Why Wasn't Participation in Government Enough? A Historical Policy Analysis of PIG and the Seal of Civic Readiness

Karen Poland
Assistant Professor, Niagara University

Elizabeth Falzone
Assistant Professor, Niagara University

Dana F. Serure
Assistant Professor, SUNY Buffalo State University

New York State has long been a leader in educational reform, including initiating efforts to enhance civic education. For example, in 1985, concerns regarding the civic and economic literacy of the state's youth prompted the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to mandate a fourth credit in social studies education. This fourth credit required students in their senior year to take two new half-credit courses, Participation in Government (PIG) and Economics. When President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, its emphasis on college, career, and civic readiness provided an additional incentive for NYSED to review its approach to civic education. Shortly afterward, NYSED introduced a new initiative, the Seal of Civic Readiness (SoCR), raising questions among educators regarding the future of PIG and its relationship to the SoCR. This paper provides a historical policy analysis of PIG and the SoCR within the context of civic education and ESSA. The intent is to answer the question, why was PIG not enough, by contrasting the two policies and providing four considerations for stakeholders as the SoCR gains popularity across the state and nationwide.

Keywords: Participation in Government, Seal of Civic Readiness, Civics, Civic Education, New York State Education Policy, ESSA

Throughout the years, New York State has maintained a prominent role in spearheading education reform initiatives. From requiring a master's degree for teacher certification to integrating academic credit into career and technical education, NYS has been a leader in educational reform. The same has been the case with civic education. In 1985, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) recognized the need to promote civic education by mandating a 12th-grade half-credit course titled Participation in Government (PIG). Paired with a half-credit economics course, this endeavor aimed to combat "civic and economic illiteracy" by

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Karen Poland, Niagara University College of Education, 5795 Lewiston Rd, Academic Complex 323 Niagara University, NY 14109 Email:kpoland@niagara.edu

enhancing the civic understanding and competency of the state's youth. In addition, it established a new graduation requirement for students, mandating four years of social studies to graduate, a stipulation not all states require even today. Despite these efforts, recent headlines decrying the purported decline of democracy and advocating for reforms such as the abolition of the electoral college prompt reflection: Why wasn't PIG enough? And will a Seal of Civic Readiness (SoCR) be the answer?

There are several plausible reasons why New York State is adjusting its approach to civic education. One possibility is that the creation of the fourth year of social studies and the Participation in Government (PIG) course was sufficient, but it has not been adequately researched to assess its effectiveness. A second reason could be that research was conducted, but the data measures used to assess the program's effectiveness do not accurately reflect current civic engagement, indicating a misalignment between the measures and the policy goals or that data do not account for changes in American society. A third plausible reason could be that PIG has been taught in isolation as a standalone course and has not been integrated with community action. While these reasons are not exhaustive, the most likely explanation could be the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965) known as the Every Student Succeeds Act, (ESSA, 2015).

Regardless of whether PIG was or was not enough, NYSED is now implementing the Seal of Civic Readiness (SoCR), partly due to federal policy changes. Thus, this paper seeks to provide a historical policy analysis of the two educational reform efforts—PIG and the SoCR—within the context of civic education and in relation to ESSA. By doing so, we hope to encourage educators and researchers to collaborate in establishing best practices to ensure the SoCR effectively prepares today's youth to be civic-minded. We hope that through collaboration

and action-based research, we can monitor the implementation of this new and innovative practice, provide continuous recommendations for best practices, and avoid looking back forty years from now questioning the effectiveness of the SoCR.

Historical Context of Civics Education

While the concept of a SoCR is relatively new, the aspirations behind the ideals of teaching civics have had a long and complex path that is deeply intertwined with the history of public schooling and educational policy (Murphy, 2007). While exploring the intricate historical nuances of the term "civics" and the various typologies of citizens, which are beyond the scope of this paper, the term "civics" denotes a separate subject that promotes the foundational knowledge of American democracy and an active attitude toward civic participation at all levels of the republic (National Council, 2023). From its origins to its contemporary state, civic education has undergone various transformations in purpose and implementation, ranging from a stand-alone course to a conceptual theme woven into social studies courses. Inspiring civic engagement in America's youth has been viewed by many as one way to preserve the fragile democratic experiment (Beadie & Burkholder, 2021; Murphy, 2007; O'Brien, 2021; Quigley,1999; Ziegler, 2023).

