Educate, Equip, Engage, Empower: A Framework for Preparing Preservice Teachers in Civic Education

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Grounded in the historical and philosophical perspective of social reconstructionism, current work in citizenship education, as well as an actual experience of recent student activism in the antinocide movement, the “4E” framework described in this article provides a way for educators to actualize goals for civic empowerment. This 21st-century model for citizenship education provides a clear path to student empowerment by activating civics in an authentic way. The framework proposes a four-step process for student learning: educate, equip, engage, and empower. In addition, the framework provides a structured way of integrating a recommended method for citizenship education into preservice teacher education.

“Not every student will become a writer, editor, mathematician, engineer or scientist, but every student will become a citizen. It is therefore our responsibility to teach citizenship.” (Lewis Huffman, South Carolina Department of Education, NCSS conference presentation)

Cultivating democratic citizens has been a goal of American education since the establishment of public education in the early republic. Various interpretations of citizenship have shaped the American mind-set throughout our history, and citizenship education remains a cornerstone of educational purposes in the 21st century. The locus of citizenship education has most often rested in the field of social studies, and the historical evolution of this discipline reveals that curriculum often changes with the political and social climate. Therefore, in looking at one’s practice, the reflective educator must look beyond the question of what should be taught to achieve the current goals of citizenship education. We must also explore how and why it is most effectively taught in a way that seeks to transcend politicized goals and instead empowers our students to participate in the present and imagine the future. A theoretical framework for citizenship education grounded in historical, philosophical, theoretical, and practical experience foundations will provide teachers and those who prepare future teachers with a sound basis for empowering students to become active citizens.

The “4E framework” for citizenship education described in this article provides a way for educators to actualize goals for civic empowerment with their students—whether K–12 students or preservice teacher candidates. The framework is a current interpretation of citizenship education.

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that provides a clear path to student empowerment by activating civics in an authentic way. The 4E model was developed by a preservice teacher as part of an undergraduate senior thesis and provides an example of the process through which students build civic identities. Moreover, the thesis afforded its author an opportunity to reflect on and build their own civic identity as a teachers. The framework proposes a four-part process for student learning: educate, equip, engage, and empower. These steps involve the following elements:

- Educate students with the necessary background content information to provide foundational knowledge of the issue or topic being discussed in an authentic, meaningful way that yields opportunities for later application and understanding
- Equip students with the necessary practical application tools and thinking skills to facilitate their own learning, identify and accomplish personal goals, and contribute to society
- Engage students by allowing them to participate in shaping their own education, provide authentic experiences from which they can learn, and facilitate a relevant, motivating dialogue for students to carry on in and out of the classroom (learning should be fluid)
- Empower students to apply their knowledge, interests, and understandings and become lifelong, active, engaged, effective citizens, capable of self-motivating and innovative thinking.

The 4E framework, grounded in social reconstructionist theory, is unique in that it is also based on actual experience with the development of student activism in the antigone of the 21st century in which the thesis author also participated. This recent example of activism serves as a model for the step-by-step process of building civic empowerment. In addition, the framework provides a structured way of integrating a recommended method for citizenship education into preservice teacher education. The model leads the reflective educator to consider how students can be empowered to act as citizens on their own accord. Additionally, it reveals how social reconstructionist goals can be actualized to reveal a compelling link between learning and citizenship in today's social studies classrooms with the guidance of properly prepared new teachers. This article explores the 4E framework's grounding in the historical foundations of citizenship education and social reconstructionist theory, as well as the development of a model student activism movement, how it works to empower students to become citizens, the importance of applying theory to practice in social studies classrooms and preservice teacher education classrooms, and concludes with recommendations from the authors for actualizing the model in both contexts to add a new dimension to current civic engagement education.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE 4E FRAMEWORK—WHY TEACH CITIZENSHIP

