

Strategic Plan | Vision 2020, Wake County Public Schools Literature Review for Measuring Metrics

Citizenship Readiness

Rationale of WCPSS Metrics and Review of Literature

Citizenship has civil, political, and social facets (Marshall, 1964) that give citizens “individual rights,” “opportunity to participate in political process,” and “health, education, and welfare needed to participate fully in their cultural communities and in the national civic culture” (Banks, 2008, p. 129). Elementary and secondary schools in the United States embed citizenship education in curriculum both formally through coursework and informally (Parker, 2014) by providing school-based extracurricular activities. Formal coursework includes classes such as American History, World History, Civics and Economics; informal activities include student government programs, or other student associations. Although citizenship is one of the fundamental components of schooling, research regarding how to measure citizenship in the U.S. is rare.

In Europe, researchers in the Active Citizenship for Democracy Project developed a composite measure of active citizenship that encompasses political life, civil society, communities, and values (for details see Hoskins & Mascherini, 2009), while in the U.S. no such measure has been published. However, studies conducted in the U.S. context (Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007; Milligan, Moretti, & Oreopoulos, 2004) commonly used participation in political events such as voting and involvement in communities as a proxy for citizenship activity.

Beyond what citizenship is, and how to measure it, citizenship depends on a certain level of financial literacy that enables citizens to make responsible financial decisions (Arthur, 2012). Defined as “the ability to use knowledge and skills to manage financial resources effectively for a lifetime of financial well-being” (President’s Advisory Council on Financial Literacy, 2008, p. 35), financial literacy shapes citizens’ involvement in a society civically, politically, and socially.

The importance of education in citizenship preparation is well-supported by research literature. Many economists and educators argued that education could “enhance the quality of democracy” (Milligan et al., p. 2), or in Nussbaum’s (2006) words, “public education is crucial to the health of democracy” (p. 385). One way that education enhances democracy is through its impact on citizens’ participation as individuals in civic activities. Citizens with more years of educational attainment tend to participate in civic activities more actively. Milligan et al.’s (2004) study based on U.S. census data collected between 1948 and 2000 found individuals with more years of schooling were more likely to vote: The percentage of individuals who

reported voting was 52% for those who did not graduate from high school, 67% for high school graduates, 74% for those with some college education, and 84% for college graduates. Given the role of education in citizenship preparation, WCPSS' definition of citizenship readiness includes how well students are prepared to participate in a democratic society as citizens, to **vote**, be **involved in communities**, and have a basic knowledge of financial literacy concepts.

How Does WCPSS Measure Citizenship Readiness?

A core aspect of WCPSS metrics relates to how involved students are in current events and voting, as shown in Table 1. Specifically, the WCPSS citizenship readiness measure shows the percentage of students who pay attention to current events as well as the percentage of eligible students who are registered to vote. WCPSS also measures the percentage of students who report engagement in community-based projects because participation in community services has a positive impact on cognitive understanding of civic engagement (Perry & Katula, 2001). Also, students' participation in community services during high school was found to be a strong predictor of voting when they became adults (Hart et al., 2007).

In addition, WCPSS adopted items from the 2015 National Financial Capability Study conducted by the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority to show the percentage of students who are financially prepared. Because preparing citizens to be financially ready and independent begins before adulthood, financial skills, knowledge, and experiences gained in childhood are fundamental to their later lives (Godsted & McCormick, 2007).

Table 1. WCPSS Citizenship Readiness Measure

Indicator	Description
Civic Engagement	Percentage of students reporting interest in current events Percentage of eligible students registered to vote
Community Engagement	Percentage of students reporting engagement in community-based projects
Financial Literacy	Percentage of students with knowledge of financial literacy concepts - banking, savings, investing

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