Dating back to Thomas Jefferson's unsuccessful endeavors in Virginia to advance affordable public education as a means to weed out those not worthy of governance to Horace Mann's subsequent successful initiatives in Massachusetts during the 1830s and 1840s to establish universal schooling, public education has consistently been valued as a means to uphold essential civic and moral principles crucial for a prosperous democracy. By the late 1800s, an emphasis on civic education arose in response to the waves of immigrants arriving in America, followed by World War I and World War II. This historical intention of civic education focused

on developing students' national loyalty and promoting conformity to societal rules, fostering the social and economic integration of the broader population (Carleton, 2009; Ziegler, 2023; Kaplan et al., 2023).

By the early 1900s, civic education encompassed not only the founding principles of American government and constitutional law but content that explored the complex interplay of civic literacy and civic engagement, with a focus on developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions in students needed for active and meaningful interaction with the government. As a result of the National Education Association's 1916 Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education and the Civics Study Group, followed by the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* in 1918, civics became a recommended stand-alone community-oriented subject to be taught in 9th and 12th grades. The subject promoted an active attitude toward participation in the democratic process at the local, state, and federal levels, a willingness to address societal issues, and a subject that was not affiliated with a political ideology or party. (Cogan, 1999; O'Brien, 2021; Quigley, 1999).

Unfortunately, the promotion of civics as a stand-alone discipline would be short-lived. The emergence of social studies as a blended social science discipline, encompassing civics alongside geography, history, and other social sciences in the late 1930s, coupled with a political shift in the post-World War II era emphasizing the significance of science education to safeguard American democracy, presented challenges to the continued emphasis on civic education. As Healy (2022) argues, the disregard for social studies and civics education can be attributed to a continuous oversight that has been influenced by prolonged education policies at both state and federal levels. These policies have emphasized testing in fundamental literacy areas such as English Language Arts and math, often providing financial incentives. Consequently, civic

education has suffered from a persistent lack of funding, spanning across both federal and local domains, despite efforts to the contrary (Healy, 2022, p.1).

Nonetheless, following the post-1945 war era, a gradual decline has been observed in the emphasis on civic education, often supplanted by what some consider essential proficiencies in English, math, and science. As Quigley (1999) stated almost twenty years ago, civic education is likened to:

> A desert is appropriate because I think that civic education, as a formal part of the curriculum that is translated into effective instruction, does not exist in many schools in the United States today…at most fifteen percent of students at the pre-collegiate level receive an adequate education in this field (p. 1425).

To further this argument, while most states require history, most do not require a civics course or completion of a service requirement (Sawchuk, 2018). Specifically, eight states require some form of civic participation; nine states and the District of Columbia require one year of U.S government or civics; 30 states require a half year, and the other 11 states have no civic requirement. Seven states currently offer a civics diploma seal (Arizona, California, Georgia, Nevada, New York, Ohio, and Virginia), one state awards a school with a civic seal (Tennessee), and five states require service learning. In addition, the current civics curriculum is still focused on content but not on building the skills needed for successful civic engagement (Kissinger et al., 2022; Shapiro & Brown, 2018; National Council, 2024). Some proponents of civic education would argue that civic education needs to be a primary purpose of schooling, viewed and approached as both a stand-alone subject and with an integrated K-12 approach. More importantly, civic education needs to be taught explicitly, intentionally, and authentically by bringing daily realities closer to the ideals government is based upon and include both the

content of the discipline and the skills and dispositions required for full participation in our democratic system (Quigley, 1999).

The dawn of the 21st century has brought about the revitalization of civic education. In recent years, we have witnessed a resurgence of attention to the need for civic education, in part due to the on terrorist attack on September 11, 2001 and the storming of the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, a drastic decline in membership of community organizations, recent contentious elections and political polarization, and repetitive poor performance by youth and adults on a variety of civic related surveys reinforce the declining trends in civic knowledge, trust, and engagement the American public has in government (Healy, 2022; Rogers, 2017). In general, such civic surveys reveal a surprising and alarming lack of knowledge of the Constitution, political process, and governmental function among Americans, coupled with a significant level of apathy, alienation, disillusionment, and low levels of participation in local or national politics. In addition, initiatives like the Sandra Day O'Connor Institute and iCivics have emerged to advance civic programs and address declining trends in civic awareness. (Sandra, 2023; iCivics, 2023; Annenberg Public Policy Center, 2022; Barrett & Greene, 2017; Levin & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2017; Melville et al., 2013; National Center, 2022; Putnam, 1995).

