., 2020). Instead, we teach students the work that others do when they "do civics and politics" (Levinson & Solomon, 2021, p. 17), but we don't give them the opportunity to learn how they can participate and get involved. Students need opportunities to practice the skills involved in civic engagement because, as the NAEP report shows, there are consequences involved with the lack of participation and engagement (Hansen et al., 2020). "Civic behavior is multifaceted and includes actions as diverse as voting, volunteering, activism, and environmental conservation...youth gravitate towards different civic actions based on background, contexts, interests, and opportunities" (Wray-Lake et al., 2017, pp. 266-267). Mihailidis (2020) even points to the shifting landscape of politics within the digital online community. He argues that digital communication forums have the potential to engage young people and give them an outlet to use memes and hashtags to participate in political and civic life if they have the appropriate instruction to do so.

Blevins et al. (2018) suggest providing young people with opportunities to complete work that is meaningful to them as a best practice for getting them involved and engaged in civic life. Levinson and Solomon (2021) recommend incorporating various civic activities and

educational opportunities into every grade from kindergarten through twelfth grade. However, it isn't enough to learn about civic engagement, students need to participate and take informed action on topics that are of interest to them to gain the key skills and dispositions required to participate in civic life when they are older (Levinson & Solomon, 2021). "There is more required for full and democratically focused civic engagement than knowledge" (Lee, 2021, p. 95). Blevins et al. (2021) suggest that schools become open spaces for members of the community to discuss and present issues of concern with students. Then, once they understand the issues within the community, students need to be given the opportunity to act on those issues and work with members of the community to solve the problems that are present. "These types of civic education experiences hold the potential to renew social connectedness and revitalize communities in ways that are meaningful to students now but also in the future" (Blevins et al., 2021, p. 157). Levinson and Solomon (2021) believe we need to give students opportunities to acquire knowledge and develop analytical skills for evaluating their choices and setting short- and long-term goals. However, they also argue that young people need to be comfortable acting within the public sphere and must possess the moral character to listen to others in a respectful manner and compromise when necessary. "Schools should be one of the main places where such cognitive, emotional, and moral learning takes place" (Levinson & Solomon, 2021, p. 20).

Our founding fathers knew civic learning and engagement were important to our nation's continuity. To keep the nation together, citizens must be committed to the core civic values required within a democracy. A line often attributed to Benjamin Franklin when he was leaving the Constitutional Convention in 1787 sums up the need for continued civics education nicely. He was asked about the type of government that was created. He quipped, "A republic, if you can keep it" (Lee, 2021 p. 98; & Levinson & Solomon, 2021, p. 21). Franklin realized that

having a government that could both support and manage the myriad of differences of its citizens would be a tall order. Later in 1787 he said, “When you assemble a number of men to have the advantage of their joint wisdom, you inevitably assemble with those men, all their prejudices, their passions, their errors of opinion, their local interests, and their selfish views” (Lee, 2021, p. 98). In 1906, as she was writing *Friends of Voltaire*, Evelyn Beatrice Hall summed up the idea nicely when she stated, “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it” (Tallentyre, 1906, p. 199). These words fit with the idea of civic education and the way educators should approach ideas with their students in the classroom.

Research Gap

The research on the need for civics instruction and increasing student engagement with political and civic life is clear. From our founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin to pragmatic philosophers such as John Dewey, and present-day researchers, the problem has been clearly outlined. However, there is a significant gap in the literature on the best strategies to use when implementing a program within the schools to encourage student engagement. I believe that the problematic situation is clearly outlined within the current literature. So, as a pragmatist, my job is to gather relevant facts and imagine possible solutions. “Dewey viewed the classroom as a place where people discovered and constructed knowledge together… (therefore) if democracy was to have any meaning… then it should occur as part of the educational process itself” (Hopkins, 2018, pp. 434-435).

National and state test scores show one of the most difficult concepts for students to learn is the federal and state government standards. Students nationwide have consistently scored below proficient levels in civics and government. If the work of Dewey and Kolb is considered, there is reason to believe simulations, like mock legislative assemblies, could make a difference.

Simulations have the ability to engage and motivate students by getting them involved in the learning process. Students are forced to use critical thinking and problem-solving skills as they work through the simulation process. In addition, students must learn to collaborate with their peers and communicate effectively for the simulation to be successful. All these skills are part of the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for social studies (Figure 2). Simulations give students the opportunity to practice skills they will need to utilize for active participation in civic life beyond high school.

Figure 2

NCSS C3 Framework Organization (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013)

<table>
<tr><th>DIMENSION 1: DEVELOPING QUESTIONS AND PLANNING INQUIRIES</th><th>DIMENSION 2: APPLYING DISCIPLINARY TOOLS AND CONCEPTS</th><th>DIMENSION 3: EVALUATING SOURCES AND USING EVIDENCE</th><th>DIMENSION 4: COMMUNICATING CONCLUSIONS AND TAKING INFORMED ACTION</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries</td><td>Civics</td><td rowspan="2">Gathering and Evaluating Sources</td><td rowspan="2">Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions</td></tr>
<tr><td>Economics</td></tr>
<tr><td>Geography</td><td rowspan="2">Developing Claims and Using Evidence</td><td rowspan="2">Taking Informed Action</td></tr>
<tr><td>History</td></tr>
</table>

The C3 Framework has four dimensions that are all evident in a mock legislative simulation. The first dimension, developing questions and planning inquiries starts from the moment students enter the classroom. In a legislative assembly, students need to first identify problems in their local communities and states. They will ask what problems are present or what needs can be addressed. Then they will research various ways to meet these needs or solve these problems. During this first dimension, students are interacting with society the way Dewey suggests and working through the process as Kolb would suggest.

The second dimension, applying disciplinary tools and concepts, means students will need to learn how the civic process of government works to apply the steps to the real-world problems they have discovered. In the simulation, students will write legislation to address the community needs they have discovered. They will research, draft, and present their bill to a student committee of their peers to revise, improve, and defend their solution. This is a very valuable part of the learning process. Students are learning civic discourse, the need to utilize evidence to support their opinion, communication, collaboration, and also how to find and evaluate reliable information sources to support their solution.

Dimension three of the C3 Framework states that students will evaluate sources and use evidence. Through the writing of legislation, students will be forced to gather sources to support a claim that they are making about a need or problem in the community. As they search for evidence, students will need to actively apply media literacy skills to evaluate their research sources. The ability to evaluate sources of information for bias and false information is critical to being an informed citizen in today's society. During a mock legislative assembly, the teacher can support students as they navigate authentic research; helping them weed out sources that are less trustworthy and provide false information. This type of research will actively engage students in learning how to interact with real-world information relevant to their lives.

The final dimension of the C3 Framework brings the entire mock legislative process to its conclusion. In this element, students are asked to communicate conclusions and take informed action. After researching, writing, and debating the issues in small groups, students will present their legislation to a larger mock assembly that is made up of their peers beyond just that of their own classroom. They will communicate their findings to a group of about one hundred other mock legislators and defend the reasons their bill should become a law.

Not only are students learning about how the legislative branch of government works by being actively involved in the process, they are also gaining skills that will carry over into all aspects of civic life. Through mock assembly simulations students will practice civil discourse, research, problem solving, communication, perseverance, and collaboration with others. These skills can all be applied to take informed action in the real-world and have the potential to increase positive civic engagement outside of the classroom and into adulthood.

Simulations have many proven advantages within the classroom and in education in general. Participants are given an experience that is similar to an experience they may encounter in the real world. In addition, they offer opportunities for students to solve challenging and thought-provoking problems in a safe environment rather than just read or watch as others solve problems (Cruickshank & Telfer, 1980). They are engaging, fun, and provide a greater opportunity to transfer skills to real life situations after having practiced skills in a controlled environment (Cruickshank & Telfer, 1980).

However, simulations also pose challenges to classroom educators, which is why they are not often used. They are time-consuming and complicated to implement. They require careful planning and preparation. Educators are not trained in how to use simulations and many lack the time and resources to pull off a successful simulation Cruickshank & Telfer, 1980). This study seeks to prove that simulations can be worth the time, effort, and resources used when done effectively.

Unfortunately, there has been minimal research completed using simulations of this nature in the classroom. Several studies have been completed on the use of Problem Based Learning (PBL) to increase student engagement in all areas of the curriculum that does prove useful in this study. Lo (2017), Bernstein (2007), and Kahne et al. (2006) released studies on

utilizing PBL in the civics classroom specifically. Lo's study (2017) followed two minority students during their senior year of high school in an advanced placement U.S. Government and Politics course. The PBL was specifically focused on the founding of the Constitution and the Supreme Court. It was a small-scale study, but it "is a promising example of how a traditional government course can engage students who felt marginalized at the beginning of the course" (Lo, 2017, p. 211). Bernstein's study (2007) utilized a college level political science course and examined the racial and gender gaps of civic competence after PBL related to "affirmative action, eminent domain, school prayer, and the war on terrorism" (Bernstein, 2007, p. 92). Bernstein concluded that the PBL approach utilized in the study was "successful in helping most students gain confidence in their civic skills" (Bernstein, 2007, p. 94). Finally, Kahne et al. (2006) analyzed a specific curriculum, "City Works (U.S.A.), with high school seniors to examine the impact the curriculum had on "civic commitments, social trust, and knowledge of social networks" (Kahne et al., 2006, p. 393). This quasi-experimental study indicated that strategies like service-learning projects and simulations help students view civic commitments in a positive manner and boost confidence in civic knowledge (Kahne et al., 2006).

There have also been a fair number of research articles published about how to utilize mock trials in the classroom. Ahmadov (2011), Miller and Seidler (2019), Glancy (2016), and Beck (1999) published research about the best and most efficient ways educators can structure mock trials to support student learning. They offered tips on how to time the trials, how to select the cases, and even how to assess student learning. However, they did not conduct studies on the effectiveness of their methods. Smagorinsky (1994) and MacKay (2000) used a high school English class and a college social sciences research class, respectively, to highlight the benefits and drawback of using mock trials to develop civic awareness, and "encourage students to

engage in meaningful research and critical analysis and to foster a sense of student camaraderie" (MacKay, 2000, p. 1). Both case studies offered a perspective that the trials produced spirited discussion and a unique opportunity for students to get actively involved. The drawbacks cited by both were the extensive time commitment required to adequately conduct mock trials and the number of resources needed to make the trials feel authentic (MacKay, 2000; Smagorinsky, 1994).

In a similar search for research and studies on the use of mock legislative assemblies, two articles were found on how to go about hosting simulations in the classroom. McAndrews (1991) and Arnold (1998) both wrote about hosting simulations in the college classroom. McAndrews (1991) specifically wrote about how he implemented simulations in his "History of Latin America Course" (p. 40). Arnold (1998) outlined a set of "six goals for my as-yet-undesigned simulations" (p. 196). Neither author indicated the effectiveness of these simulations.

The only research studies available on the use of mock legislative assemblies did not take place at the secondary level within the classroom but provided promising results for the use of such a pedagogy within the public-school setting. The first study by Bernstein and Meizlish (2003) was conducted during the fall of 1998 and the winter of 1999 in a university level American Government course. The authors concluded that students who had participated in the simulation had a greater understanding of government concepts than those who did not participate; however, they found no difference in the level of political participation the students displayed outside of the course (Bernstein & Meizlish, 2003). The only other study available shows promise for the suggested research. It was a four-year longitudinal study conducted with students from fifth grade through ninth grade at a summer civics camp, iEngage. The researchers (Blevins et al., 2021) found that after participation in a five-day summer civics program in which

students participated in Action Civics projects, they demonstrated gains in their community engagement and political action. While this study is the same age group as the proposed research study and follows a similar model of Action Research, it does not take place in a classroom setting. Participants were students who chose to enroll in a summer civics program. This indicates they are more interested in community and political engagement than your average adolescent.

The proposed study seeks to replicate an action civics model through a mock legislative assembly in the general education classroom with a large group of students who don't necessarily have a specific interest in civics and government. The researcher hopes to determine if there are statistically significant differences in knowledge and/or attitudes towards civic engagement, as measured by beliefs and values, utilizing simulations versus traditional instructional methods, such as textbooks and lectures. This study could help future practitioners as they work to create curriculum and lessons to boost students' government and civic knowledge and create future citizens with a tendency to get involved in their communities.

Research Questions

1. How, if at all, does eighth grade students' civic knowledge change as a result of participation in a legislative simulation?
2. How, if at all, do eighth grade students' attitudes, as measured by their beliefs and values, towards civic engagement change as the result of participation in a legislative simulation?

Chapter Three: Methodology

To answer the questions guiding this study, the researcher conducted a quasi-experimental mixed-method study with a two-week intervention designed to engage students in a real-world simulation of the actions and functions of state government. Before and after the intervention was applied, pre- and post-intervention data was collected. The data details students' civic knowledge and their attitudes towards civic engagement in terms of their beliefs and values regarding civic participation.

This study was inspired by the iEngage summer civics camp out of Baylor University. This camp demonstrated a positive increase in students' attitudes about civic engagement as evidenced by their civic beliefs and values. The iEngage study utilized a variety of instruments including focus groups, student reflection journals, semi-structured interviews, and pre- and post-surveys (Bauml et al., 2022; Blevins et al., 2018; Blevins et al., 2014; Blevins et al., 2016; LeCompte & Blevins, 2015; & LeCompte et al., 2020), "drawn from the CIRCLE survey on civic knowledge and engagement" (Blevins et al., 2016, p. 355). The iEngage study was conducted at a summer camp for students who were excited about civic learning and engagement. In contrast, this study was conducted in a public school with eighth-grade students who have varying interests in civics and government.

Research Design

To determine if there is a change in students' attitudes towards civic engagement, as measured by civic beliefs and values, through participation and active involvement in civil discourse and a legislative assembly simulation, the researcher conducted a mixed-method research study using a quasi-experimental design. The quasi-experimental research seeks to evaluate different interventions and "aim to demonstrate causality between an intervention and

an outcome" (Harris et al., 2006, p. 17). Due to the nature of the school's organizational structure, a random sampling was not possible. Therefore, participants were selected utilizing a convenience sampling of classes put together by the school's scheduling department at the beginning of the 2022/2023 academic year (Creswell, 2014). The school organizes the classrooms into heterogeneous groups that receive instruction on the same subject at the same time each day. The study examined the effectiveness of instructional methods within a public-school classroom setting. The study's format mirrored the daily activities taking place in schools across the nation. Unlike the iEngage study, discussed in the literature review, which selected participants who signed up to attend a summer camp on civics (Blevins et al., 2021); students in this study may or may not have an explicit interest in learning about civics and government.

When civic and government standards are taught at the school presented in the study, students traditionally learn through a series of teacher guided lectures and discussions that involve the use of non-fiction texts, the textbook, and teacher created slide presentations to accompany a lecture. Students are taught the structure of government and how others participate in the democratic nature of our society. There is no training or professional development currently offered to teachers within the district on experiential learning. Therefore, the introduction of a legislative assembly simulation was a new initiative and experimental within the setting.

Research Questions

The types of civic and political activities and lessons students encounter during their adolescent years will likely influence the manner in which they engage in civic life as adults (Kahne et al., 2006; & Lo, 2017). Young people need practice interacting with complex issues, engaging in civil discourse, and participating in government and their communities to envision

themselves as active and engaged citizens as adults (Blevins et al., 2021). Therefore, this research study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How, if at all, does eighth grade students' civic knowledge change as a result of participation in a legislative simulation?
2. How, if at all, do eighth grade students' attitudes, as measured by their beliefs and values, towards civic engagement, change as the result of participation in a legislative simulation?

Participant Sample

The study utilized a sample of 67 eighth grade students who attended a public middle school in a small suburban city in the southeast region of the United States. The school reported an enrollment of 919 students in grades six through eight in the spring of 2023. Of these students, 301 were eighth grade students (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2024). Demographically, the school reported a population that was 69% White, 11% Hispanic, 10% African American, 4% Asian, and 6% Multiracial. 49% of the school's population was reported as female and 51% reported as male. In addition, they reported that 10% of their population received free and/or reduced lunch. The school was rated sixth among the state's 540 middle schools. While academic abilities were varied, the school had a higher-than-average population of gifted and/or high achieving students as evidenced by prior test scores published by the state. The Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) reported the Gifted population was 33.3% of the overall population. English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) made up 1.4% and Special Education made up 10.1% of the population (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2024).

The researcher taught four sections of eighth grade social studies. Two sections were used for a control group that received traditional civics and government instruction. The other two sections were used as the experimental group. These students received instruction on the civics and government standards through a state legislative assembly simulation.

Data Collection

Since the purpose of this research study was to determine how students' civic knowledge and attitudes towards engagement, as measured by civic beliefs and values, changed, if at all, following a legislative assembly simulation, the researcher collected data from pre- and post-assessments and surveys from the participants of both a control group and an experimental group. Students completed the same assessment and survey before and after the conclusion of traditional instruction or the legislative assembly simulation. In addition, work samples throughout the unit were collected and analyzed along with an open-ended survey to collect anecdotal information after the process was complete.

Instruments

To measure the impact of the legislative assembly simulation, this study utilized two adopted instruments for pre- and post- analysis in the control group and in the experimental group. The first was an assessment of civic knowledge. The second was a survey to determine civic beliefs and values.

Additionally, participants in both groups participated in a researcher-created open-ended survey immediately following the unit of study to share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions about the activities they completed and the things they learned. This was followed up approximately seven months after completion of the unit with an additional email survey adapted

from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) originally published in 2003 (Carnegie Corporation of New York, & CIRCLE, 2003). This follow-up survey was collected to see if there was any difference in the beliefs and values of students in the two groups after a length of time had passed since the unit was completed.

Assessment for Civic Knowledge

Before any part of the unit was introduced, all students completed a pretest of civic knowledge of state government (Appendix A). The twenty-five-question multiple choice assessment was based on the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) for eighth grade in civics and government. This standard states, students will,

> *SS8CG2 Analyze the role of the legislative branch in Georgia*
>
> a. *Explain the qualifications for members of the General Assembly and its role as the law-making body of Georgia.*
> b. *Describe the purpose of the committee system within the Georgia General Assembly.*
> c. *Explain the process for making a law in Georgia.*
> d. *Describe how state government is funded and how spending decisions are made* (Grade 8 - Social Studies Georgia Standards of Excellence, 2016).

These test questions were adapted from Bednar (2019) and are similar to questions asked by the state of Georgia on previously released state Milestones Assessments (GA DOE, 2020) and District and School Connect (DSC) created by Lennections (Casteel & Herron, 2023) which is used by the state to create benchmark and interim assessments for schools to measure students' progress on obtaining the knowledge of the state standards. This twenty-five-question multiple assessment has been used by the participating school to assess students' knowledge on the state

required standards for the past four years. It is utilized by all eighth-grade teachers in the school and has been found to accurately reflect students' knowledge and understanding of the state legislative branch.

