

A Service-Learning Exercise in Building Civil Engagement in Teacher Education

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*You can't play a harp without playing a harp, you can't build a building
without building one, and you can't be a citizen without taking part.*
—Aristotle (History-Social Science Curriculum Framework, 1997, p. ix.)

When I taught high school social studies I wondered about apparent contradictions of our democracy in regard to three activities faced by high school senior or recent graduates: driving, voting, and serving in the military. While our laws require young people to register to engage in all three activities, registering for the Selective Service (the draft) is mandatory for males, while voting and driving are voluntary for both males and females. Signing up for the draft and to vote are simple procedures, but the procedures for obtaining a driver's permit and license are rigorous and time-consuming. On the other hand, the 12th grade government class is a requirement, and actually joining the military requires rigorous training. Nevertheless, when they qualified by age, most seniors did not register to vote, young men reluctantly signed up for the Selective Service, but all seemed to rush to apply for a driver's permit and later a license. The ironies seemed clear. Youth are not as interested in serving in the military or voting as they are in driving. The government, on the other hand, is not as interested in having youth speak their political voice as it is in compelling them to be ready to die for their country and avoid causing deaths on the road.

I thought a voter registration requirement would do wonders for the voter participation rate, but I knew that national action on this issue was

not in the future.¹ The only option was to make a difference in my own classroom, and I began to require my 18-year-old seniors to register and vote in the next election. I obtained the forms from the post office, had students fill out the forms in class, then mailed them myself. The students had to come back with a proof-of-voting stub to receive a grade for that particular assignment.

That worked fine in a high school classroom, but how was I to translate these experiences into a teacher education setting? Beyond simply telling teacher candidates that they should try something similar in their own classrooms, what could I do promote democracy in the teacher education classroom?

Some Basic Definitions: Service Learning and Democracy

Service learning can be a vehicle to promote democracy in the teacher education classroom. Cairn and Kielsmeier (1991; in Anderson, Swick, & Yff, 2001, p. xi) propose the following definition of service learning:

Service-learning is often defined as an approach to teaching and learning in which service and learning are blended in a way that both occur and are enriched by the other. Service-learning is more than community service. Community service focuses on meeting the needs of service recipients, with little or no emphasis on learning. Service-learning, on the other hand, involves intentionally linking service activities with the academic curriculum to address real community needs while students learn through active engagement and reflection.

The language here seems innocuous; nothing in it appears arduous or controversial. But incorporating service learning into a teacher education program is an uphill battle: teacher candidates lead complicated lives with professional and family responsibilities, some continue long-standing volunteer commitments to their communities, and course syllabi are already stretched to the limit with other requirements and reforms. There seems to be no time and space left to require teacher candidates to perform “community service.”

And because the will and interest to serve seem to be missing also, there is some controversy. Many teacher candidates and their instructors see aspects of teaching as an act of public service, so any additional service requirements seem excessive. While many schools and districts may be establishing some form of community service as a requirement for graduation, such requirements are also meeting resistance from high school students and families. The following excerpt from a press release issued by the Ayn Rand Institute is extreme, but it taps into a pervasive element of national sentiment against community and public service:

Issues in Teacher Education

The Ayn Rand Institute (ARI) is continuing its campaign to abolish volunteerism by offering students a unique way to fulfill school service requirement. ARI's Anti-Servitude Internships are designed for students who object to the forced sacrifice of their time, interests, and values. These students can fulfill their volunteerism graduation requirements by fighting against volunteerism. High school students can apply to ARI to work on projects that reject the self-sacrifice premise underlying service programs and instead promote reason, rational self-interest, and the freedom to pursue one's own happiness. . . . Since the President's summit on volunteerism in April 1997, the Ayn Rand Institute has been the only voice of moral opposition to volunteerism. 20Volunteerism is designed to turn Americans into guilt-ridden indentured servants—a program and morality more appropriate to a dictatorship than to a nation founded on independence and freedom. (The Self-Interest Sector, 1999, p. 19)

Service Learning and Teacher Education

The teacher candidates in my social studies methods course find the Ayn Rand Institute statement jarring but agree that it is not just young students who seem disengaged from the larger community outside the small circles of family and friends: public needs and concerns, national political debates, abstractions such as city, state, country, nation, or “our democracy.” According to many of my students, many adults are not very interested in serving the public and the community as volunteers, and in building and participating in democracy.