Historical Foundations in United States Civic Education

Thomas Jefferson argued that democracy could only be upheld by educated citizens, and thus educational institutions have aimed for more than 200 years to cultivate an effective electorate. Whether one believes that education should support individual freedoms, cultivate acceptance of existing American institutions, or empower the citizen to think critically for the advancement and betterment of democracy, these ideas are all founded upon the commonly articulated value of sustaining American democratic ideals. Social studies education, then, may serve as a means with which to equip citizens with the power and ability to improve society. For some, particularly
during times of war, this means conserving existing values and transmitting specific knowledge that will fulfill the aims of those who believe themselves to know best. For others, the continuous progression of democracy is a naturally evolving process and thus invokes a progressive reconstructionist approach to social studies education. Both orientations share the common aim of upholding democratic ideals, and thus both seek to empower students to practice citizenship actively. As Schoenfeld (2009) noted, we can see “democracy as a society where individuals are empowered to contribute in reasoned and powerful ways” (p. 29).

The promotion of democracy through education took root prior to the Revolutionary War, when schools were charged with the task of socializing children in the American colonies. Post–Civil War, however, the nation’s need for healing led to history lessons that transmitted patriotic thought and promoted the American dream (Dynnecson & Gross, 1995, p. 31). As the 20th century approached, historical events resulted in a shift within American social institutions, thus serving as a catalyst for change in the social science disciplines. At the turn of the century, an emphasis on moral education through history and the social studies laid the groundwork for educating active citizens. The public responded to the rapid change in American life by demanding that schools facilitate the moral development of students, promote American values, and prepare students for lives as citizens. Although John Dewey (1985) advocated for social education that featured historical education only to the extent that is served a relevant role in the student’s present-day life, according to Dynnecson and Gross (1995), traditional history education prevailed as the cornerstone of the social studies (p. 81).

In the midst of 1930s’ political and economic turmoil, buried in a hotly contested debate within the field of social studies education, and embedded in the dialogue of social reconstructionist educators, the National Council for the Social Studies gathered educators in 1936 to consider the future of the field, asking:

Shall the social studies present merely organized knowledge, or shall they also assume responsibility for attitudes and ideals? Shall the social studies seek to enable pupils to adjust themselves to current or developing social ideals, or shall they seek the reconstruction of society? (p. 349)

The purpose of this discussion was to investigate the extent to which social studies education should be used as a vehicle to transfer existing social values to students or whether it should instead cultivate in students an ability to build society. Ross (2004) discussed citizenship education as an opportunity for student to examine and critique past traditions, as well as current practices and problem-solving modes. He also noted that “while one must be careful not to construct the issue in dualistic terms, social studies educators’ differences can be described along a continuum with polar purposes of ‘indoctrination’ and ‘critical thought’” (pp. 249–250).

The question of whether social studies should teach conformity or progress was driven by the dual forces of theory versus practice, indoctrination versus active thinking, tradition versus progress, teacher centered versus student-centered learning, left and right politics, and historical versus contemporary curricula. The social studies debate in the 1930s did not result in one unified approach to social studies education, but it did lay the foundation for a complex and ongoing conversation about the purposes and goals of social studies. Perhaps, then, the answer to providing effective citizenship education lies along the spectrum of the aforementioned dualities rather than with one or the other. Keeping such dualities in perspective is essential, remembering that
tradition, progress, transmission, and active thinking are different mechanisms for citizen education and empowerment. The question, then, is what methods are more promising for building effective citizens who are empowered to challenge the status quo in order to advance and build democracy in the way that the social reconstructionists intended.

As early 20th-century progressivism suggests, and events of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s confirm, contemporary events cause society to reevaluate the purpose and desired results of education. Historians, teachers, and social scientists, therefore, find themselves redrawing the map to reconcile a variety of disciplines and ideologies to meet the shifting environment in which future citizens must be prepared. Our analysis of contemporary social studies education argues that the integration of scholarship, intellect, and authenticity is essential to the education of competent, empowered citizens. As Ross (2004) indicated, “The primary pedagogical goal is to support students as they come to understand their world and have agency as citizens” (p. 250). The 4E framework is designed to empower and energize students as citizens in line with all the various purposes and iterations of citizenship education.