Civic Education Models

Hoping that a revitalization of civic education and learning can instill a renewed commitment to the ‘democratic experiment’ and promote the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions for lifelong learning and civic engagement, and in part due to specific legislation in ESSA, states have begun reviewing and revising their civic curriculum. One reason is that it has been argued that when implemented properly, civic education can build a sense of community, agency, responsibility, and identity in our youth, fostering active, meaningful, and engaging

citizenship, which can be the solution needed to preserve American democracy. This hypothesis should translate into a quality civic curriculum that produces future citizens who are more likely to vote, address community issues, and interact with public officials. Preparing students for active community engagement while in school with an informed inquiry approach can prepare students for a lifetime of active democratic participation (Barrett & Greene, 2017; CivXNow, 2023; Gould et al., 2011; Healy, 2022; Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Kissinger et al., 2022; Levine & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2017; O'Brien, 2021; Rogers, 2017). However, the development of the utopian civic education experience has been fleeting, with varying models dominating the educational landscape ranging from traditional lecture and knowledge-based models emphasizing rote memorization and factual recall to critical models that require students to question existing social structures and inequities. Additional models have included experiential and active participatory models, as well as responsibility models focusing on compliance and character education (Lin, 2015; Hoge, 2002; Campbell, 2006; Althof & Berkowitz, 2006; Pearson & Nicholson, 2000; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Unfortunately, civic education has not received sustained, systematic, and purposeful attention to know its effectiveness on student learning. Further research and instructional attention to an authentic, integrated curriculum committed to teaching civic engagement is still needed in the field of civic education. Given the need to address the alarming trend of civic apathy and disillusionment, efforts have been made to improve state and national civic education policies by organizations such as the Center for Civic Education and iCivics (iCivics, 2023; Kissinger et al., 2022).

Civics in New York State

These efforts to promote civic education and "civic readiness" have been acknowledged on the federal level, in part, due to the 2015 federal education law known as the Every Student

Succeeds Act (ESSA), which prioritizes 'civic readiness' as well as college and career preparation (College, Career, and Civic Readiness Index -CCCR) (Hackmann et al., 2019). As a result, states are adopting the SoCR as a performance metric to meet ESSA requirements. This growing national trend of including the seal in state accountability plans demonstrates how states have been modifying the priority attached to civic education since ESSA's enactment. This prioritization is reflected in adjustments states are making to their required student curriculum, courses offered, and graduation requirements. For example, NYSED introduced the SoCR as a graduation performance indicator that recognizes high school students who excel in civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions as a component of their accountability plan (NYSED, 2024a). Reflecting the new emphasis on CCCR, New York State is just one of many states revising their approach to civic education. This process in NYS is not new since state education policy has continually addressed civic education in standards, curriculum, and assessments. NYSED made significant strides in improving the civic understanding and competency of the state's youth in 1985 by mandating a 12th-grade half-credit civics course titled *Participation in Government* (PIG) and paired it with a half-credit economics course in the hopes of addressing "civic and economic illiteracy." (Bragaw, 1989). This new full-year requirement mandated four years of social studies education, with a half-year devoted to civics education for students to graduate. This requirement exceeds the mandates in many states in the country because they require less than four years of social studies education, nor require a stand-alone civics course (Sawchuk, 2018).

After the adoption of the PIG course, discord emerged regarding the primary purpose of the new PIG course, with arguments ranging from teaching policy-analysis skills to an entirely participatory and experiential learning course. Given these varied visions for the course, NYSED

determined that for the course to remain true to its primary goal of encouraging civic literacy, school districts should be free to choose and devise their own programs. The autonomy granted to school districts resulted in a variety of models being adopted in the PIG course, including a citizenship education model, a law-related model, a community service model, a national issues/current event model, and a policy analysis model (Bragaw, 1989; Eckert & Scheira, 1991). By 2000, inconsistencies between school districts prompted NYSED to amend the Participation in Government (PIG) course mandating the inclusion of instruction in civility, citizenship, and character education. Aligning the course to the new Social Studies Learning Standard 5 - Civics, Citizenship, and Government (the civics standard), the course became the capstone of a student's K-12 social studies experience (NYSED, 2002). The core curriculum created by NYSED reinforced the importance of a content foundation in civics and the importance of participatory citizenship. In addition, the civic core curriculum promoted an issues-based approach to understanding public policy, active learning opportunities that required students to use the tools and skills needed to engage in real-world learning experiences, and the knowledge needed to be an effective participatory citizen (NYSED, 2002).