This article will address some compelling problems of building democracy and doing service learning in the context of teacher education. The article looks at the outcomes of a service learning exercise within a teacher education course, drawing primarily from the written reflections of the teacher candidates who complete the exercise. The main question is: *How has one social studies methods course used service learning to learn and teach about building a sense of civic engagement, democratic participation, and social responsibility?* The answer to the question has interesting implications for teacher education having to do with the teaching of social studies, particularly government and civics. A traditional and familiar approach to teaching government in elementary and secondary schools consists of teaching about three branches of government, the system of checks and balances, and “how a bill becomes a law.” The reflections of the teacher candidates in this course, however, argue for an alternative, possibly much more interesting and engaging approach addressing more fundamental principles of civic engagement and participation that originally led to the establishment of democracy in this country.

Why Don't People Care Anymore? A Theory of Civic Disengagement

In an article so influential it has been incorporated as an appendix to the *History-Social Science Curriculum Framework for California Public Schools* (1997; also Putnam, 1995), Robert Putnam, a professor at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, identifies a trend of civic disengagement in the country. He quotes Alexis de Tocqueville's observation in the 1830s that the key to making democracy work in the United States is its citizens' "propensity for civic association," for forming all sorts of commercial, industrial, "religious, moral, serious, futile, very general and very limited, immensely large and very minute," associations (p. 151). Writing a few years before Putnam, Bellah et al. (1985, pp. viii) also cite de Tocqueville's description of this wonderful disposition for forming and joining organizations as part of a set of mores, or "habits of the heart," which help form the American character.

At the time Bellah et. al. conducted and published their research, they were able to report a high degree of Americans' involvement in voluntary associations, but lower rates of involvement in political parties, clubs, and organizations. Participation and involvement in this sphere of negotiating interests at local, state and federal levels were low, but people were willing at least to vote, keeping this type of political and civic engagement at a comfortable distance.

Ten years later Putnam (1995, p. 153) found disturbing downward trends even in these areas of civic engagement. The first piece of evidence was perennially low rates of voter registration and participation in national, state and local elections.² These rates were telling because voting was most "immediately relevant to issues of democracy in the narrow sense," but also because voting may be the simplest way of being involved. If so, it is no surprise that more "direct engagement in politics and government has fallen steadily and sharply over the last generation," including such indicators as attendance at political rallies or speeches, becoming directly involved in political campaigns or working for a political party. The bad news continued as Putnam showed parallel declines in participation in religious services and church-related groups, labor unions, parent-teacher associations, and civic and fraternal organizations.

Putnam (1995) acknowledged some counterarguments: increasing membership in mass-membership, nonprofit organizations, small support and self-help groups, and the Internet. But he pointed out that being a member by simply writing checks and receiving newsletters, or attending meetings, or surfing the net primarily to help oneself are not adequate substitutes for broad, lifelong commitments to civic engage-

ment. He ended with a call for people in this country to be as involved in the democracy as they once were.

Dewey, Jefferson, and American Democracy

These concepts of participation and civic responsibility have roots in a long intellectual tradition that has been a foundation of democracy in this country. Oakes and Lipton (1999) cite John Dewey as writing that “classrooms are a part of life, not merely preparation for it, and that to make society more democratic, students must participate in classrooms that are themselves democratic societies”²⁰(p. 259). Oakes, Quartz, Ryan, and Lipton (2000) cite Dewey’s argument that “democracy requires an education that engages students in active participation with intellectual and civic ideas that matter” (p. 32).