Philosophical Foundations in Social Reconstructionist Roots and Practices

Theorists such as Harold Rugg (1941) of Columbia University’s Teachers College asserted that curriculum must sustain democracy and educate effective citizens while taking into account the current needs of society and students alike. Curriculum should transcend, to the extent possible, the politicized nature of issue-based education, while empowering students to improve society toward their chosen purpose. The social reconstructionist attempt to select curricula aimed at preparing citizens to solve society’s problems revealed a subsequent need for educators to define citizenship as it related to the student and pedagogical methods. Rugg (1941) put forth a social reconstructionist goal for social studies education that educated the individual in such a way that would build a “civilization of abundance, democratic behavior, [and] integrity of expression and appreciation” (p. 277).

In the 1940s, Mortimer J. Adler (1941) of the University of Chicago argued that “intellectual development” should take priority over “moral virtue” in social studies education. However, Adler acknowledged no explicit connection between scholarship, moral awareness, and motivational learning. Herein lies the disconnect between social reconstructionist rhetoric and effective citizen education: to cultivate effective citizens, social studies educators must empower their students to synthesize and put into practice an integrated form of scholarship, original thought, and moral awareness through motivational learning. Furthermore, authentic, intellectual citizenship education that is morally and socially relevant lends itself to the motivational principles that Adler suggested are solely dependent upon intellect. This is evident in the elements of the 4E framework which combines exposure to theoretical intellectual foundations and practical activist skills.

Theoretical Foundations in Citizenship Education That Benefit the Individual and Society

Although Rugg (1941) focused primarily on individual citizenship, contemporary theories emphasize social goals of civic education. The Center for Information and Research on Civic
Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), in partnership with the Carnegie Corporation of New York published *The Civic Mission of Schools* (2003). This report addresses the need for students to “learn to use the skills, knowledge, and attitudes” that can shape them as effective citizens (p. 10). The report outlines the skills that “competent and responsible” citizens should possess as a result of their education; students should “be informed and thoughtful, participate in their communities, act politically, and have moral and civic virtues” (p. 10). The CIRCLE report raises the question of whether civic education should produce academic knowledge, encourage nonpolitical community service, or invite explicitly nonpartisan political engagement.

As educators and policy makers seek an answer to the ongoing question of what civic education should look like and what it is meant to accomplish, they are faced with the challenge of sifting through present-day social forces to arrive at a truly democratic and authentic approach to social studies and civic education. In the current social climate, the argument for effective citizenship education is particularly strong. As Pace and Bixby (2008) stated in their most recent work, “The preparation of informed and concerned citizens is especially urgent due to the troubling political, educational, and sociological problems that confront us every time we read the news” (p. 3). They argued that democratic citizenship education is lost in the current focus on reading and math (p. 4).

Rugg (1941) asserted that in times of oppression, slavery, war, and abuse, “editors’ pens [historically] proclaimed the preciousness of American democracy” (p. 281). If students are to believe democracy is precious in a way that truly exemplifies the freedoms of a democratic society, simply importing an external, unauthentic patriotism is an insufficient way for students to develop true democratic appreciation. Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne (2003) advocated for the cultivation of students who are capable of practicing patriotism by appreciating, criticizing, and improving government (p. 14). Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) defined “real American patriots” as people who “organize, protest, demonstrate, and push for social change” (p. 587). Teaching patriotism and democracy, then, requires a commitment to democratic ideals and the exercise of democratic dialogue rather than the mere transfer or apparent understanding of an ideology.