Civic Engagement Survey

Participants also completed the survey of Civic Engagement Amongst Middle School Adolescents (Appendix B) adapted from Syvertsen et al. (2015). This survey asked students a series of questions using a six-point Likert-type scale to measure their attitudes towards civic participation based on their civic beliefs and values. Wray-Lake and Shubert (2019) define civic engagement as "a multidimensional concept comprising behaviors, values, attitudes, and knowledge" (p. 2169). Therefore, the survey measured attitudes towards civic engagement as a reflection of students' values and beliefs. This survey has been used in multiple studies by the original authors (Metzger et al., 2018; Wray-Lake & Abrams, 2020; Wray-Lake & Shubert, 2019; Wray-Lake et al., 2019; Wray-Lake et al., 2017; & Wray-Lake et al., 2015).

The measure was created using a five-step process to ensure it was a "psychometrically sound and developmentally appropriate measure of civic engagement and character strengths for elementary-, middle school, and high school-aged youth" (Syvertsen et al., 2015, p. 5). The internal reliability was measured utilizing a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of zero to one, and a general principle that a reliability score of 0.70 or higher was acceptable (Syvertsen et al., 2015). All individual items adapted from the survey had a Cronbach's alpha between 0.72 and 0.84. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was also utilized by the original authors of the measure to determine validity. The Comparative Factor Index (CFI) was 0.99 with values above 0.90 acceptable and values above 0.95 preferred.

Open-ended Survey

At the conclusion of the study, participants completed a researcher created Civics and Government Open-ended Survey (Appendix C). In this brief questionnaire participants were asked their opinions about civic engagement and how they felt they could get involved in their communities. The control group was then asked their opinion about the class lessons, readings, and lectures in which they participated, while the experimental group was asked to share their opinions on the simulation and what they learned.

This survey's purpose was to provide a richer discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of both pedagogical methods. This survey provided insights from the participants to accompany researcher anecdotal notes to provide more depth to the final discussion of the study.

Civic Engagement Indicators Survey

Seven months after the initial data was collected, the researcher emailed the Survey of Civic Engagement Indicators to participants in the study. This survey was not used in the initial data collection or analysis of the study because participation was limited to fifteen individuals from the original sixty-seven participants. Twelve of these participants were from the experimental group and only three were from the control group. This instrument served to provide a richer element to the discussion of the results rather than a statistical analysis of the results and was not coded for qualitative measures.

The survey was adapted from The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement's Civic Engagement Quiz (Carnegie Corporation of New York, & CIRCLE, 2003). This index was utilized in multiple surveys and samples, including a web-based poll, school and youth-oriented groups, and three national surveys between 2000 and 2002 to test the reliability of the items (Andolina et al., 2003). The survey is designed to be used either in

part or in whole. For the purposes of this study, the researcher utilized the parts of the index that measures civic engagement including problem solving, volunteering, group membership, and three of the nine questions on political voice for a total of nine of the original nineteen items (Andolina et al., 2003). The ten questions omitted involved electoral action or political voice that did not apply to the age group of the participants of this study.

In addition to the parts of the civic engagement quiz used, the researcher repeated the twelve-question survey of civic engagement used as a pre/post measure and asked two written open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were designed to garner more information about the types of volunteering and community action young people take and enrich the discussion portion of the study.

Study Procedure

During a two-week period in the spring of 2023, sixty-seven students participated in this study. Participants from two of the four classes (second period and sixth period), made up the control group. Thirty-six of these students received parental permission and personally agreed to participate in the data collection for the study. These students received traditional instruction on the GSE for the state legislative branch during their assigned class time. Before any instruction, students completed the *Survey of Civic Engagement Amongst Middle School Adolescents* (Appendix B) and the *Civics and Government Assessment* (Appendix A). Students read about the legislative branch of government in the county issued textbook, *The Georgia Journey* (Wood et al., 2018, pp. 148-153). The instructor provided direct instruction with the aid of slide presentations while students completed graphic organizers and notes on the topic in an interactive student notebook. The teacher led students' discussions by asking questions and encouraging participation. The unit consisted of lectures, readings on state government, and short

video clips of the legislative process and the steps a bill goes through to become a law. At the end of the unit, participants completed a post assessment and survey to determine if their attitudes toward civic engagement had changed and if they had learned more about civics and government. Results of the post-assessment and post-survey were compared with the results of the pre-assessment and pre-survey.

Intervention

Participants from the other two class periods (first period and fifth period) made up the experimental group. Thirty-one students from this group received parental permission and personally agreed to participate in data collection for the study. They participated in a state legislative assembly simulation with the same teacher who taught the control group. Students learned about the GSE in civics and government utilizing an action civics model. Prior to participation, students completed the *Survey of Civic Engagement Amongst Middle School Adolescents* (Appendix B) and the *Civics and Government Assessment* (Appendix A). During this unit of study students used an action civics model, which consisted of research, action, and reflection to solve a perceived problem within the community (Blevins et al., 2021). Students researched areas of concern and need within their state and local communities. Then, they wrote bills to share and discuss in committees. As part of the process's action steps, students served on mock legislative committees and participated in floor debates. They lobbied to pass their legislation and voted on representatives for Congress and bills to move through the legislative branch to the executive branch. At the end of the mock assembly students reflected on the process and what they learned through participation in the legislative process. Once the experiment was complete, students took the post-assessment of civic knowledge and the survey

of civic engagement with a 6-point Likert-type scale. In addition, students completed the open-ended survey of civic engagement to share their personal thoughts and opinions on the process.

The intervention was administered in the classroom setting during the course of a regular school day. Students participated in ten intervention sessions over a two-week period. The regular class schedule allowed for seventy minutes of instructional time per day. Therefore, students received approximately 700 minutes (or between eleven and twelve hours) of the intervention. The control group spent the same amount of time participating in traditional instructional practices surrounding the standards covering the Legislative branch of state government.

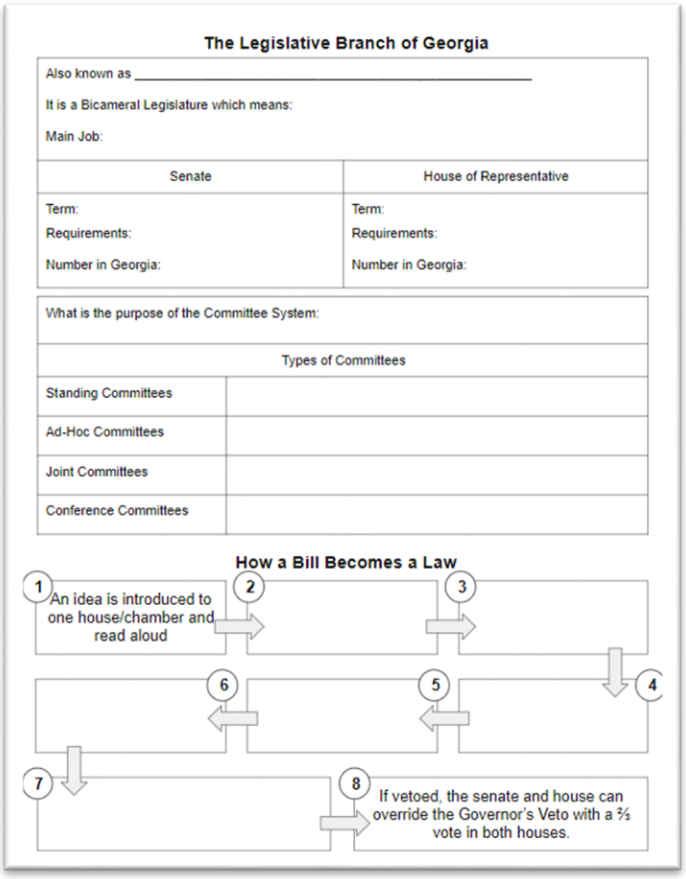
During the first intervention session, students were introduced to the legislative branch of the state government. Instruction was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the purposes for and functions of the state legislative branch?
2. How does the legislative branch meet these functions?

To answer these questions, participants worked in groups of two or three to research the legislative branch of their state and completed a graphic organizer (Figure 3). This activity gave the participants some background knowledge to understand their roles in the legislative assembly simulation. Participants utilized the official website for their state's government, the public broadcasting resources for their state, the state encyclopedia, and the county issued textbook for the class (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3

The Legislative Branch of Georgia Graphic Organizer (created by Researcher)



The Legislative Branch of Georgia

Also known as _____

It is a Bicameral Legislature which means:

Main Job:

Senate	House of Representative
Term: Requirements: Number in Georgia:	Term: Requirements: Number in Georgia:

What is the purpose of the Committee System:

Types of Committees	
Standing Committees	
Ad-Hoc Committees	
Joint Committees	
Conference Committees	

How a Bill Becomes a Law

1. An idea is introduced to one house/chamber and read aloud
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8. If vetoed, the senate and house can override the Governor's Veto with a ⅔ vote in both houses.

Figure 3.1

Resources for Research (created by Researcher)

The Legislative Branch of Georgia

In order to complete the graphic organizer, please research the Legislative Branch of Georgia's Government using the following resources.

- Georgia.gov - The Official Website of the State of Georgia
- Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB)
  - State Government - The Legislature
  - Legislative Committees - Peach State Politics
- New Georgia Encyclopedia - Government and Laws
- The Georgia Journey Textbook - Chapter 5 Lesson 2 (pp. 148-153)

On day two of the intervention, students looked at examples of students making a difference by writing bills that have passed state legislatures. They read about how students in Georgia wrote a bill to name the Green Tree Frog the official state amphibian (Smith, 2005), and students in New Jersey wrote a bill and lobbied to make cranberry juice the official state juice (Ursillo, 2023). Participants of the intervention read the acts as they were published in Georgia and New Jersey to discover the aspects required to write an effective bill (Murphy, 2022). Finally, participants worked as a group to brainstorm a list of things required to write a good bill versus a bad bill. The researcher facilitated the discussion and guided participants to a minimum of a rationale for the bill and a statement of purpose for the bill.

On days three, four, and five of the intervention, participants brainstormed areas of need in their local community and state. Each participant selected a topic of interest and began to draft a bill to fix a problem or create a program that was needed in the state. During these three intervention sessions, participants focused on researching ideas of interest, including existing laws on the topic and why their interest was an area of need for the state or community. Utilizing their research and at least three sources of information, students wrote a draft of a bill that had a rationale and statement of purpose.

On day six of the intervention, participants learned about the work members of congress do while working in committees. They started by learning Robert's Rules of Order, the widely used parliamentary procedure of governments, committees, non-profit groups, parent/teacher associations, and more (Haun & Weisgal, 2017). Utilizing the act designating cranberry juice as New Jersey's state beverage (Murphy, 2022), participants practiced reading, discussing, and amending the bill while practicing how to implement Robert's Rules of Order.

During intervention days seven, eight and nine, students worked in simulated committees to read, discuss, amend, and pass motions on their peers' proposed legislation. Prior to committee day, the teacher/researcher classified the student written bills based on the committee they most closely aligned with. To simplify the process and allow a fair number of bills to be presented, the simulation utilized three standing committees. Committee one dealt with bills related to labor, transportation, and healthcare. Committee two debated bills regarding or loosely related to education, while committee three discussed bills directly or loosely related to the environment or energy. Each participant was randomly assigned to a committee to complete the work of state legislatures. On day seven, before beginning committee work, participants nominated and elected a representative from the students to act as Lieutenant Governor on day ten of the simulation. Once in assigned committees, prior to discussion of the bills, each committee selected a chair to lead the discussion and facilitate the group's work.

On the tenth and final intervention session all participants from both intervention class sessions came together in the school auditorium to hold a floor debate of any legislation that passed in committee. The author of each bill came to the stage and read their proposed bill aloud at a podium. The student elected Lieutenant Governor presided over the floor debate. At the end of the debate for each bill students voted to either pass or not pass the bill.

Due to staffing and time constraints placed on the researcher from the cooperating county, the simulation only moved through one chamber of Congress, the Senate. After the Senate floor debate simulation, the class discussed and brainstormed the next steps for the bill as if the Senate was the first chamber it passed and still needed to go to the House of Representatives. They also brainstormed and discussed the next steps assuming the bill passed

both the House and the Senate. At the conclusion of the ten intervention sessions students completed the post-assessment, post-survey, and open-ended survey.

Table 1

Legislative Assembly Simulation Plan

WEEK	DAY	Event/Activity
Prior to Intervention		Participants will complete the pre-survey of civic engagement amongst middle school adolescents and the pre-assessment of civics and government (Appendices A & B).
1	1	Participants will be introduced to the legislative branch of state government by completing a graphic organizer while searching pre-assigned sources (Appendix G)
	2	Participants will read acts that were originally bills written by students that moved through state legislatures to become laws; naming the green tree frog state amphibian of Georgia (Appendix H) and naming cranberry juice the state beverage of New Jersey (Appendix I) Students will also explore examples of bills. They will brainstorm a list of what a proper bill must contain and also what certain bills lack.
	3 - 5	Participants will spend three days conducting research and drafting a bill that solves a problem or addresses a need in their state or community. At minimum they will need a rationale and a description of the bill. Participants will utilize no less than three reliable sources of information.
2	6	Participants will get an overview of Robert's Rules of Order so they can utilize Parliamentary Procedure in the group work moving forward. They will practice the procedures of Robert's Rules of Order by utilizing the act that made cranberry juice the official state beverage of New Jersey (Appendix I)
	7	At the beginning of intervention day seven, participants will vote for and elect a Lieutenant Governor who will preside over the floor debate on intervention day ten. Participants will be assigned to committees and will work to select a committee chair that will facilitate the committee meeting. Reading, reviewing, discussing, and amending proposed legislation will begin.

	8 - 9	Participants will work with their assigned committees to read, review, discuss, and possibly amend the proposed bills they have been assigned. After each bill has been thoroughly vetted, the committee will vote to kill the bill, pass the bill as is, or pass the bill with amendments. Any bill that successfully passes committee will move on to the mock floor debate that will take place on intervention day ten. At the conclusion of day nine, committee chairs will report back to the researcher the decisions made on each piece of proposed legislation.
	10	Participants will participate in a mock floor debate of the state Senate, headed by the student Lieutenant Governor elected by the participants on day seven. The author of the bill will read the proposed legislation aloud and a floor debate will follow. During the debate participants will use Robert's Rules of Order to follow Parliamentary procedure. Once the debate has ended participants will vote to pass or not pass the bill. At the debate's end, participants will discuss the next steps for the bill. We will assume some need to pass to the House of Representatives and others will go onto the Governor to veto, sign, or do nothing.
After Intervention is Complete		Students will complete the post-survey of civic engagement amongst middle school adolescents and the post-assessment of civics and government (Appendices A & B). They will also complete the Open-ended Survey of Civic Engagement (Appendix C). Seven months after the intervention is complete, the researcher will follow up with the participants with the Survey of Civic Engagement Indicators (Appendix D).

Quantitative Data Analysis

This study utilized IBM SPSS Statistics Premium 29.0 software for analysis of the quantitative data. It was determined that the control and experimental groups were statistically equivalent by collecting and analyzing the pre-intervention data. All nominal, ordinal and continuous data points were entered into the SPSS software for thirty-two participants in the control group and thirty participants in the experimental group. Equivalency between the two independent groups was determined for civic knowledge, and civic beliefs and values utilizing independent sample t-tests.

Data was collected from thirty-six participants in the control group and thirty-one participants in the experimental group. However, four subjects, three female participants and one male participant, were removed from the control group due to academic exceptionalities. These four participants were labeled tier three in the multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS). These four participants were excluded from the final control sample because they were receiving specialized instruction and interventions on the path to special education services. To create balanced and statistically equal samples these four participants' data was removed from the study. There were no tier three students in the experimental group and therefore their data could potentially skew results and create an unbalanced sample set.

Additionally, the experimental group contained one outlier, a male gifted participant, that significantly skewed the means of the experiment. This one outlier was removed from the experimental group. Both the control and the experimental group have other participants labeled as gifted with a relative balance in the number per group.

First, the mean and standard deviation of the pre-assessment were determined to meet equivalency utilizing an independent samples t-test. The mean of the control group (8.84) and the mean of the experimental group (9.70) were not statistically significant, ($t(60) = 1.36$, $p > 0.05$ two sided), indicating the groups meet equivalency in civic knowledge prior to the intervention.

Next, the mean and standard deviation of the survey of civic beliefs and values were analyzed to determine equivalency. Looking at the data, the mean of the control group (55.78) and the experimental group (57.5) were not statistically significant. $t(60) = 0.72$, $p > 0.05$.

To answer research question one (How, if at all, does eighth grade students' civic knowledge change as a result of participation in a legislative simulation?), t-tests were performed to compare mean scores from the Civics and Government Assessment (Appendix A). The

dependent variable was the scores on the assessment, while the independent variable was the experimental group's participation in a mock legislative assembly.

To answer research question two (How, if at all, does eighth grade students' attitudes towards civic engagement change as the result of participation in a legislative simulation?), t-tests were performed to compare the mean overall scores on the Survey of Civic Engagement (Appendix B). Looking at survey data from the pre-intervention administration the dependent variable was the total score on the twelve survey questions. The independent variable was the experimental group's participation in the mock legislative assembly.

Table 2

Quantitative Research Alignment

Q1: How, if at all, does eighth grade students' civic knowledge change as a result of participation in a legislative simulation versus traditional instruction?					
Research Question	Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	Collection Method	Data Type	Analysis
1.1 Does civic knowledge change after participation in traditional civic instruction? 1.2 Does civic knowledge change after participation in a mock legislative assembly? 1.3 Is there a difference in change of civic knowledge after traditional	IV 1: Traditional Instruction IV 2: Simulation based Instruction	1.1 Control DV 1 Raw test score at each test point DV 2 Pre to post gain/diff 1.2 Experiment DV 3 Raw test score from each test point DV 4: Pre to post gain/diff 1.3 difference in change from control group compared to difference in change from	40 Question Multiple Choice Assessment of Civics and Government given before participation in instruction and after participation in instructional method Assess # correct out of 25	1.1 Paired sample t-tests of # correct out of 25 on pre-test and # correct out of 25 on posttest for control group (DV1 pre/post) 1.2 Paired sample t-tests of # correct out of 25 on pre-test and # correct out of 25 on posttest for experimental group (DV3 pre/post)	DV1 & DV3: Descriptives - mean/standard deviation DV2 & DV4 Inferential statistics

instruction versus participation in simulation-based instruction?	experimental group	1.3 Paired sample t-test change between traditional group and experimental group (DV2/DV4)	

Q2: How, if at all, does eighth grade students' attitudes towards civic engagement change as the result of participation in a project based legislative simulation?