Oakes et al. trace this democratic ideal back to Thomas Jefferson, whose vision of schooling and democracy served as the origin of public education in this country:

For [Jefferson], public schools—perhaps more than any other institution—bore the responsibility for ensuring that Americans acquire the cultural knowledge and skills of deliberation that could make possible a public process of determining the public good. . . . This education—conveyed in three years of free, publicly provided schooling—combined with inborn moral sensibility and powers of reason would allow citizens to read political ideas in newspapers, form their own political values, and make political decisions. Jefferson believed that a public so educated would protect the new republic and help it prosper. (p. 30)

It is beyond the scope of this article to adequately explore the darker side of these uplifting, idealistic goals of American democracy: Jefferson as slave owner, Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation as more theory than practice, women’s suffrage and the Civil Rights movements as deferred dreams, various Constitutional amendments and Supreme Court decisions as broken promises, and, most recently, a disorderly Presidential election as a possible denial of the vote to thousands of Americans in Florida. Still, the ideal of “citizen participation as the essential means for protecting individual rights and freedom” (Oakes et al., 2000, p. 49) is critical and service learning is an attempt to make this ideal a reality.

The Service Learning Exercise

My interest in modeling good teaching practice as I work with new teachers is a driving force in my classroom. My intent is to follow a simple “postulate” that John Goodlad²⁰(1994) has put forth for teacher training

programs nationwide, calling for them to be “characterized in all respects by the conditions for learning that future teachers are to establish in their own schools and classrooms” (p. 84).

In my social studies methods courses I attempt to build a democratic classroom in which all the teacher candidates are encouraged to participate. The syllabus informs them that a portion of the course grade is based on participation, but they are also asked to formulate more specific criteria for judging and assessing participation. Through small and whole group discussions this use of valuable classroom time to talk about how we should talk in the course begins to build a democratic, participatory environment.

Introducing the Exercise

The course employs a 4-part model for service learning (Kaye, 2000) consisting of the following components: Preparation, Action, Reflection, and Demonstration. The model is consistent with the definition of service learning shared earlier.

The first four weeks of the course are the “Preparation” for the exercise: establishing a democratic classroom environment, establishing the course content and the discipline as embodied in state curriculum frameworks and standards for social studies, and introducing formats for unit and lesson plans.

Reading relevant parts of the state framework and content standards is crucial. The most current *California History-Social Science Curriculum Framework* (1997) links Democratic Understanding and Civic Values as one of three main goals for a required K-12 curriculum. Within this large goal are three strands that require teachers to teach students (1) a sense of national identity, (2) an understanding of the nation’s constitutional heritage and of basic principles of democracy, and (3) an understanding of the civic values, rights, and responsibilities of individual citizens in a democracy.

At the fourth class session candidates are formally introduced to the “Civic Engagement and Service Learning Exercise.” I share with candidates the anti-service learning statement from the Ayn Rand Institute cited earlier in this paper. This brings up the contradiction inherent in “requiring” students to perform “volunteer” service, and I make it clear that the contradiction holds in this course also. Candidates are required to perform a service learning exercise as part of the course. But the requirement is not an excessive burden: most of the candidates are currently teaching with interim “emergency” credentials or permits, and the exercise can be performed within the scope of their teaching duties.

The Preparation phase is supported with an appropriate reading. In this case, the reading was excerpts from a New York Times article (McFadden, 2002) on the late John W. Gardner. Gardner was the former Secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare under President Lyndon B. Johnson, founder of Common Cause and Independent Sector, and a leading advocate of campaign finance reform.³ A final part of the Preparation phase involves finding an organization such as a voter registration or immigrant-rights group with literature, websites and other resources that can help the candidates prepare the best unit possible.