Civic education in NYS was further updated in 2014 and, most recently, in 2018 because of ESSA, when NYSED included a Civic Readiness Index in their ESSA Accountability Plan and established a task force to explore the adoption of a SoCR. In January 2019, the Civic Readiness Task Force was appointed by the Board of Regents. The task force, composed of educators, civic advocates, representatives from the judicial department, Board of Elections, and other stakeholders committed to strengthening civics education, met five times between 2018-2019. In 2020, the task force recommendations were presented to the Board of Regents. In 2021, the NYS Board of Regents approved the Seal of Civic Readiness and +1 Civics Pathway and

piloted the program in 117 schools. With the launching of the NYSED seal initiative, an emblem is placed on a graduating student's high school diploma as a formal recognition that a student has attained a high level of proficiency in civic knowledge, skills, dispositions, and experiences and it is designed to convey to both employers and universities the unique skills of graduates. In addition, as per the *Seal of Civic Readiness Handbook* (NYSED, 2024a), it is voluntary for schools/districts to participate in this offering, and moving forward, to offer the SoCR, schools/districts need to apply and receive approval from NYSED. This application process requires the creation of a NYS Seal of Civic Readiness Committee (SCRC) whose membership includes teachers, counselors, and administrators. In addition, the school/district will need to provide an end-of-year data summary report and reapply yearly. As of July 2024, 534 schools have volunteered to participate (NYSED, 2024b).

The Seal of Civic Readiness

As outlined in the *New York State Seal of Civic Readiness Handbook* (NYSED, 2024a), the seal builds on the foundation of civic education already established in NYS and will serve to measure college, career, and civic readiness as outlined in the ESSA Accountability Plan. As defined by NYSED, civic readiness is "the ability to make a positive difference in the public life of our communities through the combination of civic knowledge, skills and actions, mindsets, and experiences" (NYSED, 2024a, p.6). It incorporates four distinct domains: civic knowledge, civic mindsets, civic skill and actions, and civic experiences. To earn the SoCR, students need to earn a total of six points from a variety of options, including passing regents' exams, completing a civic project, service learning, and/or work-based learning, etc. Table 1 demonstrates the details of the NYS Seal of Civic Readiness and how students may achieve the seal's designation

on their graduating diploma. According to the *NYS Civic Readiness Handbook*, to earn the SoCR students need to achieve a total of six points from the table below:

Table 1

Criteria for the NYSED Seal of Civic Readiness

Civic Knowledge	Pts.	Civic Participation	Pts.
Four credits of social studies	1	High School Civics Project (limit two times during grades 9-12)	1.5
Mastery level on Social Studies Regents Exam	1.5*	Service-learning project (minimum 25 hours) and reflective civic learning essay/presentation/product	1*
Proficiency level on Social Studies Regents Exam	1*	Proficiency level in an elective course that promotes civic engagement	.5*
Advanced social studies course(s)	.5*	Middle School Capstone Project (Grades 7 and 8 are only eligible for this point)	1
Research Project	1	Extracurricular participation or work-based learning experience (minimum 40 hours) and an essay/presentation/product	.5*
		Civics Capstone Project	4

Note: **Students may receive these points more than once*. (NYSED, 20224a p. 10-11)

In essence, it is the premise that the SoCR recognizes that students can acquire the knowledge, skills, actions, mindsets, experiences, and dispositions necessary to be productive citizens, engage responsibly in a democratic republic, use informed inquiry to make decisions, and provide evidence to universities, colleges, and future employers that they value civic engagement and scholarship. Despite these new mandates and adjustments to state policy, it does not guarantee a shift in practice at the local level. Unfortunately, the SoCR may feel like a band-aid to a larger and much more complex issue regarding how teachers should educate their

students for democratic citizenship. The "band-aid" challenges include: schools need to apply to the state to be able to offer this seal, then create an implementation model that best fits with their resources, followed by a yearly reapplication process, all without additional state funding. In addition, based on the criteria above, it may be exclusionary as not all students will be able to complete the requirements, especially if they are not integrated into the required curriculum. While the intentions behind ESSA and the SoCR initiative are commendable, the goals and purpose behind them can become obscured by the challenges practitioners face when implementing new policies, especially if the performance indicators are exclusionary. Although the SoCR signifies civic education competencies, its successful implementation necessitates effectively integrating federal mandates, state rights, school district regulations, school procedures, and stakeholder commitment to adequately support teacher readiness and student success.