Although history indicates that it is easy to dictate the types of responsible citizens that students should be by transferring visions that serve the present society, it is the duty of the educator to look and build beyond this point of transmission to critical thinking and civic skills. Teachers should provide students with the opportunity to define for themselves what a responsible citizen should be while remaining true to the flexible yet strong democratic ideals articulated in America's founding. Here reemerges Rugg’s (1941) requirement that the student reconcile contradictions: to preserve democracy, the student and citizen must be equipped with the tools necessary for innovative thinking. In other words, it is the citizen’s duty to apply the essence of democracy to contemporary society, remaining true to the original democratic doctrine while exercising appropriate and reasonable adjustments based on the current context in which America exists. This statement encapsulates many contradictions and calls on students to rise above politics while applying truth to these very politics and to accept existing American institutions while preparing to make creative and effective change.
Root and Billig (2008) added that competent democratic citizenship has four prerequisites:

1. Knowledge, for example, an understanding of democratic principles, governmental and political institutions, major political and social issues;
2. Skills, such as the ability to analyze alternative positions on an issue, engage in wise deliberation, and use civic discourse and political action for one’s own benefit and the greater good;
3. Values and attitudes needed for constructive engagement in political system and civic life, such as efficacy and tolerance; and
4. Civic involvement and intentions to become civically involved, for example in following the news, monitoring the performance of public officials, taking a stand on issues, or community service. (p. 107)

These objectives are not easily attained, nor can educators accomplish this on their own. They are, however, ideals that educators must reflect upon and strive toward to equip students to exercise effective citizenship. By incorporating the 4E framework, these prerequisites can be addressed.

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION APPLIED TO PRESHERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

To infuse an effective citizenship education model into the school curriculum, teachers must first be educated about the theory and practice of this model. If teacher candidates practice a model of citizenship education during their preservice preparation, it will influence their feelings about its importance as they establish their own civic identities. The manner in which ideas are presented to preservice students has a large impact on their teaching.

Rather than think of citizenship as a noun – as something one studies – future teachers are encouraged to imagine citizenship as a verb – as something one does. From this position, students learn democracy by studying it, questioning it, and considering actions that support aims like tolerance, open-mindedness, and fairness. (Boyle-Basie & Goodman, 2009, p. 38)

Peterson and Knowles (2009) stated “knowledge of a model of citizenship education ... challenge[s] student teacher understandings of the concept and the processes involved in translating the idea of active citizenship into practice educational experiences for pupils” (p. 47). They advocated that student teachers understand the complexities of these discussions and recommended that they do through deeper engagement with related initiatives and with theoretical and practical research within the field of active citizenship.

Student teachers need to be comfortable with a model of citizenship education before demanding it of their students. Although Weber (1998) recommended that “[c]ollege students who will be teachers of character education in the public schools need instruction and practice in skills specifically related to the actual teaching of character and citizenship” (p. 89). Martin (2008) reported little evidence that how to teach citizenship has been a focus of teacher education programs. Introducing the 4E framework at this stage of teacher development can remedy this situation.

The responsibility for providing civic learning opportunities rests with the classroom teacher, and the responsibility for preparing teachers to implement this curriculum rests with preservice teacher preparation programs. Research reported by CIRCLE in 2003 indicated that “in
the United States, teachers’ professional development experience related positively to their students’ civic knowledge . . . [t]he effect of having a teacher with both in-service professional development and a degree was also significant" (p. 6). Although this previous research indicates the importance of in-service professional development, the authors of this article propose that including this framework as part of preservice teacher education through the methods course will be even more effective, as this is the stage at which candidates’ lifelong patterns of classroom practice are established. This is also the stage that is important for building confidence in one’s ability to incorporate sound instructional practices.

Teacher candidates need experiences that reveal how active citizenship motivates their pupils. According to a study by Peterson and Knowles (2009), 98% of student teachers surveyed agreed that citizenship education should help pupils to develop skills of participation and responsible action . . . and at the same time acquire and apply knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens. Their study reveals that “96% (n = 142) of students (student teachers) either strongly agreed or agreed that active citizenship activities should be developed in the context of the wider community” (p. 48). Jerome (2006) saw a challenge for teacher education in adequately preparing teachers to facilitate experiential learning as part of citizenship education. Without this, harmful effects could occur in the development of active citizens (p. 316).