In the Action phase, candidates are required to collaborate in teams of two to prepare and conduct a one-week unit plan on one or more of the following topics or activities:

- ◆ Local, regional, state or national propositions, laws or policies of interest and relevant to the next election;
- ◆ The process of becoming a permanent resident and a citizen;
- ◆ The process of becoming a registered and informed voter, and voter participation rates and patterns;
- ◆ Meeting with school administrators or addressing a local governing body or committee on an important issue affecting the school.

The Reflection phase will be discussed at length below because it is the chief source of candidate reflections on the outcomes of this service learning exercise. The Demonstration phase, occurring throughout the semester, consists of class presentations of the service learning unit plan or lesson plans.

The Reflection Phase

This phase actually occurs throughout the semester with the goal of having candidates think carefully about the exercise as they conduct it, specifically its implications for their current or future teaching practice. The phase consists of unit and lesson plans, and a final essay answering two extended questions about the service learning exercise.

The lesson plans are completed in two drafts, allowing for extensive comments by the instructor on the first draft. The plans follow a standard format suggested by Martorella (2001, p. 127), consisting of several sections: Descriptive Characteristics, Goals and Objectives, Teaching Activities, List of Resources, and Assessments. The instructor adds one additional component to this format: the reformulation of lesson goals

and objectives into a set of guiding questions that focus both teacher and student inquiry by opening and sustaining effective classroom discussions. Much research shows that questions are the key to conducting good discussions that elicit a high degree of participation from students, thus leading to a democratic classroom (Cazden, 1988; Dillon, 1983, 1985; Heath, 1983).

Outcomes of the Reflection Phase

In the course under study, the Reflection phase resulted in a set of well-organized and interesting lesson plans. Sixteen of the 28 teacher candidates in the course cited the most significant benefit of the exercise were lesson plan presentations that exposed them to a number of different ways in which teaching and learning about civic engagement can be made interesting to students. Several candidates were able to specifically remember individual presentations that stuck in their minds:

- ◆ One candidate worked with a local county registrar of voters to demonstrate literature, mock voting booth equipment and other materials that could be shared with middle and high school students;
- ◆ One candidate inspired everyone with stories of her personal involvement in the African-American civil rights movement of the 1960s, including a photograph in which she and others appeared with President John F. Kennedy;
- ◆ Two candidates took their students to the beach to study the environment by helping to clean up the beach;
- ◆ Two candidates worked with immigrant Latino fathers to get them interested in applying for citizenship and becoming politically involved in their local community.

Six candidates mentioned that the exercise had enabled them to learn the basics of writing unit and lesson plans. Candidates also wrote of the benefits of preparing the plans in two drafts with the assistance of the professor's written instructions and comments. Several candidates mentioned that the readings had been especially helpful in preparing for the exercise.

The Final Reflection Essay

The final reflection consisted of written responses to two questions. The instructor coded the narrative responses into various categories, and

a straightforward content analysis searched for themes and recurring patterns of meaning (Merriam, 1998, p. 160). The analysis specifically sought statements that displayed the candidates' knowledge, beliefs, and dispositions toward teaching and learning about civic engagement (Lee & Yarger, 1996). The analysis also followed Erickson's (1998) recommendation that "good qualitative research reports the range and frequency of actions and meaning perspectives that are observed, as well as their occurrence narratively" (p. 1155).

The Relationship Between Service Learning and the Curriculum Frameworks

The first question for the final reflection was framed thusly: Service learning has students engage in community service to help teach part of the content of the course. One of the three main goals of the *California History-Social Science Curriculum Framework* is that of Democratic Understanding and Civil Values. Within this goal are three strands that ask teachers to teach students (1) a sense of national identity, (2) an understanding of the nation's constitutional heritage and of basic principles of democracy, and (3) an understanding of the civic values, rights, and responsibilities of individual citizens in a democracy. *How well did the service learning exercise in this course help you learn this part of the California framework, and how did it fall short of doing so?*^a