Research Question	Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	Collection Method	Data Type	Analysis
2.1 Do attitudes towards civic engagement change after participation in traditional instruction? 2.2 Do attitudes towards civic engagement change after participation in a mock legislative assembly? 2.3 Is there a difference in attitude change towards civic engagement after traditional instruction versus participation in simulation-based instruction?	IV 1: Traditional Instruction IV 2: Simulation based Instruction	2.1 Control DV 1 Raw survey score for civic beliefs/values at both survey points DV 2 Pre to post gain/diff beliefs/values 2.2 Experiment DV 3 Raw survey score for civic beliefs/values at both survey points DV 4 Pre to post gain/diff beliefs/values	2.1 12 questions answered on a 6-point Likert-type scale about civic beliefs/values given before participation in instruction and after participation in instructional method Assess raw score out of a possible 72 total score 2.2 12 questions answered on a 6-point Likert-type scale about civic beliefs/values given before participation in instruction and after	2.1 Beliefs/Values paired sample t-tests (DV 1 pre/post survey raw scores out of 72) 2.2 Beliefs/Values paired sample t-tests (DV 2 pre/post survey raw scores out of 72) 2.3 Paired sample t-test change between traditional group and experimental group for beliefs/values raw scores (DV3/DV4)	DV1, DV2, DV5, & DV6 Descriptives - mean/standard deviation DV3 & DV7 Civic Beliefs/Values Inferential Statistics

		participation in instructional method Assess raw score out of a possible 72 total score

At the conclusion of the study, if there is a statistically significant increase in civic knowledge and/or attitudes towards civic engagement, as measured by civic beliefs and values, with the experimental group, participants of the control group will be given the opportunity to participate in the mock assembly simulation. In turn, if there is a statistically significant increase in civic knowledge and/or attitudes towards engagement, as measured by civic beliefs and values, with the control group, the experimental group will participate in the traditional instructional methods at the conclusion of the study

Qualitative Data Analysis

At the end of the intervention sessions for both the control group and the experimental group, participants completed an open-ended survey created by the researcher consisting of five questions. Responses to these five questions were coded by hand and analyzed for structural consistencies and value-based consistencies. The researcher utilized deductive coding based on a priori codes established from the research questions prior to analysis. Deductive coding was selected to look for words or phrases that test the hypothesis. Since the hypothesis was that there would be a change in students' attitudes towards civic engagement as indicated by their beliefs and values, the researcher looked for either a positive change or no change in the data. Deductive coding helped to test the hypothesis utilizing the data. However, as data analysis progressed

some codes were added inductively when the researcher noticed data that didn't fit the original codes (Saldana, 2021).

The first question, "How, if at all, have your feelings changed about civic engagement?", was coded in a value-based way depending on the response of the participant. Initially responses were coded as positive or neutral. The response was coded as positive if the participants indicated that there was a change in their feelings. The response was coded as neutral if the response indicated no change. A third code, unanswered, was added inductively during the initial coding phase to deal with responses that did not answer the question in the way that it was asked.

The second question was coded structurally for what specifically students stated helped them learn. The a priori codes that were established prior to the initial coding phase were mock assembly, simulation, writing bills, taking notes, and reading. As the researcher began coding, committees, voting, review games, and nothing/no were added to the list of codes inductively to represent frequent responses. These were not part of the deductive codes the researcher first developed; however, they were frequent enough in the data that they needed to be considered (Saldana, 2021).

Question three was coded structurally for "how" responses. The question asked participants how they could get involved in their communities. The codes that were created deductively were volunteering and joining clubs or groups. As coding began, the codes donate, spread information, vote, and nothing were added as codes to help represent the data (Saldana, 2021).

For question four, codes were value based like question one, rather than structurally developed like questions two, three, and five. The question, "How, if at all, has your attention to issues in your communities changed?" asked students to share the way the intervention changed

their opinions. The analysis of the responses was based on the codes of there being some type of opinion change or no change. The response unanswered was added after initial coding began to adequately code all responses.

The fifth and final question was coded in a value-based manner. There were no codes deductively established. Instead, all codes were established inductively as the initial coding process began. This was, in large part, because the researcher wanted to see which way the data led. Many of the responses referenced understanding, learning, engagement and liking or disliking the activities or assignments. The fifth question was most valuable when utilizing in vivo coding so that the participants' own words are utilized. In addition, since this was the only question that was different for the two groups, most of the responses are better analyzed as direct quotes rather than as codes. The researcher aimed to capture the participants perspectives and eliminate any potential bias by allowing the participants words to speak for themselves (Saldana, 2021).

After all open-ended responses were coded, the data was analyzed using Qualitative Content Analysis to compare the responses of the control group participants to the responses of the experimental group participants in order to determine changes in attitudes towards civic engagement and to more thoroughly answer research question two, How, if at all, does eighth grade students' attitudes towards civic engagement change as the result of participation in a legislative simulation?

Anticipated Results

Effects of Mock Legislative Assembly on Student Civic Knowledge

The post-intervention data collected was subjected to an independent-samples t-test in order to compare the mean scores of the control group and the experimental group on the Civics

and Government Assessment (Appendix A). This was completed to determine differences in the two groups' pre- and post-assessment scores. IBM SPSS software was used to analyze the data. Using an alpha level of 0.05 and a normal distribution level the sample sizes were confirmed to have an equal variance prior to implementation of the intervention.

Hypothesis

H_o: Civics and Government Assessment mean scores for the control group = Civics and Government Assessment mean scores for the experimental group

H_a: Civics and Government Assessment mean scores for the control group ≠ Civics and Government Assessment mean scores for the experimental group

$\alpha = 0.05$

Effects of Mock Legislative Assembly on Student Civic Beliefs and Values

Post intervention data for the experimental group and control group was collected and analyzed to assess the effects of the mock legislative assembly on students' civic beliefs and values. The mean score of the twelve question Survey of Civic Engagement (Appendix B) was tabulated and an independent sample t-test was performed on IBM SPSS software to compare the results for any differences. Prior to the intervention the groups were determined to be of equal variance and the sample sizes fell within the normal range.

Hypothesis

H_o: Mean scores on the survey of civic beliefs and values for the control group = Mean scores on the survey of civic beliefs and values for the experimental group.

H_a: Mean scores on the survey of civic beliefs and values for the control group ≠ Mean scores on the survey of civic beliefs and values for the experimental group.

$\alpha = 0.05$

Limitations

Results of this study may be limited due to the nature of the quasi-experimental design. "The reality of the school environment makes it difficult to employ some features of true experimental design - such as random assignment and matched samples" (Kahne et al., 2006, p. 393). However, by employing a quasi-experimental design, the researcher can get a somewhat random sample of participants. Classes are grouped heterogeneously in terms of academic level and demographics. In addition, to limit the number of variables with the data, the teacher for the control group will be the same teacher running the experimental group.

Further limitations are placed on the study due to the fact that all participants live in the same physiographic region of the United States. The research is being conducted in a mid-sized school district in north Georgia. This study is limited to one grade level of students, eighth grade, from one suburban middle school with a higher-than-average socio-economic background. Less than ten percent of the student population is considered economically disadvantaged as indicated by a free or reduced lunch status. Due to these limitations results may not be generalizable to the broader population including more urban or rural settings. This study could be the basis for further study with different age groups and different socio-economic classes to ascertain if the results can be replicated.

Ethics

As with any study utilizing human subjects, there is always a risk of harm to the participants. To minimize harm, the researcher will present the purpose of the study in writing to all participants. The Research Study Assent Form (Appendix F) will give all student participants the chance to refrain from having their data utilized in the study. Since the participants of this study are minor children, the purpose of the study will also be presented to participants'

parent(s)/guardian(s) and written permission to participate in the study will be obtained from the parent(s)/guardian(s) of all student participants (Appendix E). To minimize harm, the lessons taught are state mandated lessons based on the Georgia Performance Standards for eighth grade. These are lessons and activities students would participate in regardless of participation in the research aspect. If students opt out of participation in the research, they will still participate in the lesson as part of the normal course of instruction in eighth grade. However, their data will not be included in the results presented as part of the study. Additionally, per Georgia law, all participants' legal guardians have the right to opt out of any instruction they deem inappropriate or divisive with the passage of the Divisive Concepts Law (Wade et al., 2022).

All data collected was kept strictly confidential and coded so it could not be tied back to any of the participants involved in the study. Data was kept in a locked cabinet and/or a password-protected digital file throughout the study and was destroyed upon completion.

In addition, the researcher received approval through the IRB board of the University for which the research was being conducted. The researcher also received approval from the IRB board of the school district and administration of the school where the study took place.

Chapter Four: Results

The following chapter will present and discuss the data collected during this study and how it provides information that relates to the two research questions being asked. Initially the data was utilized to determine equivalency between the two groups in the study, control and experimental. Both groups were statistically equivalent in content knowledge and civic beliefs and values before the intervention started. Secondly, the data was used to determine knowledge change and attitude change, as measured by civic beliefs and values, in each group. Finally, the data was analyzed to answer the two research questions in the study.

Confirming Equivalence Before Intervention

Data was collected from both the control group and the experimental group prior to intervention. This data showed that the two groups were equivalent. Establishing equivalency between the control and experimental groups made it possible to make comparisons between the two groups in the analyses of the data after the interventions were implemented.

Pre-Intervention Civic Knowledge

Data collected from the pre-intervention Assessment of Civics and Government (Appendix A) indicated the mean of the control groups (n=32) was 8.84 with a standard deviation of 2.49. The mean of the experimental group (n=30) was 9.70 with a standard deviation of 2.48 (Table 3). The pre-assessment reflected prior knowledge about the legislative branch of state government on a scale of zero, indicating no knowledge, to twenty-five, indicating a high amount of knowledge of the state standard. An independent-sample t-test was run on the data with a 95% confidence interval for the mean difference.

Table 3

Independent Sample T-Test of Mean Comparison for Pre-Intervention Civic Knowledge

Group	N	Mean	SD	T (60)	P	Cohen's d
Control	32	8.84	2.49	1.36	0.18	2.49
Experiment	30	9.70	2.48			

Both groups showed a low level of knowledge regarding the state standard on the legislative branch. However, when compared, the mean scores were shown to not be statistically significant (t (60) = 1.36, p> 0.05, two-sided) (Table 3). The non-statistically significant difference between the control group and the experimental group demonstrates equivalency between both groups' knowledge level prior to intervention.

Pre-Intervention Attitude Towards Civic Engagement

Data collected and analyzed from the pre-intervention Survey of Civic Engagement (Appendix B) displayed a mean score for the control group (n=32) of 55.78 with a standard deviation of 10.12. The mean score of the experimental group (n=30) was 57.50 with a standard deviation of 8.49 (Table 4). After running an independent-sample t-test on the pre-intervention survey data the mean difference was determined to be not statistically significant (t (60) = 0.72, p>0.05, two-sided) with a 95% confidence interval.

Table 4

Independent Sample T-Test of Mean Comparison for Pre-Intervention Attitudes Towards Civic Beliefs and Values

Group	N	Mean	SD	T (60)	P	Cohen's d
Control	32	55.78	10.12	0.72	0.47	9.37
Experiment	30	57.50	8.49			

The non-significant statistical difference indicates that these groups are equivalent regarding their attitudes towards civic beliefs and values prior to the start of the intervention. This allows the researcher to compare data on surveys after the intervention to determine change and answer the second research question, how, if at all, does eighth grade students' attitudes, as measured by civic beliefs and values, towards civic engagement change as the result of participation in a legislative simulation?

Legislative Assembly Simulation Intervention Analysis

After the two-week intervention period, participants completed the post-Assessment of Civics and Government (Appendix A) and the post-Survey of Civic Engagement (Appendix B) to measure the change in their knowledge and attitudes towards civic engagement, as measured by civic beliefs and values, after the intervention was implemented. Both the control group and the experimental group showed an increase in their scores from the pre-assessment of civic knowledge to the post-assessment. Only the experimental group showed an increase in scores

from the pre-survey of civic engagement to the post-survey. The control group's scores on the post survey decreased indicating a negative change in the attitude towards civic engagement.

Post-Intervention Civic Knowledge

The mean score for the post intervention Assessment of Civics and Government was 14.34 for the control group (n=32) with a standard deviation of 3.81. This is a mean difference of 5.50. The mean score for the experimental group (n=30) was 15.57 with a standard deviation of 3.16 (Table 5). This is a mean difference of 5.87. The independent sample t-test on the post-assessment for the two groups indicates that it is approaching significance ($t(60) = 1.37$, $p>0.05$, one-sided) with 95% confidence. These results indicate that, while the researcher accepts the null hypothesis, it is possible that the results could be significant with a larger sample size. However, for this study, the legislative assembly simulation did not indicate statistical significance with 95% confidence.

Table 5

Independent Sample T-Test of Mean Comparison for Post-Intervention Civic Knowledge

Group	N	Mean	SD	T (60)	P	Cohen's d
Control	32	14.34	3.81	1.37	0.09	3.51
Experiment	30	15.57	3.16			

Post-Intervention Attitude Towards Civic Engagement

The control group (n=32) demonstrated a mean score for the post-Survey of civic engagement of 55.56 with a standard deviation of 10.81. This is a mean difference of negative

0.22. The experimental group displayed a mean score of 59.10 with a standard deviation of 7.36, creating a mean difference of 1.60 (Table 6). With a higher mean score difference (1.82) there is a slight indication that members of the experimental group have more positive attitudes towards their civic beliefs and values than the control group. The difference in the post survey data between the two groups was approaching statistical significance ($t(60) = 1.49$, $p>0.05$, one-sided) with a 95% confidence level. Again, these results indicate that the null hypothesis is true for this study, with this measure and also indicates that the legislative assembly simulation has no statistical effect on attitudes towards civic engagement in the short term. However, it is possible that with a larger sample size the simulation would have a statistically significant effect on students' attitudes towards civic engagement.

Table 6

Independent Sample T-Test of Mean Comparison for Post-Intervention Attitudes Towards Civic Beliefs and Values

Group	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**T (60)**	**P**	**Cohen's d**
Control	32	55.56	10.81	1.49	0.07	9.30
Experiment	30	59.10	7.36			

Research Question One: Civic Knowledge

A paired sample t-test was used to answer research question one: *How, if at all, does eighth-grade students' civic knowledge change due to participation in a legislative simulation?*

This research question was answered by looking at the results from the pre- and post-scores from the Civics and Government Assessment (Appendix A) for both the control group (n=32) and the experimental group (n=30). The mean score for the pre-intervention assessment of the control group was 8.84 with a standard deviation of 2.49. The mean score of the post-intervention assessment of the control group was 14.34 with a standard deviation of 3.81. Utilizing a paired sample t-test (Table 7) to analyze the differences in the means of the control groups pre- and post- assessments reveals there is a statistical significance between the pre-assessment mean and the post-assessment mean ($t(31) = 7.97$, $p<0.05$ one sided), indicating that the traditional instructional practices, utilized with the control group, were effective in increasing civic knowledge.

Table 7

Paired-Sample T-Test of Mean Comparison for Pre-/Post-Intervention Civic Knowledge of Control Group

	N	**Mean**	**SD**	**T (31)**	**P**	**Cohen's d**
Pre-Intervention Assessment	32	8.84	2.49	7.97	<0.001	3.90
Post-Intervention Assessment	32	14.34	3.81			

Similarly, the experimental group also showed statistical significance. The mean score for the pre-intervention assessment was 9.70 with a standard deviation of 2.48. The mean score for the post-intervention assessment was 15.57 with a standard deviation of 3.16. Utilizing a paired-sample t-test (Table 8) to compare the pre- and post-intervention assessments gives us a p score of <.001. This is statistically significant ($t(29) = 7.39$, $p<0.05$ one sided).

Table 8

Paired-Sample T-Test of Mean Comparison for Pre-/Post-Intervention Civic Knowledge of Experimental Group

	N	**Mean**	**SD**	**T (29)**	**P**	**Cohen's d**
Pre-Intervention Assessment	30	9.70	2.48	7.40	<0.001	4.35
Post-Intervention Assessment	30	15.57	3.16			

When comparing the effect size between the two groups a larger effect size was indicated in the experimental group with a Cohen's d of 4.35 as compared to the control group with a Cohen's d of 3.90. This indicates that there is more statistical difference (0.45) in the means of the experimental group than the means of the control group.

These paired sample t-tests show that participants' knowledge about the state legislative branch increased through a state legislative assembly simulation and traditional instruction. The effect size was larger for the experimental group than it was for the control group; however, when the means of the two groups were compared using an independent sample t-test ($t(60) = 1.37$, $p>0.05$, one-sided), there was not a statistical significance. Therefore, the researcher rejected the hypothesis: Civics and Government Assessment mean scores for the control group ≠ Civics and Government Assessment mean scores for the experimental group. Instead, the researcher accepted the null hypothesis: Civics and Government Assessment mean scores for the control group = Civics and Government Assessment mean scores for the experimental group (Table 5).

Research Question Two: Attitudes Toward Civic Engagement

A paired-sample t-test was performed to answer research question two: *How, if at all, does eighth grade students' attitudes towards civic engagement, as measured by beliefs and values, change as the result of participation in a legislative assembly simulation?*

This research question was answered by looking at the results from the pre- and post-Survey of Civic Engagement Amongst Middle School Adolescents (Appendix B) for both the experimental group (n=30) and the control group (n=32). The mean score for the pre-intervention survey of those students receiving traditional instruction was 55.78 with a standard deviation of 10.12. The mean score for the post intervention survey was 55.56 with a standard deviation of 10.81 (Table 9). Looking at the scores for the control group utilizing a paired sample t-test there was not a statistically significant difference in the pre-intervention and post-intervention scores ($t(31) = 0.13$, $p>0.05$ one-sided).

Table 9

Paired-Sample T-Test of Mean Comparison for Pre-/Post-Intervention Attitudes Towards Civic Engagement of Control Group

Group	N	Mean	SD	T (31)	P	Cohen's d
Pre-Intervention Survey	32	55.78	10.12	0.13	0.45	9.53
Post-Intervention Survey	32	55.56	10.81			

Similarly, the experimental group did not demonstrate statistical significance between the pre-intervention survey and the post-intervention survey. The mean score for the pre-intervention survey was 57.50 with a standard deviation of 8.49. The mean score for the post-intervention survey was 59.10 with a standard deviation of 7.36 (Table 10). Utilizing a paired-sample t-test to

compare the pre and post intervention surveys indicates that there was not a statistically significant difference in the two mean scores (t (29) = 1.11, p>0.05 one-sided).

Table 10

Paired-Sample T-Test of Mean Comparison for Pre-/Post-Intervention Attitudes Towards Civic Engagement of Experimental Group

Group	N	Mean	SD	T (29)	P	Cohen's d
Pre-Intervention Survey	30	57.50	8.49	1.11	0.14	7.87
Post-Intervention Survey	30	59.10	7.36			

This paired sample t-test shows that there was not a statistical difference between the pre-intervention survey and post-intervention survey for either the control group or the experimental group. This aligns with the independent sample t-test (t (60) = 1.49, p>0.05, one-sided) between the control group and the experimental group (Table 6) and disproves the hypothesis, mean scores on the survey of civic beliefs and values for the control group ≠ mean scores on the survey of civic beliefs and values for the experimental group. The researcher accepts the null hypothesis that mean scores on the survey of civic beliefs and values for the control group = mean scores on the survey of civic beliefs and values for the experimental group (Table 4). Additionally, Cohen's d indicates a larger effect size for the control group (9.53) over the experimental group (7.87). This serves as further evidence that the legislative assembly simulation did not have a significant effect on civic beliefs and values.