Future Considerations for Implementation

In a data-driven age, it is essential to rely on various research studies to assess the effectiveness of the SoCR at local, state, and national levels. Thus, we offer four considerations for educators and researchers as they continue to implement and refine their SoCR models that will separate the SoCR from its precursor, PIG. First, we recommend comparing and contrasting other educational policies that are currently in existence and implemented statewide, such as the Seal of Biliteracy, to guide current implementation. Such a review can provide valuable insights when implementing the SoCR. Second, we recommend fostering P-20 collaborations to support the implementation and evaluation of civic education practices aligned with the SoCR by conducting thorough assessments at multiple levels to ensure the SoCR meets its objectives. Third, capitalize on the changes in ESSA legislation and align current instructional practices with

new educational policies. Finally, a fourth consideration is to seek an integrated approach to civic education by ensuring instructional practices align with best practices in civic education, social and emotional learning, cooperative learning, and informed inquiry. By considering these points, educators and researchers can enhance the successful adoption, implementation, evaluation, and overall success of the Seal of Civic Readiness.

Consideration 1

Our first recommendation encourages a review of other educational policies currently in existence and implemented statewide. For example, the Seal of Biliteracy (SoBL) is a recognition of bilingualism or multilingualism where students demonstrate proficiency in English and one or more world languages. The SoBL has been in existence for a little over ten years, with adoption across all 50 states as of 2024, and there is a modest amount of research educators can review to guide future SoCR implementation.

We argue that lessons gleaned from the research on the effectiveness of the Seal of Biliteracy should be applied to implementation of the Seal of Civic Readiness. Our review of the literature related to the Seal of Biliteracy indicates that the SoBL policy is an area in need of further research and exploration as questions remain regarding the impact the seals have upon student achievement and graduation rates, employment opportunities, college entrance, and the impact on English language learners (Davin & Heineke, 2017; Davin et al., 2018; Davin & Heineke, 2018; Hancock & Davin, 2020; Jansa & Brezicha, 2017; Marichal et al., 2021; Salavert & Szalkiewicz, 2020). As implementation models across the nation vary, it is crucial that we consider the similarities and differences. A specific difference in the national implementation of the SoBL relates to the lack of comprehensive language education policies in many states which hinders the acquisition of the required proficiency necessary to earn the Seal of Biliteracy,

particularly for non-native English language learners. We anticipate that as states adopt the Seal of Civic Readiness, they will encounter the same challenge, given that not all states require students to take a civics course or complete service learning to graduate (Sawchuk, 2018).

Consideration 2

A second recommendation is for P-12 and higher education institutions to collaborate in researching and analyzing policy implementation by promoting action-based research to inform future practices. For example, while NYSED's 1985 mandate requiring high school students to complete a half-year PIG course was a significant step in promoting "civic and economic literacy," research on the effectiveness of the new course in enhancing civic engagement is limited. Eckert and Scheira (1991) highlighted several concerns, including student time constraints, limited access to individuals involved in local policy development, and a lack of appropriate resources for teachers and students. Despite these issues, there is not sufficient evidence that these concerns have been addressed or to argue that the stand-alone PIG course has successfully addressed civic literacy concerns. Thus, prompting the question how will the SoCR differ and have a greater impact in developing civic competencies in our youth? When P-12 and higher education institutions collaborate in monitoring instructional practices designed to meet educational policy, they gain a deeper understanding of the benefits and limitations of such initiatives and are able to provide research-based evidence to inform future adjustments to policy or practice. Such research can provide insights to support the creation of successful implementation models and offer insight into the challenges schools may experience when first implementing new policy mandates. These learning opportunities, particularly from action research, can lead to better implementation readiness and generate new knowledge to inform future initiatives. We argue that fostering P-20 collaborative partnerships will help address the

current research limitations surrounding civic education, encourage broader adoption of recent efforts with a K-12 systemic approach, and promote future research to illustrate the impact of civic education on students and their learning.

Consideration 3

The third recommendation is related to the alignment of current instructional practices with the new federal education policy. ESSA represents a significant break from past educational policy as its achievement indicators do not solely focus on test scores; rather, it allows for other important indicators to be used when assessing student learning. Although states may initially remain reliant on test scores as a primary indicator, it seems clear that civics is a discipline that lends itself to other, possibly more meaningful assessments. This is one way in which the SoCR differs from PIG and could potentially be more successful in instilling the civic knowledge and dispositions we are seeking in our youth today. In essence, ESSA allows states to shift away from compliance and move toward a civics model that prepares youth to be civic-ready within their unique communities. We are encouraged to see that NYSED has recognized this shift in their SoCR model by using a point system to earn the seal and that some points can be earned during a student's middle school years as well as through alternative assessments such as capstone projects. Specifically, with regard to civic education, by taking advantage of the shift ESSA affords states and schools, it encourages the development and promotion of an integrated K-12 civics approach that acknowledges and champions the diverse needs of all students, establishes culturally responsive teaching practices, and cultivates an environment conducive to professional growth through collaboration with colleagues and educational partners. However, this is not the case with all states' SoCR policies. For example, in New York State, students need four credits in social studies and can earn extra points from Regents examinations and/or