Learning about social studies content standards and civic engagement. Of twenty-eight total reflections, almost two-thirds of the candidates reported that the chief accomplishment of the entire exercise was to enable them to learn the content and importance of the relevant content standards. One candidate said the exercise "really nailed what the content standards were looking for." Another candidate began his reflection with these compelling statements:

This is my third year teaching United States History, and up until this year I did not do anything that addressed the California state content standards. I now have a good solid lesson plan with thought provoking questions. This lesson has helped me address what is required of citizens in a democracy, and each individual's responsibility for the democratic system. It was [oblivious] to me until now, what I was required to do with regards to civic engagement and individuals' responsibilities.

Another candidate revealed that he had no idea that civic engagement had anything to do with a social studies curriculum. "Unfortunately," he reported, "in all my years of schooling this was the first class to broach this very important subject." Yet another candidate stated that prior to this exercise he had thought "civics class was where one learned about the

U.S. form of government, not where a student learned what their responsibilities were in our democratic society.”

Two candidates credited the exercise with forcing them to come to terms with their own disengagement from civic matters. Wrote one:

I have come to realize my own apathy towards civic engagement and my lack of participation in community service. I don't believe I have ever had a strong commitment to being an informed voter or voting at all for that matter. . . I was fortunate to be surrounded by upper middle class living and somewhat removed from the struggles others might face in poorer communities, but I missed the importance or my obligation to be a good and well-rounded citizen. . . Now faced with an assignment for this class, I am on the opposite side of what I was exposed to as I was growing up. How am I, being the teacher, going to show the significance of civic engagement and community service and how it potentially relates to my students' lives?

Another candidate revealed a similar change in thinking, ending with a statement of how much the exercise became one in which instead he possibly learned more than what he had taught:

Prior to conducting this assignment I included myself with the infinite apathetic and cynical voters of this country. . . I am still extremely skeptical of the importance of voting in federal and state elections, however now I realize the importance of community engagement at the local level. . . . The [Spanish speaking immigrant] parents I worked with reminded me of my parents' struggle to survive in this country. . . I thought I was going to educate the parents on voting, rights, etc., but it was the parents who taught me about the importance of being involved with members of the community.

Service “learning by doing.” Several candidates spoke of how the exercise had challenged their previous conceptions of service learning. One candidate remained “opposed to mandatory ‘volunteer’ work,” but now sees this as a difference in “semantics,” not “substance.” If some sort of service learning is a mandatory requirement for graduation in schools, he would, much as we did in this course, give students a wide array of options for how they can fulfill the requirement, eliminating the contradiction inherent in linking the words “mandatory” with “volunteer.”

One candidate credited the readings of the preparation phase of the exercise with building his conception of service learning as going beyond simple community service or volunteerism to a pedagogy that could actually help students learn course content. Several candidates disclosed they simply had no idea of what service learning was before the class. One candidate declared that the exercise showed her how service learning

could be used to instill an important sense of “love of country” among students, a love that can lead to greater civic engagement.

About half of the candidates (13 of 28) described how the service learning exercise went beyond traditional “book and lecture” teaching and actually forced them and students to perform actual hands-on work:

For years we have tried to tell students what it is to be a good citizen, and what it is to be civil to one another. This type of teaching tool directs the teacher to force the students to become engaged in their community. . .

Candidates wrote of how mock elections exposed students to the basic principles of campaigns and elections. The exercise was cited as especially useful in getting immigrant and English Language Learner students, and sometimes even their parents, to learn about citizenship and democracy. One candidate put the learning-by-doing aspect of service learning best when she wrote: “When I presented this project to my students I truly felt like a teacher and because of this experience I know I am ready to begin my teaching career.”

