

Student Voice and Youth Voice

Intro IDEA 50 Civic Literacy: What does America's democratic republic require of its schools?

According to figures from the Marion County Clerk's office, the November 2015 turnout for the mayoral election was 22.69%, *a record low!*

The rate has been steadily declining in each election. Turnout in 2011 was 29.98% and in 2007 was 26.32%. <http://www.indystar.com/story/news/politics/2015/11/05/indianapolis-voting-hits-record-low/75166124/>

"We must remove the contradictions in our culture that embrace democratic ends for its schools, but resists the actual practice in schools of the democratic means from which the ends cannot be separated." ~ The Institute for Democracy in Education

Literacy and numeracy are each fundamental for civic participation, but so is the knowledge and capacity of citizens to make sense of their democratic society. Since the democratic way of life is built upon learning what it's about and practicing how it might be led, civic literacy is the capacity of students to experience democracy inside and outside of their public school.

"Democracy is hypocrisy." ~ Malcom X www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNfAFfu6VDo

A major issue with urban youth is the authenticity of democracy and the processes involved in our democratic republic. This distrust is not new. Urban African American, Latin@, and low-income white communities have a long history of marginalization in the name of democracy. If tomorrow's voters and leaders are to trust "the system," it must be mandated that our public schools carry out their civic duty and prepare young people for self-government through its study and practice in classrooms and schools.

Civic literacy embodies the knowledge, skills, and decision-making activities students need to participate and initiate progress in their classroom, community, and the greater world. It is the foundation by which a democratic society functions: citizen self-determination as a means to create avenues for peaceful change. *This is what our democratic republic requires of its schools.*

<http://www.indystar.com/story/news/politics/2015/11/05/indianapolis-voting-hits-record-low/75166124/>

IDEA 50 Civic Literacy: What does America's democratic republic require of its schools?

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/A-Civic-Literacy-What-does-a-constitutional-democratic-republic-require-of-its-schools.pdf>

Intro IDEA 51 First Amendment Schools: Helping students be active citizens in their schools so they will be active citizens when they graduate

The nationwide initiative, "First Amendment Schools: Educating for Freedom and Responsibility," is designed to transform how schools model and teach the rights and responsibilities that frame civic life in a democratic republic. The project's goals are:

- To create consensus guidelines for any school interested in creating and sustaining First Amendment principles in their school community

- To establish project schools at which First Amendment principles are understood and applied throughout the school community
- To encourage and develop curriculum reforms that reinvigorate and deepen teaching about the First Amendment across the curriculum
- To educate school leaders, teachers, school board members and attorneys, and other key stakeholders about the meaning and significance of First Amendment principles and ideals.

IDEA 51 First Amendment Schools: Helping students be active citizens in their schools so they will be active citizens when they graduate

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/First-Amendment-Schools-Helping-students-be-active-citizens-in-their-schools-so-they-will-be-active-citizens-when-the-graduate.pdf>

Intro IDEA 52a A democratic science education: Building a more empowering science education for urban students through democratic ideals

Competition, meritocracy and individual accomplishment drive success in American public schools and frame the “democratic” way of life for school children. Yet for some students, most of whom are low-income minority students attending under-resourced schools in poor neighborhoods, *these values are often in direct opposition to the cultural norms and cultural capital that is most appreciated within their own communities.*

Therefore, urban educators must realize they cannot expect their students to be engaged and invested when their values are left disregarded and expressionless in the school.

In *Democratic Science Teaching*, editors Basu, Barton, and Tan show schools engaged in empowering urban students via shared classroom and science curriculum-related decision-making. Teachers here use a democratic ethos to respect the cultural norms, capital, and epistemologies (ways of knowing) their students bring to school to make science relevant.

IDEA 52a A democratic science education: Building a more empowering science education for urban students through democratic ideals

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/IDEA-52a-A-democratic-science-education-Building-a-more-empowering-science-education-for-urban-students-using-democratic-ideals.pdf>

Intro IDEA 52b Classroom and school shared decision-making: The practice of multi-cultural education in the 21st century

Since the early 1970s, multicultural education has been a part of the foundation of American public schools. It opened the classroom door to mutual understanding among all stakeholders.

Current curriculum is academically oriented. Students study a variety of cultures and their histories, do reports, and then take a test. Enrichment activities might include playing the African djembe at the school’s cultural fair, dressing up like Indians and pilgrims for Thanksgiving, or learning one of the songs by Jimmy Rogers, the father of country music.

Yet, where do students have opportunity to actually “*practice*” multiculturalism and the mutual respect multicultural education brings? Mutual respect that rests only on student cognition of cultural diversity is an incomplete democratic virtue.

If Marion County schools and classrooms were democracies, individuals/groups would have to directly take into account culture and cultural differences in deciding what is fair for everyone* through explaining, listening, taking stock, consideration, deliberation, and decision-making. This is the *practice* of multicultural education.

