What is a Good Citizen?
Critical Analysis and Corroboration of a Citizenship Core Competency

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The Citizenship Outcomes Assessment Committee
Southwestern Illinois College
SWIC

• Located approximately 19 miles east of downtown St. Louis

• 3 campuses: Belleville, Granite City, and Red Bud

• 26 off-campus sites including Scott Air Force Base and East St. Louis Community College Center

• Annual Unduplicated Headcount: over 20,000 students
Outcomes Assessment at SWIC

• 2001 - General Education Committee formed to identify common competencies
• 2002 - Introduced 7 focus groups
• 2007 (Spring) - Civic & Social Awareness Focus Group developed a survey (a lengthy survey)
• 2007 (Fall) - Developed 3 categories for college-wide core competencies:
  • Communication Skills
  • Reasoning Skills
  • Citizenship
Outcomes Assessment Committees
Organizational Structure
Defining the **Citizenship** Core Competency

- Committee established in Fall 2007
- Reviewed original definition from the focus group
- Studied data from the lengthy Spring 2007 survey
- Established two components of the Citizenship core competency
  - Personal Accountability
  - Civic and Social Accountability
Validation of the Citizenship Core Competency

- Committee discussions
- Open faculty forum
- College-wide faculty vote
- Committee review of comments
- Post on website
The **Citizenship** Core Competency

Two tracks are considered.

- **Personal Accountability**
- **Civic and Social Accountability**
The **Citizenship Core Competency**

The ability to recognize and assess the implications of our behaviors to ourselves and the community and to adapt as needed.

The definition and assessments consider:

- **Knowledge**
- **Dispositions**
- **Actions**
Civic and Social Accountability

**Knowledge:** Define the individual's local, national, and global roles and responsibilities.

**Disposition:** Express civic dispositions.

**Action:** Demonstrate these responsibilities and dispositions through choices and behaviors.
The **Citizenship Core Competency**

Example:

- **Knowledge**
  I know how to register to vote.

- **Disposition**
  It is important to exercise my right to vote.

- **Action**
  I regularly exercise my right to vote.
Assessment of Civic and Social Accountability in the Citizenship Core Competency

A 20-question survey was developed to assess the knowledge, dispositions, and actions of the students relative to the core competency.

Survey questions used a 5-point Likert-type scale (1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree or 1-never to 5-always).

The survey has been administered several times by established protocols.
## Civic Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUE</th>
<th>KNOWLEDGE/SKILL</th>
<th>DISPOSITION</th>
<th>ACTION/BEHAVIOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voting</td>
<td>I know how to register to vote</td>
<td>It is important to exercise my right to vote</td>
<td>I regularly exercise my right to vote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be informed</td>
<td>Being concerned about state and local issues is an important responsibility for everybody</td>
<td>It is important to be informed of national and global issues in order to be a responsible citizen in a democracy</td>
<td>I keep up to date with political affairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect others—individual</td>
<td>We all have a responsibility to consider how our behavior affects those around us</td>
<td>It is important to interact with people in a respectful manner even if you don’t agree with them</td>
<td><em>I try to be kind to other people.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect others—national</td>
<td>The U.S. has responsibilities in the global society</td>
<td>It is important that we as a country, think about how our actions impact other nations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Being actively involved in community issues is my responsibility</td>
<td>It is important to contribute in an active way to one’s community.</td>
<td>I participate in my community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>-Learning about other cultures helps me understand the world and my place in it. -Diversity in the workplace leads to more creative thinking and better decisions</td>
<td>It is important to view an issue from diverse perspectives in order to truly understand it</td>
<td>-I am comfortable when working with someone of a racial/ethnic group other than my own. -I do not have trouble interacting with people who are different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Each individual must take responsibility for protecting the environment</td>
<td>It is important to preserve the earth for future generations</td>
<td><em>I take actions to preserve the environment</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*By working with others in the community, I can help make things better*

*New questions in italics*

*Boxed questions had averages > 4.5 or = 4.5*
Summary of Survey Results

- Overall students did better on disposition than knowledge.

- Students performed worst on action/behavior.

- Highest performance categories - affect others (individual)

- Worst performance categories - Community involvement

- Worst question results:
  - < 3.5 (Both are action questions)
  - Q19 I *regularly* exercise my right to vote
  - Q20 I *participate in* my community
Summary of Survey Results

• Even though most students thought that community involvement is important, many students did not know how to become involved in the community and did not perform what they thought was community service.

• Most students think political engagement and voting are important, yet many students are not engaged in the political process and do not vote in elections.
Informal Survey About Citizenship

To find out how students define citizenship, an informal survey was conducted with students. The survey was one open-ended question:

*What is a good citizen?*

There were 148 responses to the survey, across a range of disciplines.