Sharing and learning from peers. More than half the candidates stated that another major strength of the service learning exercise was seeing all the different ways in which their peers were getting students to become civically engaged. The following were typical assessments:

- ◆ The examples my fellow students presented in class have broadened my perspective about the areas one might present to students to fulfill the California State Standards.
- ◆ Seeing what my fellow students were doing in their classes was very exciting and gave me many good ideas for future civic engagement unit.
- ◆ The various student projects and presentations illustrated the range of possibilities that Service Learning exercises can take.

As mentioned previously, some of the activities were so interesting and compelling that candidates were able to describe some of them in detail weeks after they had been presented.

What could have been better about the exercise? The prompt asked candidates to identify areas where the exercise had fallen short. While candidates identified a number of weaknesses, no more than four mentioned any single one. A few candidates mentioned that it was difficult to fit the requirements of the exercise into their established curriculum, and that it might have been better in the fall semester. One candidate said too much class time was spent on just this one set of content standards, and two said the individual class presentations were too long.

Two candidates said the exercise did not go far enough in addressing fundamental questions of why young people are so cynical and apathetic in regard to voting. Several candidates were not able to get their students interested or engaged since they were either too young to vote or there was not a real election running to analyze. Two candidates were disappointed by the professor's feedback on their lesson plans, wished there had been more guidance, and recommended a series of short lesson plans rather than one big unit plan.

What Will We Do In Our Classroom?

The second question for the final reflection asked: *If you were to consider integrating some type of service learning component into your future or current social studies classes at the middle or high school level, what might be the nature of such an exercise?*

One-fourth of the candidates were sufficiently inspired by their first attempt at service learning that they now claimed they would like their students to actually volunteer for some worthy cause, involve their own parents in school and community work, or take field trips that would go beyond the usual museum fare. The majority of candidates wrote in terms of extending what they did with their students such that their students actually go out into the community.

But instead of telling students exactly how to get involved, the candidates want the activity to be more student-centered. Most want students themselves to identify the activity, or design their own projects, similar to what was done in the course. The following was a typical statement:

If I were to incorporate this type of community service exercise in my social science class I would have the students create and decide the nature and direction of the project. For example, I would have the students try and discover a problem in their community and work with the whole class on how to solve the problem.

In short, impressed by the opportunity provided by service learning for intellectual creativity and meaningful work outside the classroom, many candidates would want to provide these same opportunities for their own students. As a group, the candidates also put forth several types of extensions of service learning activities:

- ◆ Complete research and presentation projects;
- ◆ Become involved in actual local, state or national electoral campaigns;

- ◆ Address individual school site concerns and problems;
- ◆ Study the intersection of civic engagement and a particular ethnic group's history;
- ◆ Work to educate and empower parents and other community members;
- ◆ Become involved in environmental issues or projects.

It is interesting that some of these suggestions were actually included in the initial set of activities made available to the candidates. It seems each candidate would now like to go far beyond what they did with this initial exercise.

Implications and Recommendations

As with any good course, the instructor also had some learning to do. In this section I try to draw from the experience of one methods course a set of useful implications and recommendations for teacher education, particularly in the subject area of social studies. Other instructors seeking to replicate the exercise may benefit from alternative approaches and modifications to the exercise that are now finding their way into current versions of the course.

Attention to Curriculum and Content Standards

Through the service learning exercise, teacher candidates learned how to write lesson plans that address state curriculum standards. By collaborating with peers and listening to the various class presentations they also learned to address the standards in ways that are interesting and engaging to students. Actually having teacher candidates read relevant sections of the California curriculum framework seems not only productive but also essential to having candidates learn the framework well. In spite of all the attention that schools put on curriculum standards in response to state and public pressure to do so, candidates currently teaching report that their own effort to teach to "the standards" are generally confined to the grade-by-grade content standards. The candidates do not take the time to read the more philosophical explanations of three overarching goals of the social studies curriculum, including nine separate instructional strands, found at the beginning of the standards document. If the service learning exercise had not had them read one of those goals, Democratic Understanding and Civil Values, and its three strands on national identity, principles of democracy, and civic values and

responsibilities, candidates continue to report that they would never known about these individual strands.