Martin (2008) reinforced the sentiment with a call for educators to embrace “the opportunity to influence the political side of citizenship. As educators, they have the opportunity to encourage their students to become future voters and active members of their community, society and world” (pp. 61–62). This highlights the importance of adequate training and preparation for teachers of citizenship. Once teachers develop their own civic identities, they can model this type of important behavior for their students by putting their beliefs into practice, just as one of the authors did as a teacher candidate with the creation of the 4E framework. As Jerome (2006) noted, “[t]his process of (i) planning; (ii) doing, (iii) reflecting and (iv) analyzing with a view to developing future practice, closely mirrors the strategies for learning through experience that these new teachers will be facilitating in school” (p. 326).

PRACTICAL FOUNDATIONS IN A CONTEMPORARY CASE STUDY OF CIVIC EMPOWERMENT

In addition to the historical, philosophical, and theoretical foundations discussed previously, a practical foundation led to the development of the 4E framework for citizenship education. This event was the rise of genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan in 2003 and the slow but overwhelming student response. The response reveals a unique moment in which students have created their own resources and educated themselves about issues that are important to them. Beginning in 2004, student groups emerged in response to the genocide, and within 2 years, a national student coalition was formed and aimed to navigate the structure of the U.S. political system to bring change. As students joined together, they implemented outreach tools, educational materials, teaching methods, and advocacy skills workshops. The student movement had expanded by 2008 to more than 1,000 student groups throughout the United States of what was previously known as STAND: Students Taking Action Now: Darfur and has since been renamed STAND: A Student Anti-Genocide Coalition. It is the duty of the reflective educator to investigate how social studies curriculum can better support students as individuals who can promote the well-being of society.
Recent developments demonstrate that STAND students have become active citizens who are empowered to exercise their roles in a democratic society and are building their efforts to end genocide by practicing active citizenship. The college antigensocide movement evolved when students educated themselves and became engaged in a social issue. Strong student engagement led them to develop the tools necessary to equip themselves to take effective action. The process of learning and developing action tools led active students to empower one another to build a movement in response to genocide, while also participating in the U.S. political system and collaborating with teachers and community members. Genocide prevention activism has therefore awakened civic participation, and it is thus useful to use the process of how STAND students came to exhibit the qualities of empowered citizens in comparison to their peers to support this proposed framework for teachers and their students.

The lessons of the antigensocide movement invite a reexamination of the social reconstructionist perspective and citizenship education, suggesting that methods could be adjusted to maximize student learning and to apply the goals of social reconstructionism within the overall objective of preserving democracy and cultivating the individual student. Four core themes, the 4E framework, have been identified to encapsulate the process through which STAND students reached civic empowerment. STAND students worked to create resources and equip themselves with action tools around a topic about which they felt passionate. The steps required in-depth education, engaging with the material, and developing and sharing tools that enabled students to lobby Congress, create and grow social networks, and navigate communications. These students, who demonstrated increased confidence in their knowledge and who have developed strong civic identities, have come to see the tools they use in antigensocide activism as transferable skills. Their lobbying experience allowed them to internalize civic responsibility.

Social studies teachers, then, can capitalize on this authentic process that the STAND students experienced. We can actively model citizenship and facilitate civic practice by guiding students through a 4E process. Depending upon the community and students, this process can be replicated for multiple topics and is not exclusive to antigensocide activism; rather, the process is necessary for students to acquire the ability to navigate our government and come into their own civic identities as empowered citizens.

This is particularly relevant in today’s world, in that our “ultimate purpose is to prepare citizens who will actively and thoughtfully participate in the social and political arena” (Pace & Bixby, 2008, p. 7). Instead of seeing democracy as a finished product, citizenship education should prepare students to become involved in democracy as an ongoing work in progress (Parker, 2003). Pace and Bixby (2008) went on to reiterate that “to be successful, citizenship education must promote both democratic enlightenment and political engagement . . . Political engagement means participation in the form of voting, deliberating public problems, campaigning, civil disobedience, and so on” (p. 8).

