Character Development and Engaged Citizenship among Children and Adolescents
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Audience Polling

Use your smart phone or laptop.

Type “respond.cc” into the browser.

Enter the session key.

Answer the question.

Submit with the check box!
Tell us about you!
respond.cc
Session Key: 70406
Getting to Know You

- Active serviceman or woman: 2
- Veteran: 4
- Military Parent: 4
- Educator: 21
- Counselor: 10
- Social Work: 2
- Health Care Professional: 2
- Other Professional: 14
Session Overview

• Background
• Civic Engagement → Character
• Strategies → Civic Engagement
• Wrap Up
POLL: What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the term “civic engagement”?
"Participation, your civic duty, is more than just voting... Only you can make sure the democracy you inherit is as good as we know it can be. But it requires your dedicated, and informed, and engaged citizenship. And that citizenship is a harder, higher road to take, but it leads to a better place. It's how we built this country—together."

President Barack Obama
May 5, 2013
What is Youth Civic Engagement?

- Volunteering
- Informal Helping
- Environmental Behaviors
- Watching News
- Civic Skills
- Social Responsibility Values
- Voting Intentions
Why do we care about youth civic engagement?

Builds strong communities

Establises life-long habits

Benefits health & development

Cultivates CHARACTER
Civic engagement is a strength of military families.

Photo Credit: Noel Abejo
Importance of Studying Character

• Component of PYD that enables thriving
• Associated with academic success
• Linked to well-being
Our Theory

Civic Engagement
- Political actions
- Informal Helping
- Environmental Behaviors
- News consumption
- Volunteering

Character
- Leadership
- Future-orientation
- Perseverance

Strategies
- Civic Discussions
- Modeling Civic Behavior
- Organized Activities
- Support

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Our Sample

- 2,475 youth in grades 4-12
- Residing in CA, MN, and WV
- 55% Female
- 50% White
- 30% Hispanic or Latino
- 10% Black or African American
Character

Leadership
- I am good at leading others to reach a goal.
- My peers consider me to be a leader.
- I am usually the one who suggests activities to my friends.

Perseverance
- When I get stuck on something I’m working on, I keep trying until I figure it out.
- I almost always finish things that I start.
- I am a hard worker

Future Orientation
- I am hopeful about my future.
- When I make a decision, I consider the impact it will have on my future.
- I think about who I will be when I’m older.
- I believe I am going to make a difference in the world.
- I feel a sense of purpose in life.
- I have plans for my future.
POLL: Which character strength do you think is highest among youth?
Results: Which character strength do YOU think is highest?
Civic experiences cultivate character strengths.

Photo Credit: Karolina Grabowska
Leadership, Future Orientation, and Perseverance

Informal helping and skills predict all three character strengths.
How to Apply

• Informal, unstructured behaviors help develop character

• Practicing civic skills → big payoffs
Strategies to Promote Civic Engagement

- DISCUSS Civic Issues
- PROVIDE Opportunities
- MODEL Civic Behaviors
- BUILD Supportive Relationships
Background

• Stresses importance of these topics
• Expands youth’s civic knowledge and understanding
• Youth civic engagement is enhanced when teachers and parents discuss:
  – Politics
  – Current events
  – Problems facing their community
  – Injustice
Results

DISCUSS
Civic Issues

Parent Discussions

Classroom Discussions

Civic Skills

- Informal Helping
- Civic Engagement
- Volunteering
- Watching News
- Social Responsibility Values
- Voting Intentions

Incorporation:

- Environmental Behaviors
- Social Responsibility Values
- Civic Skills
- Informal Helping
  - Classroom Discussions
  - Parent Discussions
Results

DISCUSS:
Civic Issues

Classroom Discussions

Parent Discussions

Leadership

Perseverance

Future Orientation
How to Apply

• Look for opportunities
• Choose the right words
• Be open to the youth’s opinions
Background

• Social Learning Theory
• Children imitate and emulate the behavior of people who are important to them – PARENTS
Youth’s Views on Parents’ Modeling

- 23% Parents volunteer
- 56% Parents vote
- 31% Parents follow the news
- 28% Parents actively improve the neighborhood
Results

MODEL
Civic Behaviors

Parent Civic Engagement
Youth Civic Engagement
Character Development
How to Apply

• Volunteer with youth
• Contact local organizations
• Pick a project
  www.generationon.org
• Be spontaneous
• Seize the little moments
POLL: Which matters more for civic and character development? **QUANTITY** or **QUALITY** of organized activities?  
Respond.cc  
Session key: 16917
Organized Activities

- Sports, school clubs, community organizations, religious groups.

- Personal Growth Experiences
  - Learning about self and what is important to self
  - Learning new skills
  - Doing something you enjoy that gives you energy and passion
Results: Quantity vs. Quality

![Organized Activities Graph](image)

- **Quantity**: 3 responses
- **Quality**: 29 responses
- **Both matter equally**: 6 responses
Results

High Quality Organized Activities

Providing Opportunities

- Civic Engagement
  - Volunteering
  - Informal Helping
  - Environmental Behaviors
  - Watching News
  - Voting Intentions
  - Social Responsibility Values
  - Civic Skills

Quantity: Time in Activities
How to Apply

- Quality matters
- Infuse quality into activities
- Help youth find their spark
Background

• Respect opinions
• Listen to show you care
• Give positive feedback
• Build close connections

Supportive relationships are NECESSARY but INSUFFICIENT for fostering civic engagement.
Results

HIGH SUPPORT from PARENTS and TEACHERS

LOW across other three strategies

LOW levels of Civic Engagement
Supportive relationships enhance the effectiveness of other strategies.
Results

Parenting and Environmental Behaviors

- High Modeling, High Support
- High Modeling, Low Support
- Low Modeling, High Support
- Low Modeling, Low Support

Environmental Behaviors
How to Apply

• Visit parentfurther.com
• Take the quizzes
• Get personalized feedback and strategies
How do they work together?

- **DISCUSS** Civic Issues
- **MODEL** Civic Behaviors
- **PROVIDE** Opportunities
- **BUILD** Supportive Relationships
Strategies Working Together
Doing it all?
Take-Home Messages

• Civic engagement builds character.

• Adults can implement strategies that cultivate civic engagement.

• Civic engagement is a strength of military families that can be leveraged for positive development.
Next Steps

• Study military families directly and in-depth.
Thank you!

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Visit our website
www.civicroots.org

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