completing a middle school capstone project. Whereas, in Arizona which also offers a SoCR, all requirements to earn a seal need to be completed in grades 9-12, which includes completing three social studies credits with a 3.0 GPA or higher, and earning at least a 70% competency on the Arizona civics test (Arizona, 2024, 2024a). These differences between just two states illustrate the complexity of policy implementation at the state level. As states define their criteria, significant differences are emerging that may inevitably affect the success of civic readiness across the nation. Although efforts are being made to prioritize civic education in schools, the criteria differences (course requirements, assessments, etc.) led us to our fourth and final policy consideration.

Consideration 4

A standalone civic education course is not sufficient to teach the necessary civic knowledge and dispositions that are needed in the citizens of a pluralist democracy. We believe this is a relatively fair assessment; thus, as states and schools begin implementing a SoCR program, we believe a best practice policy recommendation is the creation of an integrated K-12 systemic civics approach. When aligning daily instructional practices to informed inquiry, experiential learning, social and emotional learning, cooperative learning theory, and culturally responsive teaching, we are essentially equipping our students with fundamental civic skills. This approach not only enriches student learning but also proactively addresses the critical issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion frequently encountered in schools and classrooms. By ensuring that instructional practices across the entire school embrace and support all students, we can foster an environment where students are equipped to resolve conflicts and reach consensus. This holistic approach helps to prevent exclusionary practices and promotes a more inclusive and harmonious educational experience for everyone. For example, the *College, Career and Civic*

Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards recommended by the National Council for the Social Studies promotes framing instruction around an "inquiry arc" that requires students to develop questions, plan research and inquiries, apply conceptual knowledge to evaluate sources, and use evidence to defend their evaluation. Many of the same skills are needed in a democratic populous. As Levinson (2014) argues, this approach to action civics requires a collaborative effort in the planning and development of a curriculum that relies on community engagement and partnerships, which naturally leads to the integration of authentic civic experiences into the school day, both within and outside of the school walls (Tripodo & Pondiscio, 2017). These experiential learning opportunities move students beyond basic civic knowledge to a place of active civic engagement and require students to use the soft skills embedded in the social and emotional learning standards, which are the skills taught when using cooperative learning as an instructional practice. Teaching children that we can "agree to disagree" is an essential component of civic education, and as Johnson and Johnson (2015) articulate, cooperative learning is one way in which we can involve students in the democratic process on a daily basis in school:

> In order to ensure future generations of citizens in a democracy understand their rights and are committed to their responsibilities, schools must involve them in the processes of democracy on a day-to-day basis. The two steps to doing so:
>
> 1. Use cooperative learning the majority of the school day to engage students in the basic processes of democracy.
>
> 2. The second step is to utilize constructive controversy procedure to engage students in the processes of political discourse (Johnson & Johnson, 2015, p.1).

When we create a safe and inclusive learning environment by honoring students' individual cultures and backgrounds through culturally responsive teaching, it can serve as a catalyst for deep and productive conversations on various topics of debate.

Conclusion

Despite the introduction of the half-year Participation in Government (PIG) course in 1985, the issues it aimed to address—civic education, participation, and responsibility—potentially remain unresolved. Unfortunately, due to minimal research on the effectiveness of PIG, we are unable to provide definitive reasons as to why it was or was not enough. What we do know is that initial research indicated there were challenges to implementing the PIG course that could have been overcome had there been research available guiding improvement efforts. Thus, with increasing political polarization, some argue that we seem worse off than in 1985, raising the question: *Why wasn't PIG enough? And will a Seal of Civic Readiness (SoCR) be the answer?* With ESSA's emphasis on college, career, and civic readiness, states are rapidly moving toward adopting a Seal of Civic Readiness into their state ESSA accountability plans. To remain faithful to the intent of these new policies, we believe educators and policy advocates alike need to explore research on current and past practices to guide SoCR implementation models, encourage the creation of P-20 collaborative partnerships, embrace the newfound freedom that ESSA affords, and seek to create a systemic and integrated K-12 civic curriculum.

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