Post Intervention Open Ended Survey of Civic Engagement

To help further answer research question two, participants completed a reflection of their learning about one week after the intervention was complete. Students answered questions on the Open-ended Survey of Civic Engagement (Appendix C). Both the control group and the experimental group answered five questions about the intervention and their opinions. The first four questions were the same for both groups. The fifth and final question was different for each group. The control group was asked to share information about the readings, presentations, and notes that were a part of their lessons. The experimental group was specifically asked about their participation in the mock legislative assembly.

For the first question of the survey, both groups were presented with the American Psychological Association's (APA) definition of civic engagement, "individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern" (Carpini, 2009, para. 1). More specifically, civic engagement includes many activities, including voting, participation in marches and protests, signing petitions, coordinating and raising money for community projects and causes, volunteering, attending community meetings, and even participating in polite political discussions on social media sites and blogs. After reading the definition and examples, students were asked the following: Considering the definition, how if at all, have your feelings changed about civic engagement?

Eighteen participants (60%) in the experimental group (n=30) and only nine participants (28%) from the control group (n=32) indicated a change in their feelings about civic engagement with statements such as, "I learned that your voice does matter." Similarly, a participant stated that "In the beginning of the unit I wasn't as informed or involved in civic engagement. I didn't really care. Now, at the end of the unit, I am more aware and active in the community. I feel that

it is important to be involved in the community." In contrast, more participants from the control group (n=32), nineteen (53%), displayed an answer of "My feelings really haven't changed" or "My feelings are the same" compared to nine participants (30%) in the experimental group (n=30). This difference indicates qualitatively that students who participated in the state legislative assembly simulation had a greater tendency to think more positively about getting involved in their communities and their ability to become civically engaged (Tables 11 and 12). There were a small number of participants in each group who did not answer the question in a positive way, indicating change, or in a neutral way, indicating no change. These students, four participants (13%) in the control group and three participants (10%) in the experimental group, gave answers such as, "People should be able to do all of these things as long as it is peaceful." and "I liked this alright. It was a very confusing unit." These responses did not indicate if understanding and feelings have changed, therefore they were coded as unanswered.

Table 11

Responses to Open-ended Survey Question One

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines civic engagement as: "individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern." More specifically, civic engagement includes many activities, including voting, participation in marches and protests, signing petitions, coordinating and raising money for community projects and causes, volunteering, attending community meetings, and even participating in polite political discussions on social media sites and blogs. Considering this definition, how, if at all, have your feelings changed about civic engagement? Be Specific.

	Control		Experiment
1	No because I didn't have an opinion on it before so it never changed.	1	I've been more interested in civic engagement.
2	At first I did not understand much of this and was confused on this sort of stuff but after the government unit I am able to sort of agree with the APA's definition of civic engagement.	2	Civic engagement isn't really that hard to do. Anybody, no matter who they, are can participate.
3	My feelings have not changed about civic engagement when considering the definition.	3	I have more concern in helping it.

4	I like civic engagement because of how it gives people a way to give input into their day to day lives outside of their direct control.	4	I have realized that it is important to vote, before I didn't really care about voting and now I realize that it is an important right.
5	my feelings haven't really changed on it i just learned more about it	5	In the beginning of the unit I wasn't as informed or involved in civic engagement. I didn't really care. Now, at the end of the unit, I am more aware and active in the community. I feel that it is important to be involved in the community.
6	My opinion on it hasn't changed much. I still try to keep up with whats happening in the community but not that often	6	My feelings haven't changed. I still think its good.
7	My feelings have not been changed I still think civic engagement is still something good.	7	My feelings haven't changed now that we have practiced and experienced civic engagement. I have always believed that to have, or to be apart of a successful community, the citizens of the community need to come together and participate and help out within the community.
8	I think I look at tings more closely now and pay attention to more things	8	Yes, I didn't really know what it was before we learned about it in class, now I think it's more important to be involved.
9	It has stayed the same, but helps me fully understand the term civic engagement.	9	No it was a some what boring class that i had no interest in but it is necessary to learn about it.
10	They have not changed	10	I think my feelings have changed about civic engagement. I think civic engagement is no longer boring but a thin I need to do to help my community.
11	I do think civic engagement is a good thing. Particularly when the government does a not so good decision for the community. I think its a good way for citizens to peacefully share their beliefs and volunteering hours for what they believe in. However, I do think sometimes it can get out of hand and people can get too violet over some things that aren't worth fighting for.	11	I think they haven't changed much on it, I still think it's very important to address issues.
12	No.My feelings hasn't changed about civic engagement. Not negative nor positive change.	12	My feelings about civic engagement have not changed.
13	They haven't a lot because I was already engaged in civic activities	13	My feelings have changed about civil engagement significantly about civil engagement. Before I thought that civil engagement, such as voting, was a waste of time because I thought, "How will my vote change the outcome of the election or even affect it at all?" Now, however, I realize that yeah my vote might have no effect at all, but it will still show that I am a good citizen of society and I have exercised my right to vote because not many people have the chance to freely do so.
14	My feelings about civic understanding have changes, because now I know that I can make a difference in my community.	14	I think civic engagement is good and everyone should do it.
15	Yes, because I use to feel like there was only one type of civic engagement which was voting, but now I understand that it is a citizens responsibility to be active in many things in their community.	15	My feelings have stayed the same when it comes to civil engagement. I still feel it is important to discuss and be active in the community and participate in civil engagement.
16	My feelings really haven't changed, but I didn't know that the APA covered so much.	16	Yes, I didn't understand how much work went into making a bill, and I still don't understand all of it.

17	My feeling about civic engagement has not changed because I have already known this information and it talks about how they can do all this politely which is good.	17	Nothing has changed.
18	My feelings have not changed	18	Since I now know all this about civic engagement, I may participate a little more in the activities of civic engagement.
19	i liked this alright. it was a very confusing unit. but i understand it now.	19	People should be able to do all of these things as long as it is peaceful.
20	I realized how the government works and the regulations that need to be put in place to have a good working government.	20	My feelings changed positively because civic engagement is a lot of things that can help out our community.
21	After and during the learning process of "Civic Engagement," nothing has really changed about it because I have already learned about this from my father, so in short term I have already known about what we were going to learn, it was just how we learned it that made a bit of a difference to me.	21	My feelings for civic engagement have changed positively from the definition. The definition makes civic engagement seem like it's something that needs to be done in a community and I didn't always see it like that.
22	Yes I believed that Civic engagement was not that much but voting and some other things, but know I know its a lot more.	22	This definition helps me feel good about being a good citizen. By knowing that I participated in civil engagement with all the activities we did, I feel more confident that I know how to play a role in government.
23	My thoughts on civic engagement have not changed. I already believed that definition.	23	My feelings have changed for the good because I have learned more and interested me more in civic engagement.
24	Considering this definition, my feelings have changed slightly knowing what I do can help my community. For instance, as a minor I can volunteer and look at recent media on the internet.	24	Because the Civic Engagement considers soft and calm political conversations, instead of yelling and trying to dominate opinions. They do community projects to keep the community nice, safe and clean.
25	Civic understanding has changed the way I look at politics and events. By how you have to look at details of each candidates and so forth.	25	At first I thought that civic engagement was kinda dumb and useless. After learning about it more I now understand the importance of it and how it affects my community.
26	My feelings haven't really changed.	26	After seeing this definition, My civic engagement has become more eager, I have really enjoyed learning about how to help in my community.
27	My feelings are still the same I feel like protesting or marching can be helpful sometimes but at the same time it causes too much dangerous things happening on the street.	27	Yes. I didn't really care about voting before.
28	It hasn't changed my engagement at all, since I already never participated.	28	I feel like civic engagement helps our community and I have not had any overall change
29	I think that my feelings about civic engagement did not change	29	My feelings about civic engagement haven't changed. I believe it's a good thing and I will always believe that.
30	My feelings changed on civic engagement because I didn't know so many things fell under the civic engagement category.	30	I learned that your voice does matter and even though you may not think you could make a difference you actually can. No matter what your opinion or question is you always have a right to say it, because there is a high chance someone has the same opinion or question as you.

31	After reading the definition, I still feel the same because I already had an understanding that civic engagement involved people voting or getting involved. However, I was not aware that it also included protests.
32	I feel like my feelings on civic engagement has changed a lot over the passed couple months because of how much i know. At first I thought it was too much too learn and too boring but ever since MS.Palmer has taught me about it it has become really interesting to me.

Table 12

Coded Responses to Open-ended Survey Question One

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines civic engagement as: "individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern." More specifically, civic engagement includes many activities, including voting, participation in marches and protests, signing petitions, coordinating and raising money for community projects and causes, volunteering, attending community meetings, and even participating in polite political discussions on social media sites and blogs. Considering this definition, how, if at all, have your feelings changed about civic engagement? Be Specific.

Code	Control Group n=32	Experimental Group n=30
Positive	9 (28%)	18 (60%)
Neutral	19 (59%)	9 (30%)
Unanswered	4 (13%)	3 (10%)

Overall, examining the answers that indicated a change in feelings of civic engagement were varied, however they included responses about voting, community service, learning the workings of the government, and how getting involved helps the community. To illustrate this change in perspective, here are some responses from students indicating how their feelings changed.

"I have realized that it is important to vote, before I didn't really care about voting and now I realize that it is an important right."

"At first I thought that civic engagement was kinda dumb and useless. After learning about it more I now understand the importance of it and how it affects my community."

"In the beginning of the unit I wasn't as informed or involved in civic engagement. I didn't really care. Now, at the end of the unit, I am more aware and active in the community. I feel that it is important to be involved in the community."

The second question of the survey asked participants if there was anything in class that helped them learn about civic engagement and active participation as a citizen. Twenty participants (63%) from the control group (n=32) stated, "Not Really" or "No". Nine participants (28%) gave responses from learning activities we did in class. Like question one, there were three responses (9%) that did not answer the question as it was asked (Tables 13 and 14). The following responses from the control group help to illustrate their learning experiences.

"Not really, I just learn best from taking notes and going back and looking at them. I like how we did notes on the subject instead of reading it from books."

"Yes, reading the textbook and the slideshows that Mrs. Palmer presented."

"Not sure. Can't recall an activity that helped me learn about civic engagement and active participation as a citizen."

Table 13

Responses to Open-ended Survey Question Two

Was there anything we did in class that helped you learn about civic engagement and active participation as a citizen over other things we did? Explain in detail.

	Control		Experiment
1	I think the quizzes and blookets we do are a fun way to learn the material .	1	I liked when we had a review with an answer key, gimkits, and that one time we played a review game with a ball.
2	Nope	2	No, but the Mock Assembly was fun. I've never done anything like that, so it made learning easier and interesting.
3	no	3	The mock trial where many people got to read and discuss bills.

4	I like how we did notes on the subject instead of reading it from books.	4	The Mock Assembly helped me engage in civics
5	Things that helped me understand were like blookets we did on it and quizzes	5	The mock assembly helped me better understand, by giving a real life example of how law making is executed. Instead of sitting at a desk and reading over notes we got to make our own laws and vote for others.
6	Not really	6	The committees that we did in class. That really helped me understand the process of a bill becoming a law. Before we did it, I did not understand it at all.
7	Yes, reading the text book and the slideshows that Mrs. Palmer presented.	7	I would say the thing that helped the most was writing a bill and participating in the Mock Assembly. It gave us a taste on how things are ran in real governments, and it was just overall a fun experience.
8	no	8	Doing the mock assembly as well as writing bills that applied to our school and community. These helped me really get a feel for what our legislative branch does.
9	No	9	No the mock assembly was a blast but it never helped me learn that much.
10	No	10	Doing the mock assembly helped me learn about civic engagement.
11	No	11	The mock assembly helped because it was a glimpse of what it's like to be in government or be citizen, experiencing having a voice and opinion that mattered.
12	Not sure. Can't recall to a activity that helped me learn about civic engagement and active participation as a citizen.	12	Voting for Lieutenant Governor helped me learn about the voting process and what to look for in a good candidate.
13	No	13	One thing that we did specifically was learn about how many steps there are to creating laws. That helped me to realize that it is a very complicated and long system, but it also an average joe like me could submit a law and possibly make a change in government.
14	Not really	14	Yes we did a survey that asked if we did any type of civic engagement.
15	No	15	The Mock assembly, really helped me understand civic engagement. It especially helped when we went through the steps of making the bill, otherwise I would have had an extremely hard time remembering them.
16	no	16	The assembly, because I actually got to see how it looks and feels. I feel like for visual learners it's a lot easier to comprehend something like in the way we did it.
17	no	17	I liked going to the auditorium to here the bills. It was fun and I like how you could state your opinion.
18	no	18	When we did the Mock Assembly and held the voting for governor, it helped we learn about how the voting system works, and how bills are made into laws.
19	reading on our own helped. not so many people talking at once	19	The mock assembly helped me learn what it is like to participate in that.
20	Not in class	20	The mock assembly really helped me understand and feel what it was like to be in a assembly.
21	no	21	When we made our own bills in class I learned a lot about choosing a new problem that I thought needed to be solved locally and coming up with evidence to back it up.
22	Before I knew what civic engagement was, I thought was only being apart of your community, but since taught me that I now know what it is.	22	To help us learn about civic engagement, our class participated in a mock assembly, which included making laws(bills), acting as committees and passing or holding back our peers' bills, voting in a democracy for a Lieutenant Governor, and reading out loud the passed bills and determining what to do with them in our Mock Assembly. This was helpful because it was a hands-on unit, which tremendously helped make the world of government make

			more sense.
23	Yes, this class has helped me to understand how to get involved and participate as a citizen. The unit on personal finance and juvenile justice have helped me understand how to be a citizen of my country.	23	Mock assembly. It helped understand the process.
24	No	24	We made some notes about the Civic Engagement but not much.
25	Yes, the note taking process was what really helped me the most.	25	One thing that we did in class that helped me learn about civic engagement, would have to be when we did our mock trial.
26	No	26	Something that really helped me learn was when we did the mock assembly, I really learned from that.
27	Not really I just learn best from taking notes and going back and looking at them.	27	The example with M&Ms in cups with Sianna as the queen was fun.
28	Not Really	28	The committees for the mock assembly helped me learn more about civic engagement and understand it better.
29	No	29	The lead up to the mock assembly. We learned that the average citizen can create a bill and get it turned in to law.
30	no	30	When we got into groups and voted on passing a bill. Talking with a group really helped me because I learned what is was like in a community and also got to hear other opinions.
31	When we talked about the different branches of government and how each one works. I also learned how each member gets chosen for the job.		
32	no		

Table 14

Coded Responses to Open-ended Survey Question Two

Was there anything we did in class that helped you learn about civic engagement and active participation as a citizen over other things we did? Explain in detail.

Code	Control Group n=32	Experimental Group n=30
Positive	9 (28%)	23 (77%)
Neutral	20 (63%)	7 (23%)
Unanswered	3 (9%)	0 (0%)

In contrast, only seven of the students (23%) from the experimental group (n=30) responded in a way that indicated they were unable to learn from their experiencestated some

part of the simulation process, or the assembly helped them. Their responses indicated the mock assembly, committee work, voting, and writing bills were helpful. Three participants (10%) gave an answer other than the simulation, indicating they learn better from taking notes or participating in review games. Qualitatively, this data indicates that the simulation does help participants learn and become more engaged in the process (Tables 13 and 14). These responses from the experimental group participants illustrate the benefit of utilizing a legislative assembly simulation.

"The Mock Assembly helped me engage in civics."

"Doing the mock assembly as well as writing bills that applied to our school and community. These helped me really get a feel for what our legislative branch does."

"One thing that we did specifically was learn about how many steps there are to creating laws. That helped me to realize that it is a very complicated and long system, but it also an average joe like me could submit a law and possibly make a change in government."

"To help us learn about civic engagement, our class participated in a mock assembly, which included making laws(bills), acting as committees and passing or holding back our peers' bills, voting in a democracy for a Lieutenant Governor, and reading out loud the passed bills and determining what to do with them in our Mock Assembly. This was helpful because it was a hands-on unit, which tremendously helped make the world of government make more sense."

The third question asked participants some ways they felt they could get involved in their communities. This question was coded structurally for responses that indicated involvement. The data was analyzed for responses that fit into six distinct categories including: volunteering,

participating in clubs or groups, raising or donating money or items, spreading information, voting, and no response or not getting involved.

Volunteering in some capacity was the most common answer in both the control group n=32), seventeen responses (53%), and the experimental group (n=30), twenty-three responses (77%). Responses coded as volunteering included performing community service, volunteering at the local food bank or animal shelter, and picking up trash (Tables 15 and 16).

Table 15

Responses to Open-ended Survey Question Three

What are some ways you feel you could get involved in your school community and the local area? Be specific.

	Control		Experiment
1	Community sports, fundraisers, food banks, community service, and many more.	1	Doing more service projects.
2	I feel like I could participate in events that come up or do activities such as beta club and volunteer at places to help the area such as the food bank.	2	I can volunteer for community service because I am on Beta Club.
3	I could volunteer at animal shelters or at the Midwest Food Bank.	3	Join clubs and after school activities.
4	I don't get involved much, but whenever I see some trash I try to pick it up and throw it away.	4	I could volunteer at pet shelters and other places like that
5	spread information about it	5	By volunteering at food banks or shelters, or even staying informed about current events in our community would help me get involved.
6	Donate to charity and attend local small events.	6	I could get involved by volunteering or donating. For example, I could volunteer at and animal shelter or a food bank. I could donate money to school fundraisers.
7	I could get more in dept about government, and when I'm 18 I can place a vote, because every vote matters.	7	The main way you can get involved in your community is by volunteering at different places around the area. Food banks and other things are really good ways to be active in the community because you are serving the people around you.
8	Volunteer for things in school or outside of school	8	I can volunteer, speak up for what I believe in, and be an all around good citizen following the rules.
9	Volunteering and knowing what is going on in your community.	9	Community service
10	Volunteer, clean up, don't litter	10	I feel I could get involved in my local area by volunteering at animal shelters and food banks and voting when I am old enough.
11	I would like to serve on the debate team when I'm in highschool, because I've heard you talk about the politics and things going on in the world and how you can be apart of the world. I think that would be of good interest.	11	Volunteering at school, church, or other organizations in the area.
12	Volunteering for community projects or help keep the community clean.	12	Some ways I feel as if I can get involved are giving ideas to student council and volunteering to help with neighborhood events.