IDEA 52b Classroom and school shared decision-making: The practice of multi-cultural education in the 21st century

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Classroom-and-school-shared-decision-making-The-practice-of-multi-cultural-education-in-the-21st-century.pdf>

***Intro* IDEA 53 Indianapolis Youth (Empowerment) Council**

The youth of Indianapolis/Marion County have no authentic youth-led organization with a real budget, thus no real power, and consequently no real responsibilities. An enlightened and sophisticated adult/youth coalition is required.

A major way for the citizens of Indianapolis to face the challenges it has regarding education, jobs, neighborhoods, or recreation, as well as issues around mental health, crime, housing, or gangs--is through working together with young people.

In November 2000, San Francisco voters approved Proposition D, the Children's Amendment, which reauthorized the Children's Fund through June 2015. Since its inception, this Youth Empowerment Fund (YEF) has supported youth-led projects and programs to enable young people to define their own services and address issues that their neighborhoods face.

The YEF believes the following:

- *Youth should be making decisions that affect their own lives*
- *Youth possess the knowledge and ability to be leaders in their communities*
- *Youth should have access to resources to define their own programs and opportunities*

IDEA 53 Indianapolis Youth (Empowerment) Council

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Indianapolis-Youth-Empowerment-Council.pdf>

***Intro* IDEA 54 The Seattle Youth Commission: Now Indy doesn't have to reinvent the wheel**

The Seattle Youth Council (SYC) is an example of a youth-led organization with real power and thus real responsibilities. The SYC advises the adult community on important issues—in a way and at a level Indianapolis youth do not experience. For example these are the initiative of the

Full Commission:

- Guaranteed freedom of the press for student newspapers
- Expanding school board voting rights to include high school students
- Automatic voter registration for under-18-year-olds with drivers license application

SYC also has these committees:

- Education
- Environment
- Public Health
- Race and Social Justice

- Transportation
- Youth Violence

<http://www.seattle.gov/seattle-youth-commission>

To view a presentation of the SYC Go to 1:16.00 of Youth Commission's End of the Year Report

<http://www.seattle.gov/seattle-youth-commission/issues>

IDEA 54 The Seattle Youth Commission: Now Indy doesn't have to reinvent the wheel

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/The-Seattle-Youth-Commission-Now-Indy-doesnt-have-to-re-invent-the-wheel.pdf>

***Intro* IDEA 55 Students as change agents: From community service to community change**

We have all heard the saying, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." Yet, what if the water where the fishing occurs is polluted? Or, what if the shoreline is being purchased for a factory, warehouse, or condominiums?

This same logic can be applied to the idea of community service where students mainly volunteer for a public or private entity like the Y, an animal shelter, or our state legislature.

Perhaps students must also appreciate that "helping" goes beyond the charitable to focus on how they can empower people to look after themselves. We must understand that there are systemic issues that cannot be overcome by simply teaching a man to fish. Having students partner with people to organize themselves allows for real change to occur.

IDEA 55 Students as change agents: From community service to community change

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Students-as-change-agents-From-community-service-to-community-change.pdf>

***Intro* IDEA 56 Student voice or student action in Indianapolis?**

In the early 1970s, real alternative schools used the community to teach. Service learning and internships became a part of these programs. Learning Unlimited, North Central High School's alternative education program, left open Friday's for students to find places to volunteer.

Nationally, some schools give students voice in school matters around designing school climate, creating courses, or even advising lunch menus. Also, many schools, courses, or programs such as International Baccalaureate encourage or require community service.

For urban schools, many families, students experience the negative effects of poverty and other social toxins which interfere with school success as well as quality of life issues. It makes sense then that in these schools, student voice and community service must advance to student action and shaping the community.

Thus, such types of re-orientation concerning the purpose of urban schools will engage all* students, especially the more disaffected the *OpportunINDY* initiative concerns. These are the children and youth who will benefit in 2 important ways:

- academically--easing and eradicating poverty and other social toxins will require academic and higher order thinking skills to ease/eradicate
- communally--will actually bring social-economic justice to their families/neighborhoods

IDEA 56 Student voice or student action in Indianapolis?

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Student-voice-or-action-in-Indianapolis.pdf>

***Intro* IDEA 57 Students on Marion County school boards: Providing youth a sense of responsibility for their school district**

OpportunINDY cannot forget the beginning of the adolescent sub-culture in the 1930s, which blossomed in the 40's and grew through the "rebel without a cause" era of the 50s, and then found a home in the 60s anti-establishment movement. However, with the advent of the Internet and social media, never before have more young people felt more compelled to act.

Across the US, Canada, Europe, and Australia there is a growing awareness that student voice matters, a lot. It turns out that student voice--which is any expression of any student, anytime, anywhere, about anything related to education--drives all aspects of learning and teaching in schools. More than ever before, students are beginning to ask why student voice is not also driving leadership in school districts. Considering this global picture, *isn't it time for our Marion County school boards to change what they're doing?*

IDEA 57 Students on Marion County school boards: Providing youth a sense of responsibility for their school district

<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Students-on-Marion-County-school-boards-Providing-youth-a-sense-of-responsibility-for-their-school-district.pdf>