The results of the survey were critically analyzed, and categories for the responses began to emerge.
Student Definition of a Good Citizen

Seven categories emerged from the analysis of the survey results:

- **Contribution** - make a difference, give back, etc.
- **Legal** - native born, follows rules, pays taxes
- **Moral** - do the right thing, good character
- **Participation** - voting, community involvement
- **Respect** - treating others with respect
- **Personal development** - better yourself, get education, good job
- **Attitude** - patriotism, nationalism, etc.
Student Definition of a Good Citizen

Contribution
Legal
Moral
Participation
Respect
Personal Development
Attitude
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civic Survey</th>
<th>Student Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Contribution, Participation, Respect, Moral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute/Assist others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity – interpersonal</td>
<td>Moral, Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment – preserve for future</td>
<td>Moral, Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be informed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitude, Legal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Definitions - Grouped

- Participation/Contribution - Activity: 37%
- Respect/Moral/Development - Character: 34%
- Legal - Order: 22%
- Attitude: 7%

Legend:
- P/C
- R/M/D
- LEGAL
- ATT
Two Aspects of Civic Engagement
A Civic Hierarchy

- Behavior
- Knowledge
- Disposition
Self-Government

Taking action to solve problems

Deliberative discussion

Accept other points of view as legitimate

Express opinion—vote

Other-directed / Community-minded

Behavior

Knowledge

Disposition
Self-Government

- Taking action to solve problems
- Deliberative discussion
- Accept other points of view as legitimate
- Express opinion—vote

Other-directed / Community-minded

- Self-sacrifice for others
- Contribute—Organize action to address needs
- Contribute—Volunteer
- Accept diversity
  Tolerance

Behavior

Knowledge

Disposition
Comparison of Student Definition with Civic Survey Items

Student Definitions - Grouped
Minimum Legal Requirement

Self-Government

- Taking action to solve problems
- Deliberative discussion
- Accept other points of view as legitimate—diversity, respect
- Express opinion—vote

Other-Directed/Community-minded

- Self-sacrifice for others
  - Environment
    - Contribute—Organize action to address social needs—informed, assist, environment
- Participate—Volunteer to assist others
- Accept diversity
- Tolerance

Informed

- Red text identifies civic survey issues

Respect
Minimum Legal Requirement
Follow the law

Items in red are student definition categories

Self-Government

- Taking action to solve problems
  Participate/Contribute/Moral

- Deliberative discussion
  Participate/Contribute

- Accept other points of view
  As legitimate—Respect

- Express opinion—vote
  Participate

Other-Directed/Community-minded

- Sacrifice-self for others
  Moral/good character

- Contribute—Organize action to address social needs

- Participate—Volunteer to assist others
  Personal Development
  Accept diversity
  Respect
  Be tolerant

Personal Development

- Accept diversity
  Respect
  Be tolerant
Exceptions in the Comparisons

- The emphasis on “being informed” varies greatly between the Committee and students—only 6 students specifically mentioned being informed.

- Although the ‘legal’ aspect was not included in the Committee’s civic survey, it fits in well with the other citizenship track, personal accountability.

- The students express attitudes (like patriotism and nationalism) as part of Citizenship, but those topics do not appear in the definition and assessments put forth by the Committee.
The Paucity of the Political

- Of the 148 students who responded to the survey:
  - 27 (18.24%) mentioned anything related to the political/self-government side of citizenship.
  - 8 (5.4%) mentioned voting.

- It appears that the political side of citizenship is more important to the Committee than it is to the students.
Conclusions

- Even though different vocabulary and expressions are used, the definition of Citizenship is consistent between the committee and students.
- The emphasis in students’ definitions is on the community side, not the self-government side.
- Lack of participation in elections and lack of involvement in the community are issues of concern.
Continuing Work

➢ Continue to develop and promote curricular and co-curricular activities to encourage voter engagement and involvement in the community.

➢ Develop curricular and co-curricular activities to encourage and allow students to “be informed”.
Other Studies

• Asked the same question
• Identified 3 types of citizens
  – Personal responsibility—contributes to a food drive
  – Participatory—organizes a food drive
  – Justice-oriented—solves the problem of hunger
Sherrod (2003)

- Open-ended question—what is a good citizen? [responses > 5%, p. 290]
  - Obey the law—46.7%
  - Help others/improve things—46.2%
  - Respect others/tolerance—17%
  - Patriotic—11%
  - Be productive—7.5%
  - Be informed—6.2%
  - Be honest—5%
References

References, cont.


Acknowledgements

Southwestern Illinois College

- Citizenship Core Competency Committee
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  Outcomes Assessment Coordinator