13	Volunteering and my church.	13	I could join the CFC at our school or I could get elected to student council.
14	I could get involved by voicing my opinion more.	14	I could volunteer at food banks and things like that. I could sign up to help with things.
15	I could volunteer for some events (races, fundraisers, etc.) and help everyone around me.	15	I think one way, is by following local news in what happens around the area.
16	I think I could join multiple clubs in high school and communities in Peachtree City.	16	I feel like I could volunteer at Bloom or a place like that.
17	I feel like I could help out with some events more and for being involved in school more I can maybe help with CFC.	17	I can volunteer to help out like for after school activities and stuff like that.
18	Volunteering	18	Probably doing volunteer work such as helping clean up a park.
19	community service or pick up trash.	19	Volunteering and participating in different community activities.
20	You could get involved by donating money, talking to the board, and going to the schools fundraisers.	20	You could volunteer at things like the midwest food bank.
21	I would say, pay a closer attention to garbage/trash out on the streets or in the trees and take notice about it then clean it up.	21	I could be involved is being in Beta Club at the school because that gave me multiple opportunities to be involved in the community. Such as helping with activities in the elementary schools.
22	I could raise money for school band whenever there is a fundraiser.	22	I can volunteer at places that help the less fortunate, such as the Midwest Food Bank or the Bloom Closet.
23	I feel that if I were to make more acquaintances/friendships I could become more involved in the school community.	23	I could volunteer for charities.
24	Some ways I can get involved in my school community are engaging/attending in school meetings or speaking to the principal about concerns. For the local area I can stay up with news about my town so I know if their is anything I could voice an opinion on.	24	Join clubs and volunteer at places to help the community.
25	Participating in events and community cleans ups to get involved.	25	I could volunteer to help clean up around the school or our city's golfcart paths.
26	The dance or Cleaning up.	26	Some ways I could get involved is helping out at churches, volunteering to help do child care for different events, and even helping out at local spring flings in fayette county.
27	Be more involved in sports or activies that the school offers	27	Volunteering at Bloom.
28	I do not know of any ways.	28	raise a go fund me for the school
29	I could get involved in my local area by going to food banks, homeless shelters, or charity organizations.	29	I could volunteer at various shelters helping people and animals alike.
30	Picking up trash	30	I would like to get better pratice soccer feilds at SMHS. They could definenetly use some work.
31	The way I feel like I could get involved is donating things I do not use and giving them to people who might not have a lot of things for them to use.		
32	I feel like I could get involved in my community and the local area by helping and reporting if something's happening in the community that is not supposed to be happening and keep the community safe.		

Table 16

Coded Responses to Open-ended Survey Question Three

What are some ways you feel you could get involved in your school community and the local area? Be specific.

Code	Control Group n=32	Experimental Group n=30
Volunteering	17 (53%)	23 (77%)
Joining Clubs/Groups	9 (28%)	7 (23%)
Raising Money/Donating	5 (16%)	2 (7%)
Spreading Information	3 (9%)	3 (10%)
Voting	1 (3%)	1 (3%)
No Involvement	1 (3%)	0 (0%)

Note: Some participants indicated more than one way they could get involved. Response totals are equal to more than the total number of participants.

Joining school or community groups, including athletic teams, school Beta club, and student government, received the next highest number of responses from both the control and experimental groups. The control group had nine participants (28%) indicate this is the way they would get involved. Responses included “community sports,” “debate team,” “school meetings,” and “the dance.” The experimental group had seven participants (23%) suggest clubs or groups as the way they would increase their involvement.

The other codes did not receive as many responses from either group. A total of seven participants from both groups, five from the control group (16%) and two from the experimental group (7%), were coded as donating money or goods. Six participants, three from each group, gave a response coded as spreading information. Two participants, one from each group, indicated voting to get involved. Only one participant from the control group (3%) stated, “I do

not know of any ways" to get involved. There were no participants from the experimental group that were coded as not getting involved (Tables 15 and 16).

The fourth question addressed changes in participants' attitude and attention to issues in their communities since participation in the intervention group they were assigned. This open-ended survey question was coded in the same way as the first two questions (Tables 17 and 18). Participants either answered positively, indicating that their attitudes and attention to community issues had changed, neutrally, indicating their attitudes and attention had not changed, or they did not answer the question. In the control group (n=32), sixteen participants (50%) indicated a positive change with responses such as, "I pay more attention to things around my community and in the government" and "I'm able to better understand how things that I see and do every day are allowed and not illegal, such as driving a golf cart." The experimental group (n=30) had nineteen (63%) positive responses with similar themes including, "I have begun to notice the need to change certain things in the community or am more aware of other people's concerns."

Table 17

Responses to Open-ended Survey Question Four

How, if at all, has your attention to issues in the community and state changed since we completed the government unit of study?

	Control		Experiment
1	Ever since we completed the government unit I haven't noticed anymore involvement into the community or state, personally.	1	I feel like I have understood more of the issues in the community better.
2	I'm able to understand better how things that I see and do everyday are allowed and not illegal. Such as driving a golf cart.	2	I've always been observant, so my attention hasn't been shifted to anything dire or important recently.
3	My attention to issues in my community and state has not changed very much, only a couple of issues have recently come to my attention.	3	It encouraged me to help my school and community.
4	It hasn't changed much except I'll know what to do if when I can vote.	4	I know now that it is important to be a part of your community
5	It hasent	5	I have began to notice the need to change certain things in the community or am more aware of other people's concerns.
6	Not that much. I still like to read the news and keep up with what's happening in the county/state. I also started to recognize how that I could voice my opinions too.	6	My attention hasn't changed.

7	My attention to issues in my community has changed because I realized all the jobs and responsibilities people have to help run the state and community.	7	It hasn't changed.
8	I understand mroe about what people are talking about	8	I realized that we can do a lot more for our community even as middle schoolers than what I thought before.
9	It has not changed, as I already knew about the issues in the state and community.	9	they haven't
10	They have not changed	10	My attention has changed a little bit and made me care more about our community and surroundings.
11	I think our state has come so far and I am glad I learned about it and the people. Our state I think has definitely improved from the beginning and I am proud to live in Georgia.	11	I don't think they have changed much when it comes to the government unit, but I do think as you get older, you start noticing more things in your community and state.
12	Yes. I have a greater feeling about taking action on issues in the community and state.	12	When people are talking about issues I tend to pay more attention then I did beforehand.
13	My attention has not really changed	13	I focused more on things that effect me and my community instead of more country issues.
14	My attitude has not changed.	14	It showed different issues that I didn't know were issues before.
15	I feel like I have noticed more issues in my community than I did before, because now I have realized that voting for the right people to help fix these decisions is my responsibility and I should care to notice these issues.	15	I have always had a interest in news and what is going on in the world, so I do not think I have grown any less fond of these topics or the way our state, county or country work.
16	I have learned to be more aware of the local issues that are happening.	16	Not really any.
17	It made me realize more stuff and it made me realize I should help out more in my community.	17	Nothing really has changed I still don't know like what goes on in the community and stuff.
18	I have not really changed	18	Now I know how much I can do for my community and who it can benefit.
19	my attention went up knowing that i could do that one day.	19	Not too much.
20	I relized what really happends in courts, what happens regarding what law you break, and how the state runs.	20	My attention to issues in the community and state increased after government.
21	It helped me create an easier process to sort of solve any situation I come across in my own way.	21	It changed because now I feel like there are a lot of things that I and my peers could change in the community.
22	It hasnt srry	22	It makes me feel more involved in our community, like I can have my voice heard.
23	My views have not changed. Most of what we learned were of law, of which I do not have an interest being involved in, other than voting.	23	It made me think that I could have an impact.
24	My attention to issues in the community and state changed slightly. Still being young I know I can do something to help, but I still need to know more about if I really want to make a change.	24	I have a brighter and smarter way of looking at it in a educational way.
25	Yes by how the government really works and what is part of each branch of the government.	25	It hasn't really change I still don't really pay attention to the issuses in my community.
26	It hasn't changed.	26	I feel like I can more about what's going on around me, I feel that I know whats going on in out world.

27	I think differently of governement stuff now that we have learned about that it is definielty a hard topic.	27	It hasn't really, but I was already quite engaged.
28	Still hasn't changed.	28	It was way more complex than I thought
29	Before we learned about government, I was not into it at all and had little knowledge on government. Now, after completing the unit, it has caught my attention to learn more about what goes on in our state everyday.	29	I have realised that there is so much things you can do to help your community.
30	I pay more attention to things around my community and in the government.	30	I think it has grown as we have disscused.
31	My attention to issues in the community and state has not changed since we completed the government unit.		
32	I am really more into watching news now and see what is going on around the world. I am also more cautious about what I am doing at times.		

Table 18

Coded Responses to Open-ended Survey Question Four

How, if at all, has your attention to issues in the community and state changed since we completed the government unit of study?

Code	Control Group n=32	Experimental Group n=30
Positive	16 (50%)	19 (63%)
Neutral	15 (47%)	11 (37%)
Unanswered	1 (3%)	0 (0%)

Neutral responses included, “It hasn’t really changed” and “My attitude has not changed.” The control group had fifteen (47%) neutral responses and one (3%) unanswered response. The experimental group had eleven (37%) neutral responses. All experimental participants answered the question.

The final question of the open-ended survey of questions was different for both groups. From the responses, there was an overwhelmingly positive response from the experimental group and a less positive response from the control group.

The control group (n=32) was asked, “How did you feel about the readings and lessons we did from the textbook and powerpoint presentations? Did they help you learn? How? Did they encourage you to be a more engaged citizen? How? Be specific and give as many details as you can think of.” (Table 19). The responses were coded in two separate ways. Initial coding analyzed the data for positive versus negative responses indicated by feelings of enjoyment or learning versus feelings of unenjoyment or not learning (Table 20). Nineteen of the participants (59%) indicated they did not enjoy the unit and would have preferred to do an activity. The other thirteen participants (41%) gave slightly more positive responses and listed the notes and powerpoint presentations as being helpful.

Table 19

Control Group Responses to Open-ended Survey Question Five

Participant	How did you feel about the readings and lessons we did from the textbook and powerpoint presentations? Did they help you learn? How? Did they encourage you to be a more engaged citizen? How? Be specific and give as many details as you can think of.”
1	I think the lessons do help a lot with learning the material. But not as much encouragement to be a more engaged citizen.
2	The textbooks and powerpoints were sometimes confusing to understand but they really did help me learn about this stuff. It helped me understand the topics and lessons overall.
3	The readings and lessons from the textbook and powerpoint presentations did not help me learn. They did not encourage me to be a more engaged citizen.
4	I personally hated when we learned from the textbook. It gave me no real way of learning because I can't learn by just reading it. It did not encourage me to be an active citizen because I had no way to access the book at home so I had no way to finish my notes. Therefore I deeply disliked learning from the book, and hope to never do it again. I liked the study guides you made that really helped me study. I really enjoyed learning that way.
5	It didn’t help me learn writing notes from a slideshow wasn't really that help full
6	Personally, I did not like reading the textbook that much. It got boring really fast, however it's good to take notes from. I liked the powerpoint presentations lessons more.
7	I like how we did learn from the text book, however, I need to see it to learn it more-so, it's kinda hard for me to learn so much in a text book where I can picture the puzzles together.
8	I did not like doing that because it did not help me learn at all I just was looking for answers on a page and writing it down. I prefer taking notes with your slide. It helps me learn better and easier for me to go back and look at.
9	Powerpoint was easier, because it was less information at once. I could also comprehend it easier. Nothing has changed in my engagement.

10	The reading did not help as much as the power point presentations. The power points were better help because I like taking my time making my notes, if my notes aren't appealing to my eyes then I don't want to look at them😈
11	I think the checkpoints and reading did help prepare for tests. Especially the provided notes our teacher printed out I am very thankful for that. Overall, I think everything our teacher provided helped.
12	Reading lessons from the textbook was not a great way to teach me. Most of the time, I found ways to skip to the point and get information fast. This is sort of how the powerpoint presentations did. Except, there was a bit more information. This didn't encourage nor discourage me to be more engaged as a citizen.
13	Yes I think they helped me learn how a bill becomes a law, but they didn't encourage me to be a more engaged citizen because I already volunteer and am active in my community.
14	The presentation was much better than the textbook, I felt I was more engaged and the presentation gave more information . . . in a better way.
15	I felt like somethings on the textbook weren't on the quizzes or tests, but the majority of the lessons did help me learn.
16	I think the powerpoint presentations really helped me memorize and understand civics a lot more. The textbook didn't hurt, but I would prefer powerpoints.
17	They helped me learn some but I would rather do an activity because I learn better then instead of just sitting there listening or reading a lesson.
18	I did not like the textbook because it was boring and they both did not help me become a more active citizen.
19	The readings helped a little. it helped me learn and understand more but a little hard to read.
20	The textbooks didn't help me as much as the presentations because I could understand civics more when someone was talking to me. It helped me by having to write my own notes because when I did that it stayed in my brain longer.
21	To me, reading the text book wasn't as helpful as reading the powerpoints because, when you read in the textbook you have to more thoroughly search for your answers. While in the powerpoints you could just read through it in a second and easily understand what you read.
22	They did not but that doesn't mean it wont change later.
23	I feel that the powerpoint presentations were a good way to help me learn, in contrast to the textbook. The powerpoints conveyed information fluently and smoothly.
24	I enjoyed the lessons and powerpoint presentations, but I didn't like the reading I believed some parts looks a lot more than they really are on paper. They really helped me learn especially the lessons and videos by being simple and understandable.
25	I liked taking notes more from the powerpoint presentations at sometimes but at others I wanted to take them from the textbook since they both gave me the same amount of information.
26	I hated the textbook readings and hardly gained any knowledge from them.
27	Those were kinda hard to learn off of in a way. I didn't really learn much from it like I've learned from the powerpoints and videos. For me it was definitely harder to focus and learn something off of. I mean I learned some stuff but like when we took tests I forgot and stuff because I didn't really read the textbooks.
28	Readings and lessons i forget easily, so that wouldn't be much helpful, and as said before, never really participated to begin with.
29	I feel that the readings and lessons we did from the textbook and powerpoint presentations were very helpful because they gave detail and great information on government.
30	I did not feel great about the readings and lessons we did from the textbook because I felt I did not learn as much as I could have. I don't

	learn much from just reading out of the textbook so it was much harder for me to get the information down. It did not encourage me to be a more engaged citizen because I did not understand it fully.
31	I feel good about the readings and the lessons. It did help me learn the types of governments and what each branch does. It did not encourage me to be a more engaged citizen because I do not volunteer that much because of school and my homework.
32	Well the textbooks didn't help me learn as much as the powerpoints did but they both help me learn way more than what i knew beforehand

Table 20

Control Group Coded Responses to Open-ended Survey Question Five

Code	Control Group n=32
Positive	19 (59%)
Negative	13 (41%)

The experimental group (n=30) was asked, "*How did you feel about participation in the Mock Legislative Assembly (consider all steps of the assembly from writing your bill, participation in committees, and participation in the large assembly on March 28th)? Did it help you learn? How? Did it encourage you to be a more engaged citizen? How? Be specific and give as many details as you can think of*." (Table 21). Initial coding of the data was done for positive versus negative responses to the question. Twenty-seven participants (90%) indicated they enjoyed the legislative assembly simulation, and it did help them learn in some way. Three participants (10%) indicated the simulation was boring or not remarkably interesting and it did not necessarily help them learn (Table 22).

Table 21

Experimental Group Responses to Open-ended Survey Question Five

Participant	**How did you feel about participation in the Mock Legislative Assembly (consider all steps of the assembly from writing your bill, participation in committees, and participation in the large assembly on March 28th? Did it help you learn? How? Did it**

	encourage you to be a more engaged citizen? How? Be specific and give as many details as you can think of.
1	The mock assembly helped me visualize and learn more about how the legislature works. Seeing things in person helps me a lot more.
2	I really liked hearing the bills go up and people's different ways of interpreting them. It really helped the process of making a bill stay in my brain. It didn't really encourage me to do anything, but I did enjoy it.
3	It helped me learn all the steps clearly, and it encouraged me to be more involved.
4	It was hard to think of a bill that was fair for everyone, but it helped me learn how to be an engaged citizen, by asking questions
5	By being a part of an assembly and passing bills, It helped me better understand law making in a real world scene. Presenting my bill also helped me better understand how in detail bills need to be and how prepared representatives need to be.
6	Doing the mock assembly definitely helped me a lot. Before we did it, I did not understand how the process works, it just didn't make sense. I have a really hard time understanding government and mock assemblies. But the mock assembly helped me understand. It did not encourage me to be more engaged as a citizen.
7	It helped me learn how real government is ran and the whole process.
8	The mock assembly definitely helped me have a better understanding of our legislative branch. It helped me experience and visualize the steps to get a bill passed and how difficult it can be. It encouraged me to be a more engaged citizen as I could help propose bills that could be important to the community and I saw the problems people presented.
9	I liked all the steps but when i was researching my topic that was school appropriate it blocked me from websites i needed. as well as in committees it was very one sided with a bunch of the girls over ruling the other. the mock assembly was fun but i wish more people got a say.
10	I felt that my participation in the Mock Assembly has helped me learn more about the government and how it works. It encouraged me to be a more engaged citizen. I now want to help my community by volunteering and doing other things.
11	I liked participating in this. I definitely helped me learn the material and really understand it. It also gave me a glimpse at what having a voice and opinion that matters is like.
12	I felt that my participation in the mock assembly was very important because I knew that if nobody stood up for what they believed in then we would get nowhere.I got to learn about how the law that affect us citizens are put into place and how we can have a say for ourselves even when it feels as if we can't.
13	I think that the Mock assembly did help me learn about the legislative process. I also think it encouraged me to be a more engaged citizen because it helped me learn more about the process and understand it.
14	It was fun and it did help me learn by understanding the process of an assembly. It did encourage me to be a more engaged citizen by wanting to know what kind of bills are going to get passed.
15	The Mock Legislative Assembly helped me learn all the steps in creating and passing a bill. It helped, when we stepped into the shoes of the Legislative Assembly, when it came to creating, drafting and discussing bills. I had a difficult time remembering and understating the creation of the bills. After we started our hand on assessment of creating bills I had a way better understanding of how it works.
16	As a visual learner I feel like it helped me learn better how the whole process work from creating a bill to going to the assembly.
17	It really did help me learn because now I know what if would feel like to be in a committee and it help me learn more about the roles of the people in the like committee.
18	I felt like it was a good way to learn about how the legislative assembly in real life works, it helped me learn because before we did it, I didn't really know much about how the legislative assembly works, but after we did the assembly, I knew a lot more, like the system of how a bill is made into a law and electing the governor. It did encourage me to be a more engaged citizen because I learned how my actions can affect others.