Future courses will have to continue to experiment with the choice of topics or issues made available to students. Some candidates struggle with the format of the exercise as established by the instructor—a small structure of three separate options—seeing it as too restrictive. In a subsequent course, options for available topics were broadened to include a general one regarding the building of respect among students, and yet some students still felt the range of topics was too restricted. This has been difficult for the instructor to understand, because students seem to be forever complaining about how vague and loose other requirements of the course are, begging for more clarity, direction and structure. Perhaps the best student recommendation has been to open up the choice of topics to any of the three overarching goals and twelve curriculum strands of the state's History-Social Science Curriculum Framework (1997). Clearly, the challenge is to strike a comfortable balance between structure and flexibility.

"Requiring" Volunteerism and Public Service

By experiencing service learning, many candidates learn the potential of using service learning in their own classes. A majority learns that service learning does not have to be an excessive burden that makes unreasonable demands of students and their teachers, and that it does not have to fall into the contradiction of "requiring" individuals to perform "voluntary" community service. They learn this by being given the broad topic of civic engagement, but also given wide latitude in selecting issues and lesson plan strategies within this topic. The key is to grant candidates flexibility but provide some structure, and give them an opportunity to work outside the classroom without this being an excessive burden on their complicated lives. Candidates learn that service learning is a powerful and enduring reform because it turns community service into a pedagogical tool to enable students to learn course content.

A minority of candidates report, however, that they are never able to resolve the inherent contradiction in "requiring" students to perform "voluntary" service, essentially forcing people to perform public service, to care about others. Some students resent being required to do something against their will. They are unmoved when it is pointed out that our parents and teachers required many things of us in order to prepare us to function in society, such as learn how to read, and yet we would be hard-pressed to brand them as tyrants and dictators. The world of schooling is full of requirements, such as following curriculum frameworks and standards, and service learning is a way to meet some of those requirements. Clearly

the challenge here is for any service learning effort to strike a balance between “good” requirements and “bad” dictatorial mandates.

Concluding Thoughts

The course modeled the building of a democratic classroom environment and conducted a careful service learning exercise through a four-part process, including careful preparation with appropriate readings. These provided avenues through which the candidates learned how to get their students to participate meaningfully in individual class sessions and in longer-term class projects.

It may be that the most enduring lesson candidates learned about social studies was to begin thinking about teaching government and civics as much more than teaching about the institutional structure of government: the branches of government, the powers and authority that each has, the mechanical process of how a bill becomes a law in the legislature. Candidates came to realize the greater importance of more fundamental issues of civic engagement, democratic participation, and social responsibility. The study of government and democracy should be about more than how these institutions affect the lives of citizens. More fundamentally, it should be about how each citizen can and should play a role in ensuring that these institutions serve us all well.

Notes

¹ The U.S. Census Bureau reports that voting rates are higher in states with same-day registration and no registration. (Jamieson, Shin, & Day, 2002, p. 9)

² In the November 2000 Presidential election, only 60 percent of all United States citizens (76 of 186 million people) turned out to vote, though 86 percent of those registered actually voted. Only 36 percent of U.S. citizens between 18- to 24-years-old voted. (Jamieson, Shin and Day, 2002, pp. 2, 4)

³ Gardner, a founder of the White House Fellows Program, had also lent his name to the Gardner Fellowship for Public Service awarded by Stanford University and the University of California at Berkeley to graduating senior committed to pursuing a career in public service. The author is the proud recipient of the Fellowship. Gardner passed away in early February 2002, leading the author to share part of Gardner’s life and work with the methods students.

⁴ The 2001 Updated version of the History-Social Science Curriculum Framework for California Public Schools includes an appendix on how the instructional method of service-learning can help teachers and students address the social science content standards. I look forward to sharing this new appendix with my future social studies methods students.

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