19	The Mock Assembly was a fun way to get to participate and learn and especially doing it with the whole 8th grade was great. It helped me learn what it is like to be a legislature in an assembly and it was fun and we learned about things going on in the community and state that people wanted to make bills on.
20	The Mock Legislative Assembly helped me learn what it is like because people are only allowed to talk when granted permission which is unusual. It encourages me to be a more engaged citizen because most of the bills are beneficial to a regular citizen.
21	I wouldn't say it helped too much learning about committees because I still did bad on the test however it helped me to learn how to write a bill, and be engaged. Yes because like I said before I realized that there are ways I could always help in the community even if it is something small.
22	By participating in the Mock Assembly, I have a lot less questions, if any, about how the Legislative Branch works. It helped me learn tremendously because it was an activity where we actually got to do something, rather than sit in a chair and take notes. My grades were much better, as this is a better teaching method for me personally. It shows me the ways our government works.
23	It was sort of boring having the same thing happen over and over, but I did learn how it goes.
24	I felt like it helped us learn how a real assembly goes, we understand the meaning of seconding a motion and how a bill passes.
25	I'm really glad that we did the Mock Legislative Assembly. It helped me more understand how civic engagement works. During the assembly when more and more people started standing up and asking questions, it made me more confident about standing up and asking questions. Before I didn't understand how asking questions affected outcome of the assembly but now I do.
26	the mock assembly helped me so much. I learned a lot about how bills get passed. To be honest I wasn't really sure what to do but after a little bit I learned and I was able to learn so much from that experience. After doing that definitely made me consider working some day in politics.
27	It wasn't very interesting, but I think I probably learned more than I think, and it made me care about a lot of things I didn't before.
28	I definitely think it helped me learn because it gave me a better visualization of the process by witnessing it first hand. It seemed like something I might be interested when I grow up and learn more about the subject.
29	It felt good to participation in the Mock Assembly. It helped me learn how they kill or pass bills. Your vote matters so it makes you want to be engaged citizen.
30	I really enjoyed learning what goes on in committees, and what its like to make a bill. It helped me learn what it was like in committees with adults. I felt like my vote really did count and helped my side.

Table 22

Experimental Group Coded Responses to Open-ended Survey Question Five

Code	Experimental Group n=30
Positive	27 (90%)
Negative	3 (10%)

After initial value coding of the fifth question, responses were coded a second time to analyze how the different interventions helped participants learn the material. Codes were created based on words and phrases that described the actions the students attributed to their learning. For example, words like visualizing and hands-on were coded as engaging. Words like learning and valuable information were coded as increased understanding. Finally, words like disliked, boring, and not helpful were coded as Uninteresting (Table 23). For the control group (n=32) responses were centered around understanding and uninteresting with only two participants (6%) responding with engaging. Seventeen responses (53%) indicated the intervention used with the control group helped with understanding. However, twenty responses (63%) indicated that students either disliked the unit or did not learn from the material. There were some responses that were coded multiple times because they may have helped increase understanding, but the participant did not like the activities. For instance, "They helped me learn some, but I would rather do an activity because I learn better then instead of just sitting there listening or reading a lesson."

Table 23

Combined Coded Responses to Question Five of the Open-ended Survey

Code	Control Group n=32	Experimental Group n=30
Engaging	2 (6%)	16 (53%)
Increased Understanding	17 (53%)	22 (73%)
Uninteresting	20 (63%)	3 (10%)

The experimental group (n=30) had similar responses to the control group in terms of understanding, however the percentage of students who indicated the Legislative Assembly Simulation helped them learn was higher with 22 participants (73%) indicating they learned from the experience compared to the control group's 17 participants (53%). In terms of engaging and uninteresting, the experimental groups' results were the opposite of the control group. Sixteen participants (53%) said the activities were engaging compared to only two participants (6%) of the control group. Three participants (10%) of the experimental group said the Legislative Assembly simulation was boring or uninteresting, compared to twenty participants (63%) of the control group (Table 23). According to Experiential Learning theory, students retain more information and can more readily apply their learning when they are engaged and actively participating (Gadotti & Torres, 2009).

Post Intervention Civic Engagement Indicators

To provide more detail on research question two, a Civic Engagement Indicators Survey (Appendix D) was sent to participants about seven months after the intervention ended through their official school email accounts. There was limited response from former participants, therefore this information cannot conclusively support or dispute the hypothesis that participation in a Legislative Assembly simulation will increase students' attitudes towards civic engagement. Instead, it serves as a discussion point and indicates a need for a future longitudinal study.

The researcher received fourteen total responses from the survey. Twelve of these responses came from participants in the experimental group while only two came from participants in the control group. This six to one participation rate does support the idea that

students who participated in the simulation have more of an inclination to get involved and support their community in the long term.

The first question asked participants if they have ever worked together with someone or some group to solve a problem in the community where they live. The control group participants (n=2) both answered never. Of the experimental group participants (n=12), seven answered yes, within the last twelve months, three responded, yes but not within the last year, one answered never, and the last participant left this question blank.

When asked about the type of volunteer work participants had taken part in, one participant from the control group (n=2) indicated they had never volunteered for any organizations or groups. The other participant indicated the only volunteer group they had participated in was a youth or educational organization. In contrast, the experimental group (n=12) indicated a lot more participation in volunteer activities. Four participants indicated they volunteer once a month or more, and another five indicated they have volunteered during the last twelve months. Overwhelmingly, the volunteer work took place mostly in religious organizations and/or youth or educational groups (Table 24).

Table 24

Volunteer time by organization as indicated on Civic Indicators Survey for Experimental Group

	Once a month or more	In the last 12 months	More than a year ago	No, Never
Religious Groups	4	4	2	2
Environmental Organizations	1	1	5	5
Civic or Community Groups	2	1	4	5
Youth or Educational Organizations	5	5	0	2

The most telling questions on the Civic Indicators Survey (Appendix D) were the two

open-ended questions at the end of the instrument. The first question asked, “What are some ways you feel you could get involved in your school community and the local area? Be specific.” Only one of the two participants from the control group answered this question. The participant stated, “I can't think of any ways to get involved.” Meanwhile, all twelve of the participants from the experimental group gave a response with at least one way they could get involved in the community. The most common response was to volunteer in some way (Table 25).

Table 25

Community Involvement from Civic Indicators Survey for Experimental Group

Participant	What are some ways you feel you could get involved in your school community and the local area? Be specific.
A	maybe help out at food banks
B	For school, get involved in the extracurricular clubs, for example, Red Cross club. For local area, volunteer at charities similar to or like Bloom Closet, Midwest Food Bank, or the Fayette Humane Animal Shelter.
C	Tutoring young children or reading/math. Food bank. Bring mental health concerns to the school board and see what else can be further improved for students.
D	Volunteer through clubs like Key Club.
E	Join a club that involves volunteering and doing something for the community.
F	Volunteering for a food bank to help those who are less-fortunate.
G	Well since school has started, I joined Student Government Association and helped with home coming court and homecoming hallway decorating. I joined Family Career and Community Leaders of America, and we are thinking of ways to make our community better.
H	I could join clubs that participate in charities or fundraising events for the school or the community.
I	Volunteering.
J	I can do the volunteer opportunity at Peeples to help kids learn to read and I can volunteer at my churches sunday school.
K	help people
L	Volunteering at charities such as Bloom or Clothes Less Traveled.

The second and final question of the Civic Indicators Survey (Appendix D) asked participants if they felt it was important for people to get involved in their communities. Again, only one of the two control group participants responded. The response was, “I think it is

important for people to get involved in their communities because it is good to help others that might be in need or do not have as much as you do." All participants from the experimental group (n=12) responded with yes, it is important to get involved (Table 26).

Table 26

Importance of Community Involvement from Civic Indicators Survey for Experimental Group

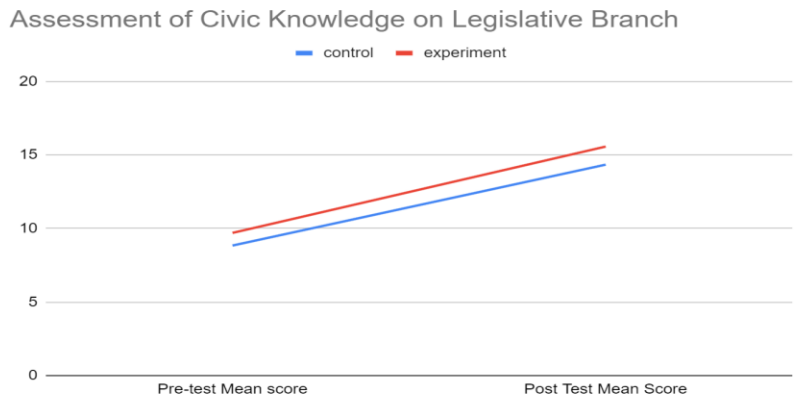
Participant	Do you think it is important for people to get involved in their communities? Why or why not?
A	yes, getting involved with your community will help you physically and mentally
B	I believe that it is important for people to get involved in their communities but it is definitely not a shame factor if you don't. People who are in school or college often don't have much, if any, time on their hands, and maybe getting involved just isn't fitting into their schedule.
C	Yes, there are many things I can do to help my community.
D	Yes, if most people in the community volunteer then it would make a big difference and help the community.
E	Yes it is important to get involved in the community to help the community become better.
F	Somewhat, people should get involved, but not a lot, for example, someone could volunteer for something but they don't have to every month.
G	I do, because it can make themselves better but also others. As well as making the community stronger by getting closer together and improvement in thins involved with the community.
H	Yes, not only does it look good in colleges, but you are able to create lifelong bonds with friends and strangers. You get to know your community and can help create a place that you love.
I	Yes, it brings the community together.
J	I do think it is important for people to get involved in their communities especially kids and teens around my age. Our generation is what many decisions made now will affect so helping with the community will help make our world better for when we are adults.
K	yea.
L	Yes, if everyone does it the world will be a better place.

Results Summary

Using the data collected, the researcher was able to analyze information from both the control group and the experimental group to compare changes in civic knowledge and changes in attitudes, as measured by civic beliefs and values, towards civic engagement. Both groups

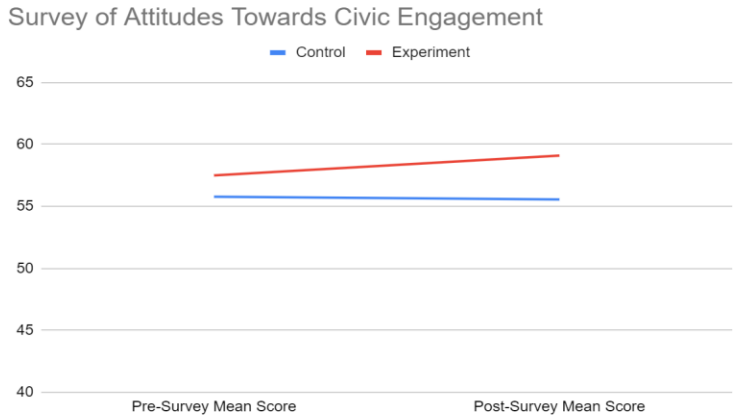
demonstrated an increase in civic knowledge with no statistically significant difference between the growth of either group (Figure 4). This indicates that either pedagogical method will teach students about the state standard of the legislative branch in an equivalent manner.

Figure 4



Only the experimental group that participated in the state legislative assembly simulation showed an increase in positive attitudes towards civic engagement. The control group showed a slight decline in their positive attitudes towards civic engagement. However, the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant in the short term (Figure 5).

Figure 5



Chapter Five: Discussion

The goal of this mixed-methods study was to expand upon the current literature on civic engagement and instruction in the classroom. Specifically, the study examined students' attitudes towards civic engagement and their civic knowledge after active participation in a state legislative assembly simulation. The study aimed to address the following two research questions:

1. How, if at all, does eighth grade students' civic knowledge change as a result of participation in a legislative simulation?
2. How, if at all, do eighth grade students' attitudes, as measured by their beliefs and values, towards civic engagement change as the result of participation in a legislative simulation?

Impact of a Legislative Assembly Simulation on Civic Knowledge

The study examined the use of a state legislative assembly simulation on student's knowledge of the legislative branch as outlined in the state standards. The pre-intervention assessment determined that both the control group and the experimental group were equivalent in their knowledge of the legislative branch of state government prior to the intervention.

With confirmation of pre-assessment equivalence, the researcher was able to utilize the post-intervention assessments to examine the effectiveness of the legislative assembly simulation as compared to the control group that received traditional instruction, including the textbook, notes, readings, and classroom discussions. The post-intervention data did not represent a statistically significant difference in the civic knowledge gained between the control and the experimental groups. However, the data was approaching significance with scores for the experimental group slightly higher than the control group. This shows that the legislative

assembly simulation was no more effective in increasing civic knowledge than traditional instruction. However, it is possible that with a larger study the difference between the two groups would grow. With the data approaching statistical significance, it is likely the sample size was too small. Additionally, it is also possible that the assessment of civic knowledge itself is not a particularly good measurement of civic knowledge. The assessment used was twenty-five multiple-choice questions testing knowledge of the state legislative branch of government. With questions of this nature, there is a twenty-five percent chance that a student guesses the correct answer when they are not truly knowledgeable about the material. Had the questions been asked as short, constructed response items, it may be a better indicator of content knowledge.

Impact of a Legislative Assembly Simulation on Attitudes Toward Civic Engagement

The findings from research question two demonstrated mixed results. The quantitative data, while approaching statistical significance, did not meet significance with a 95% confidence value. The survey with the six-point Likert-type scale may not have provided the rich data needed to capture adolescent participants' attitudes toward civic engagement. At thirteen and fourteen years old, students are still developing their ability to understand and reason about abstract concepts like civic engagement. A six-point scale might be too nuanced for them to reliably differentiate between each level. Also, adolescent students are often sensitive to social pressures. They might choose answers they think are "correct" or reflect what they believe the researcher wants to hear, rather than their true feelings. Students in this age range are better suited to answer questions on a four-point Likert –type scale, yes/no questions, or open-ended questions. This seems particularly relevant considering the legislative assembly simulation was significantly more favored with the open-ended responses when compared to the control group. Students responded to the questions about their values and beliefs more positively after

participating in the simulation. Answers to the questions by the experimental group indicated a greater level of engagement in the activities and a stronger desire to get involved in activities both inside and outside of the school setting. In contrast, the control group indicated more boredom related to learning and no change in their desire to get involved or the value they placed on civic engagement.

Attitudes toward civic engagement were determined by using the Survey of Civic Engagement Amongst Middle School Adolescents (Appendix B) before the intervention. Scores between the control group and the experimental group were confirmed to be equivalent on the pre-survey by a non-statistically significant independent sample t-test.

Equivalency between the two groups on the pre-intervention survey allowed the researcher to analyze the post survey data of the two groups to determine the effectiveness of the legislative assembly simulation on attitudes, as measured by beliefs and values, toward civic engagement. The post-intervention survey did not show statistical significance between the two groups' attitudes, as measured by beliefs and values, towards civic engagement. However, the mean difference between the two groups was approaching significance with an independent sample t-test. The post-survey data demonstrates that attitudes of the experimental group did not change significantly more than attitudes of the control group.

However, the experimental group that participated in the legislative assembly simulation did have slightly higher scores than the control group that received traditional instruction. While the mean score of the experimental group increased from 57.50 to 59.10, the mean score of the control group decreased slightly from 55.78 to 55.56. While these are not statistically significant changes it is interesting to note the difference of a positive increase for the experimental group compared to a decrease for the control group. This indicates a positive trend for the effectiveness

of the simulation. However, there is a need for a longer study with a larger sample size to establish significance. Additionally, it can be challenging to produce significant changes in beliefs and attitudes through a brief intervention. Previous research on measuring and producing change indicates short-term programs do not produce notable change (Verba et al., 1995). However, with extended learning experiences that incorporate service-learning, project-based learning, and opportunities for active participation in civic life there has been some success (Kahne & Westheimer, 2003).

When analyzing the quantitative data alone, the researcher had to accept the null hypothesis. However, the qualitative data paints a much different picture of the use of legislative assembly simulations to improve students' attitudes, as measured by beliefs and values, towards civic engagement.

Following the interventions, participants were invited to share their thoughts about the government intervention they had experienced. They did this by completing a survey with five open-ended questions (Appendix C). For the first question, sixty percent of the experimental group reported positive changes in their beliefs and values regarding civic engagement, while only twenty-eight percent of control group participants reported positive changes in their beliefs and values regarding civic engagement. This is double the number of experimental participants as compared to students who experienced traditional instruction. In contrast, the opposite was true for no change in beliefs and values regarding civic engagement; the experimental group only had thirty percent of participants state they did not change their beliefs and values. However, fifty-nine percent of control group participants stated their beliefs and values regarding civic engagement had not changed. One participant from the control group reported, "No. My feelings haven't changed about civic engagement. Not negative nor positive change."

The responses to this question suggest that students who participated in the legislative assembly simulation had much more positive beliefs and values regarding civic engagement than students who participated in traditional instruction. Thus, while the responses to the quantitative survey did not statistically support a change in attitude, as measured by beliefs and values, participants' word choice suggested a shift in their perspective. One participant from the experimental group stated, “At first, I thought that civic engagement was kinda dumb and useless. After learning about it more I now understand the importance of it and how it affects my community.” Another said, “My feelings for civic engagement have changed positively from the definition. The definition makes civic engagement seem like it's something that needs to be done in a community and I didn't always see it like that.” The responses from the experimental group suggest a positive shift in the perspective of participants regarding civic engagement. The simulation helped the students move beyond the simple, technical definition to a deeper understanding of how it fits into their lives (Elias et al., 1997).

Like question one, responses to question two were twice as positive from the experimental group than they were the control group. Seventy-seven percent of participants stated there were activities we did in class that helped them learn how to be civically engaged compared to only twenty-eight percent of control group participants. Most of the responses from the experimental group mentioned participating in the mock assembly, writing bills, serving on committees, and voting. Most of the responses from the control group were “no” or “not really.” However, of the positive responses from the control group, students mentioned taking notes, or listening to the teacher. This data once again suggests that students were able to increase their beliefs and values about civic engagement and what it means to be an active participant in their communities from participation in the legislative assembly simulation. Research suggests that

when schools engage students in learning they are more likely to "become the productive, responsible, contributing members of society that we all want" (Elias et al., 1997, pp. 1-2). Utilizing simulations to teach civic engagement can benefit students because they are using their own voices and actions to understand the "why" behind the learning taking place (Elias et al., 1997). Additionally, this aligns with the research from the Judicially Speaking Program out of Colorado. Students participate in the program to learn about the judicial system through interactive programs and the state displays a youth volunteerism rate and voter rate that is higher than the national average (Shapiro & Brown, 2018). Students in Texas who participate in the iEngage program showed a larger interest in political activism and community engagement (Blevins et al., 2021).

The final question of the open-ended survey asked about participants' individual experiences from the intervention. Specifically, did the lessons or activities help them learn and encourage them to become more involved in their communities? Ninety percent of participants from the experimental group gave positive responses to this question. One participant stated,

> *"Doing the mock assembly definitely helped me a lot. Before we did it, I did not understand how the process works, it just didn't make sense. I have a really hard time understanding government and mock assemblies. But the mock assembly helped me understand."*

Another participant said,

> *"I felt that my participation in the Mock Assembly has helped me learn more about the government and how it works. It encouraged me to be a more engaged citizen. I now want to help my community by volunteering and doing other things."*

In contrast, only fifty-nine percent of the participants in the control group responded positively. One student stated,

> *"I personally hated when we learned from the textbook. It gave me no real way of learning because I can't learn by just reading it. It did not encourage me to be an active citizen because I had no way to access the book at home, so I had no way to finish my notes. Therefore, I deeply disliked learning from the book and hope to never do it again. I liked the study guides you made that really helped me study. I really enjoyed learning that way."*

In this same question, fifty-three percent of participants from the experimental group labeled their intervention as engaging while only six percent of control group participants used language in their responses that indicated they were engaged in their intervention. In contrast, only ten percent of experimental participants were uninterested or "bored" during the legislative assembly simulation. However, sixty-three percent of control group participants labeled their work as uninteresting or boring.

The experimental group had seventy-three percent of participants that stated the intervention helped to increase their understanding and helped them learn the material. One participant stated, "The mock assembly helped me visualize and learn more about how the legislature works. Seeing things in person helps me a lot more." Another stated,

> *"I definitely think it helped me learn because it gave me a better visualization of the process by witnessing it first hand. It seemed like something I might be interested in when I grow up and learn more about the subject."*

While the control groups had a relatively high number of participants that stated the control intervention helped them learn, it was still twenty percentage points lower than the

control group at fifty-three percent. One participant stated, “Well the textbooks didn't help me learn as much as the PowerPoints did but they both help me learn way more than what i knew beforehand.” Another stated, “I feel that the powerpoint presentations were a good way to help me learn, in contrast to the textbook. The powerpoints conveyed information fluently and smoothly.”

All the qualitative data indicates that students did increase their attitudes about civic engagement with the use of a legislative assembly simulation as compared to the control group who were taught the same material in a traditional manner with the use of textbooks, slide presentations, note-taking, and class discussions. This is in line with the findings in the Judicially Speaking Program out of Colorado (Shapiro & Brown, 2018), the iEngage program out of Texas (Blevins et al., 2021), and Maryland’s requirement that students complete a service-learning project to be eligible for high school graduation (Jeffrey & Sargrad, 2019). In each of these cases, attitudes towards civic engagement increased. Colorado has a youth voter participation rate higher than the national average (Shapiro & Brown, 2018). Texas students who participated in the iEngage summer camp showed a greater tendency towards civic engagement (Blevins et al., 2021). While Maryland Advanced Placement (AP) students perform in the top fifth of the nation on the AP Exam in United States Government.

As a follow-up to this study, a voluntary survey was sent via email to all participants in both the control and experimental groups about seven months after the study's conclusion. Participation in this study was limited to fifteen individual responses. Due to this limited participation, the data could not be evaluated and analyzed in the same way as the other data in the study. There simply was not enough response to draw strong conclusions about the long-term effect of the simulation on student behavior. However, of the fifteen responses, twelve were from

participants in the experimental group and only three were from participants in the control group. This four to one participation rate was telling. Participants from the experimental group were more likely to continue their duty to follow up on a study they were involved in than participants in the control group. All twelve of the experimental group participants that responded stated they feel it is important for people to get involved in their communities. One respondent stated, "*Yes, not only does it look good in colleges, but you are able to create lifelong bonds with friends and strangers. You get to know your community and can help create a place that you love.*" Another participant said,

> *"I do think it is important for people to get involved in their communities, especially kids and teens around my age. Our generation is what many decisions made now will affect so helping with the community will help make our world better for when we are adults."*

In contrast, of the three control group participants only one responded that they feel getting involved in the community was important. The other two participants did not answer this question. While no conclusive evidence can be drawn from this, the researcher did find it telling that the results were so much more positive from the participants in the experimental group than they were from the participants in the control group.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The first of these limitations is the limited diversity of demographics represented in the sample population. The sample for the research study was made up of four eighth grade classes in a suburban middle school in the southeastern region of the United States. These classes match the demographics of the school where the research was conducted. The school has a higher-than-average gifted population. One-third, thirty-three percent, of students are identified as gifted (Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2023).

Also, the school has a low population of economically disadvantaged students, with only nine percent qualifying for free and reduced lunch. The research conducted in this study could have different results in schools with a different population.

The next major limitation of this study was the instruments utilized to collect data. Each of the instruments has limitations that could affect the data. First, the assessment of student knowledge addresses the structure, functions, and processes of the Georgia legislative branch. It is efficient and standardized to assess consistent knowledge across both the control and the experimental groups. However, it is a multiple-choice assessment and therefore does not assess a greater depth of knowledge, a student's ability to think critically about the legislative branch, or their real-world application of the information. A better assessment of student knowledge would contain some multiple-choice items to measure factual knowledge and open-ended questions to assess students' deeper understanding and critical thinking about the subject being assessed (Black & William, 1998).

Second, the utilization of student reported survey data has major limitations that include self-reporting bias, social desirability bias, and they capture a limited depth of motivations and experiences (De Vaus, 2002). Eighth grade students are thirteen and fourteen years old and may not have taken the tests and surveys seriously. If students failed to complete the tasks seriously, it could lead to inaccurate and unreliable data. The tests and surveys used in this study were not calculated into students' grades and did not affect their overall performance in the class. Students were made aware that these tasks were not part of the grade calculation which could have led to less effort and focus on the instruments.

Additionally, the misconception that there is a more desirable and less desirable answer for the researcher on the surveys could have made students respond in a manner that is not

accurate to their personal beliefs and feelings (Tourangeau et al., 2000). To avoid this problem and minimize the impact of students trying to please the researcher, they were told that there was no right, or wrong answer and they should answer how they truthfully felt. Despite this, students could still have responded in a manner that was not reflective of their true beliefs and values. Finally, the survey does not consider varying opportunities that may be available to each individual student. It would be helpful to provide more open-ended questions in the initial survey so a deeper understanding of students' beliefs and values before and after participation in the study can be garnered.

This study could be improved in the future by utilizing a wide variety of instruments. Instead of pre- and post-tests it could be beneficial to utilize standardized achievement tests so that there is a wide scale comparison and the potential of teaching to the test is limited (Linn & Gronlund, 2000). In addition, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), suggest the use of attendance and participation data to indicate student engagement. While this data is not always specific to a certain pedagogical method and can be influenced by many factors, the participation data from observations and assignments could provide a larger picture of student engagement. When these quantitative methods are used in conjunction with qualitative instruments such as artifacts or portfolios, teacher reflection journals, focus groups, and interviews, the researcher would be able to gain insights beyond what just numerical data can display (Wolf, 2001).

Another limitation in this study was the length of time over which the study was conducted. This was a short-term study and does not represent longitudinal data which could impact civic beliefs and values. A long-term study would have the benefit of highlighting lasting impacts of the interventions and could provide better evidence of causal relationships between civic knowledge and civic attitudes and the type of intervention utilized (Shadish et al., 2002).

Still another limitation of the present study was the age of the participants and the background knowledge they bring to the study. Students thirteen and fourteen years old are at the mercy of their parents and older siblings to get around the community to participate in many civic events. They do not necessarily have the social maturity necessary to grasp the concept of civic engagement. Due to this age limitation, results could be drastically different with older students who are sixteen or seventeen years of age. Additionally, students at this age in the state of Georgia have never had a stand-alone civics class. Instead, their previous knowledge of civics and government has been limited to a single unit in a social studies, geography, or history class. The eighth-grade curriculum where this study took place is state history with civics and government standards comprising one unit in the spring semester. Results of this study could be different in a stand-alone civics class.

Implications for Future Application

This study outlines two implications for future research. First, one of the major limitations of this study was the length of data collection and measurement. The research shows beliefs, values, and behaviors in a short-term study (Niemi & Chapman, 1999; & Verba et al., 1995). Therefore, conducting a longitudinal study of the same nature could provide more conclusive results. A long-term study would need to follow two groups of participants, a control group, and an experimental group from eighth grade through high school to determine if there is a significant difference in knowledge attained and attitudes toward civic engagement, that can be traced back to an experiential learning model as compared to traditional instruction. To accomplish a study of this nature, a much larger sample size is needed to account for the attrition of any participants. Additionally, a larger group of researchers would need to be trained in experiential practices, especially the use of simulations, to teach government standards.

Additionally, better measures of civic knowledge and attitudes towards civic engagement need to be investigated to improve data results. An assessment of knowledge should include multiple question formats and a broader knowledge base to encompass more than just the legislative branch of state government.

The second implication for future research is to replicate the study on a larger scale in multiple schools with varying demographics. Since the population of this study consisted of a higher socio-economic class and a higher-than-average gifted population, it would be beneficial to replicate the study in schools with varying populations to determine if the results are comparable to the results garnered in this study. Again, due to the limitations regarding the instruments used in this study, exploration, and adoption of different instruments is recommended. The assessment of civic knowledge should include multiple question formats, including open-ended constructed response and multiple choice. Additionally, surveys should be analyzed and consider changing the Likert-type scale used given the age of the participants. A future study may want to consider the use of student interviews or focus groups along with surveys that have more open-ended questions to better garner students' values and beliefs. Given the target age of thirteen or fourteen, for the participants in this study, the use of a simplified four-point Likert-type scale or dichotomous (yes/no) questions could allow for less ambiguity from the participants (DeVellis, 2017).

Conclusion

The current research study produced mixed results as evidence that a legislative assembly simulation is an effective instructional tool for teaching students about government and increasing attitudes towards civic engagement. The results can be likened to the results of the eight-year study that took place in the 1930s. The eight-year study looked at thirty different

secondary schools across the country that were implementing more progressive and experimental pedagogical practices. These practices were designed with students' needs being met along with meeting curricular goals (Bass, 2012). Much of the work of the thirty schools was drawn from Dewey's ideas that "needs came to be recognized as growing out of a mutually defining interrelationship, a transaction between individual[s] and [their] surroundings" (Kridel & Bullough, 2007, p. 122). The study found that students could learn and become prepared for college in both traditional ways and using experiential learning. However, students involved with the more progressive and needs-based curriculum of the study schools were more active in social activities, politics, and artistic endeavors in the long-term (Kridel & Bullough, 2007).

Like the eight-year study, this study showed that students can learn the curriculum surrounding the government and civics standards in both traditional methods and using simulations through experiential learning. However, there was a greater level of engagement and excitement about the material in the experimental group. Due to the short-term nature of this study, the researcher cannot compare the long-term results of the eight-year study to the results attained. However, the data qualitative data is promising. Participants in the experimental group were, overall, more engaged and had more positive changes in their beliefs and values about becoming civically involved than students in the control group.

When looking specifically at increasing knowledge, there is no evidence that suggests the legislative assembly simulation was any more effective than traditional methods of instruction. However, students did learn the content, at least as well as, if not slightly better than, the students receiving traditional instruction. While the simulation did take more time and planning from the teacher on the front end, the work of learning was accomplished by the students throughout the activities. During the simulation, the participants did the work while the teacher simply

moderated where necessary. For this reason, the simulation activity was beneficial and worth the extra preparations and planning on the front end. During the activities, the participants were lively and engaged. There was critical thinking, communication with peers, collaboration, problem solving, and adapting taking place throughout the ten days of the experiment. The classroom almost buzzed with the excited energy of the participants as they performed real-world tasks that were meaningful and fun. An observer in the room would see some students engaged in research on Chromebooks, others editing and writing at their desks alone or in small groups, and still others debating and arguing points of a bill or policy they were working on.

In contrast, the control group was quiet, lethargic, and unengaged for much of their learning. The planning on the front end of the unit was not as intense, but the educator had to do all the work throughout the ten-day unit. Students are casual observers in the learning process. They simply sit and get the information handed to them. There is no ownership or active engagement from students. In this situation, their job is simply to learn the information well enough to pass the end of unit test. An observer in the traditional classroom would see a teacher standing at the front of the room and telling the participants what the work is that other people do in the government. Participants sit quietly at their desk, writing in notebooks. Many have their heads down and are even fighting to keep their eyes open or daydreaming about what they will do after school lets out for the day. The room is quiet, save for the teachers talking and the occasional question by a student. While this has been shown to be an effective manner to teach content, it is not as fun or engaging. Students are not required to collaborate with their peers or think critically about the content. There are no problems for them to work through and no need for them to adapt their own thinking.

Simulations promote active participation, critical thinking and problem-solving, and application of real-world knowledge that can help to bridge the gap between theory, as obtained in a traditional lesson, and real life (Alessi & Trollip, 2001). There are also the social and emotional benefits of learning collaboration, teamwork, empathy, and perspective-taking that are not easily taught in a traditional classroom (Dede, 2009; & Dieker et al., 2015).

The real takeaway here is simulations are not a magic fix for everything that is wrong with civic education today, but they are an amazing tool for educators to use. They bridge the gap between theory and practice and help to bring the real-world into the classroom. Simulations can cultivate informed and engaged citizens who understand their role and power in shaping the communities they live in. Educators need to be equipped with the resources and training they need to effectively conduct simulations. By doing so, classrooms can be more exciting, engaging, and alive. Simulations help to place students at the center of their own learning and allow for ownership of content. They are an extremely powerful tool in helping to create a more engaged and civically responsible future generation.

Appendix A

Civics and Government Assessment

SS8CG2 Analyze the role of the legislative branch in Georgia.
A. Explain the qualifications for members of the General Assembly and its role as the lawmaking body of Georgia.
B. Describe the purpose of the committee system within the Georgia General Assembly.
C. Explain the process for making a law in Georgia.
D. Describe how state government is funded and how spending decisions are made.

1. The General Assembly is divided into ___ chambers.
    a. The General Assembly functions as one unit.
    b. 2 chambers
    c. 3 chambers
    d. 4 chambers

2. What is the primary function of the General Assembly?
    a. enforce state law
    b. interpret state law
    c. make state laws
    d. veto bills before they can become laws

3. Which of the following meet the qualifications for becoming a Georgia state senator?
    a. An 18-year-old who has always lived in Georgia and is a U.S. citizen
    b. A 21 year old who moved into Georgia 5 years ago and is a U.S. citizen
    c. A 25 year old who lives in Alabama but has worked in Georgia for 15 years and is a U.S. citizen
    d. A 30 year old who has lived in Georgia for 3 years and is a U.S. citizen

4. Which of the following meet the qualifications for becoming a member of Georgia's State House of Representatives?
    a. A 21 year old who moved into Georgia 4 years ago and is working towards citizenship
    b. A 27 year old who has lived in Georgia for 1 year and is a U.S. citizen
    c. A 44 year old who was born, raised, and has always lived in Georgia and is a U.S. citizen
    d. A 32 year old who has lived in the United States for 14 years, moved to Georgia 3 weeks ago, and just became a U.S. citizen

5. In order to be either a Georgia state representative or senator, a person must... (Check all that apply.)
    a. Be born in the United States
    b. Be a U.S. citizen
    c. Be born in Georgia
    d. Be a resident of Georgia for at least 25 years
    e. Be a resident of Georgia for one year
    f. Be a resident of Georgia for at least 2 years
    g. Be a resident of the district they represent for at least 1 year
    h. Be at least 30 years old

6. Both Georgia state senators and representatives serve for ____ years.
    a. 2
    b. 3
    c. 4
    d. 6

7. Which of the following represents a duty required by the General Assembly?
    a. Serve on a standing committee
    b. Serve on a conference committee
    c. Manage the state budget
    d. Direct the work of the executive branch

8. Which of the following is NOT a role of the Georgia General Assembly?
    a. Collecting taxes
    b. Redistricting the state
    c. Passing the state's operating budget
    d. Voting to place constitutional amendments on election ballot

9. The Georgia State Senate is made up of ___ members.
    a. 21
    b. 29
    c. 56
    d. 91
    e. 180

10. The Georgia State House of Representatives is made up of ___ members.
    a. 21
    b. 29
    c. 56

d. 91
e. 180

11. Members of both chambers work together to coordinate, investigate, or pursue certain studies. Determine which type of committee is being described.
    a. Standing Committee
    b. Ad-Hoc Committee
    c. Joint Committee
    d. Conference Committee

12. When different bills have been created in each chamber, a committee is formed with members from both chambers in an attempt to work together to form identical bills. Determine which type of committee is being described.
    a. Standing Committee
    b. Ad-Hoc Committee
    c. Joint Committee
    d. Conference Committee

13. A temporary committee formed for a special purpose; also known as a select committee. Determine which type of committee is being described.
    a. Standing Committee
    b. Ad-Hoc Committee
    c. Joint Committee
    d. Conference Committee

14. A permanent committee that continues every legislative session with a particular focus. Determine which type of committee is being described.
    a. Standing Committee
    b. Ad-Hoc Committee
    c. Joint Committee
    d. Conference Committee

15. The majority of the work of the General Assembly happens in committee. What is the general purpose of the committee system?
    a. To pass the state's operating budget
    b. To override a governor's veto
    c. To enforce laws that have been passed by the governor
    d. To review and study bills and make recommendations to the General Assembly

16. Who formally introduces a bill to the General Assembly?

a. any Georgia citizen
b. any member of the General Assembly
c. only the State Governor
d. the Speaker of the House or State Lieutenant Governor

17. Both houses of the General Assembly must vote on _____ bills before the bill can be sent to the governor for approval.
    a. similar
    b. different
    c. separate
    d. identical

18. A bill must be voted on and passed with _____ of the votes from both chambers.
    a. at least 25%
    b. at least 2/3
    c. a majority
    d. 100%

19. True or False: The Governor has the final decision concerning whether a bill becomes a law. If he decides to veto the bill, the General Assembly has no power to change the veto.
    a. True, the governor is seen as the final authority in the state.
    b. False, the General Assembly can ignore the governor's veto and after 40 days the bill will become law.
    c. False, the General Assembly never sends the bill to the governor for approval. The General Assembly has final authority and power over making laws.
    d. False, the General Assembly can override a governor's veto if 2/3 of the General Assembly vote to pass the bill.

20. When disagreement over a bill occurs between the State House of Representatives and the State Senate, the bill must go before a committee to attempt to resolve the disagreement so the bill can become law. What type of committee is created to resolve the differences in the created bill?
    a. Standing Committee
    b. Ad-Hoc Committee
    c. Joint Committee
    d. Conference Committee

21. After a bill is formally introduced, the bill is assigned to what type of committee?
    a. Standing Committee
    b. Ad-Hoc Committee

c. Joint Committee
d. Conference Committee

22. What role does the General Assembly have in ensuring the state government is funded?
    a. The General Assembly is responsible for balancing the state budget.
    b. The General Assembly is responsible for determining the source of revenue and how it will be collected.
    c. The General Assembly is responsible for collecting sales tax.
    d. The General Assembly is not responsible for funding the state government.

23. What is the highest source of revenue for funding the state government?
    a. State lottery
    b. Individual income taxes
    c. General sales taxes
    d. Fees on licenses
    e. Property taxes

24. What is the second highest source of revenue for funding the state government?
    a. State lottery
    b. Individual income taxes
    c. General sales taxes
    d. Fees on licenses
    e. Property taxes

25. The state government's primary source of revenue is through taxes. Which of the following are sources of revenue that are not generated through taxation? (Check all that apply.)
    a. Fees on park entry
    b. Money collected on the purchase of gasoline, alcohol, and tobacco
    c. Fees paid for various licenses
    d. Money collected from property ownership
    e. State lottery
    f. Money collected from purchases made at retail stores

Note. Adapted from Bednar, H., 2019. *Branches of state government*. Moving Towards Mastery, GA.

Appendix B

Civic Engagement Amongst Middle School Adolescents

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding your civic participation and beliefs.

Civic Beliefs and Values	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I can make a positive difference in my community.	1	2	3	4	5	6
There are ways for me to get involved in my community.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I can solve real-life problems in my community.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have a responsibility to improve my community.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have a responsibility to help others in my community.	1	2	3	4	5	6
It is important to me to consider the needs of other people in my community.	1	2	3	4	5	6
It is important to me to help those less fortunate than myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
It is important to make sure all people in my community are treated fairly.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Indicate how often you engage in the following activities with 1 being never and 6 being always.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
I share school supplies with a fellow student who needs them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I listen to people talk about politics even when I know that I already disagree with them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I talk with my friends and family about times when people are treated unfairly.	1	2	3	4	5	6

If I do something wrong, I take responsibility for my behavior.	1	2	3	4	5	6
				Total	_____/72	

Note. Adapted from Syvertsen et al. (2015). Youth civic and character measures toolkit. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute.

Civic Engagement Scale for Middle School Adolescents: Initially the scale was created to demonstrate how young people become good citizens, and to understand the origins of youth civic participation. I have modified the scale to use as a measure for understanding adolescents' feelings and opinions about civic engagement both before and after participation in an Action Civics approach to learning about government and civic participation. The scale will be utilized as a pretest and post-test to measure the changes in student attitudes towards civic engagement. The scale will measure both attitude changes and level of engagement prior to the implementation of the program and after participation in the academic program.

Appendix C

Civics and Government Open Ended Survey - Experiment

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines civic engagement as: "individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern." More specifically, civic engagement includes many activities, including voting, participation in marches and protests, signing petitions, coordinating and raising money for community projects and causes, volunteering, attending community meetings, and even participating in polite political discussions on social media sites and blogs.

Considering the definition of civic engagement above, how, if at all, have your feelings changed about civic engagement? Be specific.	
Was there anything we did in class that helped you learn about civic engagement and active participation as a citizen over other things we did? Explain in detail.	
What are some ways you feel you could get involved in your school community and the local area? Be specific.	
How, if at all, has your attention to issues in the community and state changed since we completed the government unit of study?	
How did you feel about participation in the Mock Legislative Assembly (consider all steps of the assembly from writing your bill, participation in committees, and participation in the large assembly on March 28th? Did it help you learn? How? Did it encourage you to be a more engaged citizen? How? Be specific and give as many details as you can think of.	

Appendix C

Civics and Government Open Ended Survey - Control

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines civic engagement as: "individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern." More specifically, civic engagement includes many activities, including voting, participation in marches and protests, signing petitions, coordinating and raising money for community projects and causes, volunteering, attending community meetings, and even participating in polite political discussions on social media sites and blogs.

Considering the definition of civic engagement above, how, if at all, have your feelings changed about civic engagement? Be specific.	
Was there anything we did in class that helped you learn about civic engagement and active participation as a citizen over other things we did? Explain in detail.	
What are some ways you feel you could get involved in your school community and the local area? Be specific.	
How, if at all, has your attention to issues in the community and state changed since we completed the government unit of study?	
How did you feel about the readings and lessons we did from the textbook and powerpoint presentations? Did they help you learn? How? Did they encourage you to be a more engaged citizen? How? Be specific and give as many details as you can think of.	

Appendix D

Survey of Civic Engagement Indicators

	Yes, within the last 12 months	Yes, but not within the last 12 months	No, Never
Have you ever worked together with someone or some group to solve a problem in the community where you live?			
Have you volunteered or done any voluntary community service for no pay?			
Have you personally walked, ran, or bicycled for a charitable cause (this is different from sponsoring or giving money to this type of event)?			
Have you personally taken part in a protest, march, or walk?			
Have you ever boycotted (not bought something) from a certain company because you disagree with the social or political values of the company that produces it?			
Have you ever bought something because you like the social or political values of the company that produces or provides it?			

Indicate whether you have volunteered with any of the following types of organizations or groups

	Yes, I volunteer once a month or more	Yes, I have volunteered within the last 12 months	Yes, but it has been more than 12 months	No, Never
Religious Group				
Environmental Organization				

Civic or Community Organization				
An organization for youth, children, or education				
Any other group				

Do you belong to or donate money to any groups or associations either locally or nationally such as charities, labor unions, professional associations, political or social groups, sports, or youth groups, and so forth?

	Active Member	Member, but not active	Given money only	No
Charities				
Political Groups				
Social Groups				
Sports Groups				
Youth Groups				

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding your civic participation and beliefs.

Civic Beliefs and Values	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I can make a positive difference in my community.	1	2	3	4	5	6
There are ways for me to get involved in my community.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I can solve real-life problems in my community.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have a responsibility to improve my community.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have a responsibility to help others in my community.	1	2	3	4	5	6
It is important to me to consider the needs of other people in my community.	1	2	3	4	5	6

It is important to me to help those less fortunate than myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
It is important to make sure all people in my community are treated fairly.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I share school supplies with a fellow student who needs them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I listen to people talk about politics even when I know that I already disagree with them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
I talk with my friends and family about times when people are treated unfairly.	1	2	3	4	5	6
If I do something wrong, I take responsibility for my behavior.	1	2	3	4	5	6
				Total	_____/72	

What are some ways you feel you could get involved in your school community and the local area? Be specific.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Do you think it is important for people to get involved in their communities? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix E

Parental Permission to Participate in a Research Study (12-14 year olds)
"Promoting Civic Engagement Amongst Middle School Adolescents Through Simulation Based Teaching Models "

Principal Investigator: Karrie L. Palmer, Kennesaw State University
678-849-7028
palmer.karrie@fcboe.org
kpalme51@students.kennesaw.edu

Your child is being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this form will help you decide if you want to allow your child to take part in the study. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

Overview and purpose
The purpose of this study is to investigate if simulation-based activities through action civics is an effective way to increase students' understanding of civics and government and improve their civic knowledge and attitudes towards engagement. The researcher plans to utilize a quasi-experimental design in order to determine if student knowledge and attitudes about civic engagement increase after participation in a mock state legislative assembly as compared with traditional instruction consisting of lecture, use of a textbook, and class discussion.
The researcher, Karrie L. Palmer, is conducting this research study in partial fulfillment of the requirements to obtain a Doctoral Degree in Middle and Secondary Social Studies through Kennesaw State University's Bagwell College of Education.

Description of your involvement
If you consent to your child's participation in this study, he/she will participate in class activities, including assessments, as they normally would. The assessments, and activities involved in this study are part of the standard curriculum used in our social studies class.The only additional information collected will be a survey of your child's attitudes towards civic engagement as measured by their civic beliefs and values, perceived civic behavior, and attitudes towards civic participation. All surveys will be given during class and no additional time outside of the normal school day will be required.

Voluntary nature of the study
Participating in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose not to allow your child to participate there will be no penalty to his/her grade and they will not receive instruction that is any different than their peers. They will participate in the lessons and activities with the rest of the class; however, their data will be excluded from the analysis of the study.

Benefits
While your child may not receive a direct benefit beyond learning the required standards from participating, others may benefit from the knowledge obtained in this study.

Risks
There is minimal risk from participation in this research study. The risk involved does not exceed the risk taken in the regular, daily activities of attending school. All precautions will be taken to protect personal information including coding individual data and limiting access to the data beyond the research team.

Confidentiality
I plan to publish the results of this study, but will not include any information that would identify your child or family. I will take steps to protect your child's privacy, but there is a small risk that your information could be accidentally disclosed to people not connected to the research. To reduce this risk the researcher code the data to eliminate personally identifying information and will enter the data on a secure server with limited access. To protect confidentiality, your child's name and any family member's name(s) will not be used in any discussions or connections to the data.
There are some reasons why people other than the initial researcher may need to see information provided as part of the study. This includes organizations responsible for making sure the research is done safely and properly, including faculty from Kennesaw State University or the school system where research is being conducted. Additionally the data may be used for future research studies without obtaining additional consent. However, all identifiers will be removed before any data is shared.

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, irb@kennesaw.edu.

If you agree to allow your minor child to participate in this research study, please sign below:

_____ _____
Printed name of minor child Printed name of parent/guardian

_____ _____
Signature of parent/guardian giving consent for minor child Date

_____ _____
Signature of Investigator, Date

_____
PLEASE SIGN BOTH COPIES OF THIS FORM, KEEP ONE AND RETURN THE OTHER TO THE INVESTIGATOR

Appendix F

Research Study Assent Form (11-14 Year Age Range)

Name of Minor: _____ Parental Permission on File: ☐Yes ☐No

Study Title: Promoting Civic Engagement Amongst Middle School Adolescents Through Simulation Based Teaching Models

Researchers: Karrie L. Palmer
678-849-7028
palmer.karrie@fcboe.org
kpalme51@students.kennesaw.edu

My name is *Karrie L. Palmer*. I am from Kennesaw State University.

- I am inviting you to be in a research study about *the civics and government standards we will learn in eighth grade and the best way to learn these standards.*
- Your parents know we are going to ask you to be in this research study, but you get to make the final choice. It is up to you. If you decide to be in the study, we will ask you to complete a pretest to see what you already know about state government and complete a survey to see what your attitudes are about civic engagement. Then, you will p*articipate in the class lessons on state government the way you normally would. At the end of the unit, you will take the test and the survey a second time. All of this work will be done in class and will not require your time outside of the normal school day.*

Benefits
While you may not receive a direct benefit beyond learning the required standards from participating, others may benefit from the knowledge obtained in this study.

Risks
There is minimal risk from participation in this research study. The risk involved does not exceed the risk taken in the regular, daily activities of attending school.

- If anything in the study worries you or makes you uncomfortable, let me know and you can withdraw your participation at any time.
- Everything you say and do will be private. We won't tell your parents or anyone else what you say or do while you are taking part in the study. When we tell other people about what we learned in the study, we won't tell them your name or the name of anyone else who took part in the research study.

You don't have to be in this study. It is up to you. You can say no now, or you can change your mind later. No one will be upset if you change your mind. Participating in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate there will be no penalty to your grade and you will not receive instruction that is any different than your peers. Your data will simply be

excluded from the analysis of the study.

You can ask me questions at any time, and you can talk to your parents any time you want. I will give you a copy of this form that you can keep. Here is my name and phone number if you have questions about the study:

Name *Karrie L. Palmer* **Phone number (*678)-849-7028***

Do you have any questions now that I can answer for you?

IF YOU WANT TO BE IN THE STUDY, SIGN OR PRINT YOUR NAME ON THE LINE BELOW:

_____ _____

Signature of Minor Date

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher obtaining assent Date

Appendix G

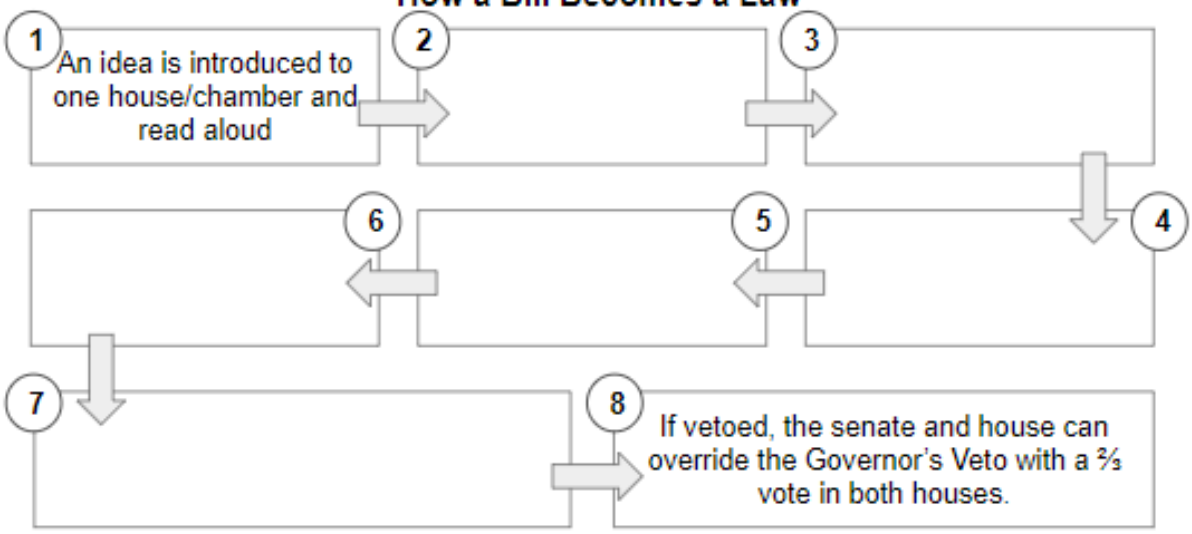
Student Graphic Organizer

The Legislative Branch of Georgia

Also known as _____ It is a Bicameral Legislature which means: Main Job:	
Senate	House of Representative
Term: Requirements: Number in Georgia:	Term: Requirements: Number in Georgia:

What is the purpose of the Committee System:	
Types of Committees	
Standing Committees	
Ad-Hoc Committees	
Joint Committees	
Conference Committees	

How a Bill Becomes a Law



In order to complete the graphic organizer, please research the Legislative Branch of Georgia's Government using the following resources.

- Georgia.gov - The Official Website of the State of Georgia
- Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB)
    - State Government - The Legislature
    - Legislative Committees - Peach State Politics
- New Georgia Encyclopedia - Government and Laws

The Georgia Journey Textbook - Chapter 5 Lesson 2 (pp. 148-153)

Appendix H

Green Tree Frog Legislation

Georgia Senate Bill 41

On May 9, 2005, Governor Sonny Purdue signed Senate Bill No. 41 into law making the green tree frog the "official Georgia state amphibian.

05 LC 28 1909

By: Senator Smith of the 52nd

PASSED

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

To amend Article 3 of Chapter 3 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to state symbols, so as to designate the green tree frog as the official state amphibian; to provide for legislative findings; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

The General Assembly finds and determines that:

(1) The green tree frog's (hyla cinerea) habitat includes nearly all of Georgia, so virtually all Georgians are familiar with it or have a great opportunity to see its conspicuous bright color and striped markings;

(2) Large aggregations of calling males create conspicuous and characteristic nighttime choruses during the warm months;

(3) All other major groups of wildlife, including mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, insects, trees, and wildflowers, are represented by state symbols, and amphibians are a crucial link in the state's

ecosystem;

(4) Official recognition of a state amphibian could help correct the false impression that amphibians and reptiles are one and the same;

(5) The State of Georgia is home to 85 different species of amphibians, which gives it the distinction of having the second greatest amphibian diversity of any state in the United States behind North Carolina;

(6) Well-publicized world-wide decline of amphibians has become a major conservation concern and the exclusion of amphibians from our official state symbols list could possibly contribute to a sense of complacency towards this loss of biota;

(7) Amphibians are excellent indicators of water and air quality due to their porous skin and habit of moving between aquatic and terrestrial habitats, and declines in their numbers can serve as early warning signs that environmental conditions may be deteriorating in localized areas; and

(8) Establishing an official state amphibian is necessary to fully recognize our diverse wildlife and the green tree frog is deserving of the attention and appreciation of the citizens of this state by designation as the official state amphibian.

SECTION 2.

Article 3 of Chapter 3 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to state symbols, is amended by adding a new Code Section 50-3-81 to read as follows:

"50-3-81.

The green tree frog is designated as the official Georgia state amphibian."

SECTION 3.

All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.

The law designating the green tree frog as the official Georgia state game amphibian is Section 50-3-81 (Official amphibian) of the Georgia Code Title 50 (State Government) Chapter 3 (State Flag, Seal, & other symbols) SECTION 50-3-81.

TITLE 50. STATE GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER 3. STATE FLAG, SEAL, AND OTHER SYMBOLS

ARTICLE 3. OTHER STATE SYMBOLS

O.C.G.A.§ 50-3-81 (2007)

§ 50-3-81. Official amphibian

The green tree frog is designated as the official Georgia state amphibian.

HISTORY: Code 1981, § 50-3-81, enacted by Ga. L. 2005, p. 316, §2/SB 41.

Taken from: Ferguson (2005). *Georgia State amphibian*. Georgia State Amphibian: Green Tree Frog. https://www.ereferencedesk.com/resources/state-symbols/georgia/amphibian.html

Appendix I

ASSEMBLY, No. 2271
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
220th LEGISLATURE
INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 7, 2022

Sponsored by: Assemblywoman CAROL A. MURPHY
District 7 (Burlington)

SYNOPSIS

Designates cranberry juice as State beverage.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT: As introduced.

AN ACT designating cranberry juice as the State beverage.

WHEREAS, A fruit native to North America, the cranberry grows on an evergreen shrub that thrives in wet areas, such as bogs or wetlands; and

WHEREAS, The history of cranberries predates the arrival of the first European settlers in the Western Hemisphere as cranberries were a staple of the diets of Native-Americans; and

WHEREAS, The Lenni Lenape people from southern New Jersey harvested wild cranberries and used the fruit in a variety of remedies, foods, and drinks; and

WHEREAS, In New Jersey, commercial cranberry farming began in 1835 in a bog in Burlington County and New Jersey is now the third largest cranberry producing state in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Records indicate that cranberries sold for as much as $50 a barrel in the 1840s when merchants sold cranberries to sailors who consumed the fruit for its high Vitamin C content to help ward off scurvy; and

WHEREAS, In 1917, Elizabeth Lee of New Jersey was the first person to create cranberry sauce from the berries and later joined forces with other farmers to start the company that became known as Ocean Spray, famous for its bottled cranberry juice; and

WHEREAS, Research indicates that cranberry juice is full of nutrients that may have significant health benefits by boosting the immune system; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey does not have a State beverage and it is fitting and proper to formally recognize the significance of cranberries to the history and culture of our State and its people by designating cranberry juice as the State beverage; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. Cranberry juice is designated as the State beverage.
2. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill designates cranberry juice as the State beverage. The bill was inspired by the advocacy of the fourth-grade classes in Cinnaminson township schools in New Jersey.

New Jersey is the third largest cranberry producing state in the United States. The history of cranberries predates the arrival of the first European settlers in the Western Hemisphere as cranberries were a staple of the diets of Native-Americans. In New Jersey, commercial cranberry farming began in 1835 in a bog in Burlington County and New Jersey is now the third largest cranberry producing state in the United States. In 1917, Elizabeth Lee of New Jersey was the first person to create cranberry sauce from the berries and later joined forces with other farmers to start the company that became known as Ocean Spray.

Research indicates that cranberry juice is full of nutrients that may have significant health benefits. New Jersey does not have a State beverage and it is fitting and proper to formally recognize the significance of cranberries to the history and culture of our State and its people by designating cranberry juice as the State beverage.

Taken From: Murphy (2022). *An act designating cranberry juice as the state beverage*. A2271. https://pub.njleg.gov/Bills/2022/A2500/2271_I1.HTM

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