SHIFTING THE CIVIC PARADIGM TO EMPOWERMENT—THE 4E FRAMEWORK

Moving beyond content, then, today’s social reconstructionist educator is charged with the task of applying theory to practice. “We want our students to be able to think for themselves in a democracy, to make judgments based on evidence and argument, to develop minds of their own. We want them to ask fundamental questions” (Ayers, 2009, p. 32). Schoenfeld (2009) also noted
that participatory democracy means questioning, thinking through ideas, and making reasoned choices (p. 28). How can students realistically be asked to participate in democracy unless they have internalized a civic identity by being educated with the necessary background, equipped with the skills, and engaged in the practice of thinking, reasoning, and decision-making opportunities? Only then, when students have practiced and internalized the civic process, can they become empowered to fully participate in democratic citizenship.

To move beyond passive civic learning and to transcend politicization to the extent possible while still promoting authentic citizenship, education, and genuine democratic ideals, the educator thus returns to the question of why we teach what we teach. The goal of cultivating citizens who can thrive individually while contributing to society thus invokes the question of how to shape an approach to citizenship education that actualizes social reconstructionism in the classroom. What follows is an exploration of one example of a process through which students can practice and internalize citizenship in a way that allows them to construct their own meaning, which should not be subject to the politicized preferences of policy makers, but should instead promote the critical thinking and objectives that Rugg (1941) and the social reconstructionists advocated but have yet to be fully implemented. Pace and Bixby’s (2008) recent study of citizenship programs found that “successful programs in this study featured components that required students to learn about political institutions and processes and practice skills for political participation” (p. 14).

Active participation through a sequenced program is the key to building civic identities. Students do not observe science in the effective science classroom; they perform it. Students do not memorize mathematical theorems without applying them to problems; in effective mathematics classrooms, students practice mathematical problems to develop an understanding of the theorems. The English student learns rules of grammar by reading and writing, and reading skills are not accumulated unless the student practices reading on a habitual basis. Dance is not taught by watching dance; it is learned by dancing. Similarly, memorizing vocabulary words and step-by-step processes of government, or even being able to list the problems of democracy that the early social reconstructionists would include in a curriculum, are not sufficient for citizenship education. The student must be a citizen rather than merely read about other citizens. Therefore, the cultivation of the individual and society, as well as the ability of the individual to face paradox and adversity, requires that students practice navigating the political system in a way that is relevant to their own lives.

The development of STAND required students to seek an education before engaging in the political process. Motivated by passion and real-life events, they viewed the process as more authentic, therefore internalizing information. At this point, the students needed the skills to transfer their knowledge and affect government action. The process and results of these students’ work empowered them as citizens and resulted in strong, sustainable civic identities. Frontloading the process by educating and equipping students enables them to then practice engagement and empowerment. By articulating a series of steps and elements as a framework for citizenship education, as demonstrated in the development of STAND, it is increasingly likely that this process will actually be implemented in K–12 classrooms and brought to the attention of preservice teacher candidates as well. The 4Es are thus articulated further here.

Educate: In this context, the word educate refers specifically to authentic education and understanding. Here, educate is built on a foundation laid by the Understanding By
Design (UBD) model, which argues that building transferable, enduring understandings should be prioritized over memorizing seemingly disconnected content that carries no meaning for students (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The ability to define the word democracy is quite different from a student’s ability to participate in and develop an attitude about democracy. Students should actively engage in curriculum, making meaning of big ideas, and learning transferable skills and themes. As Rugg (1941) acknowledged, the student must have a thorough understanding, rather than a superficial familiarity with democracy. By learning within the context of the big picture, students learn with a more authentic purpose and are able to apply their democratic understandings in a variety of contexts. In this view, education does not fully serve the individual who can list the branches of government but is incapable of navigating the political system to lobby for one’s individual rights. Teachers, then, must imagine a way to shape coursework that fosters a strong content foundation for student understanding of and feel for government.

Equip: Equipping students with the essential tools they need to be engaged citizens provides a different model than the tradition of teachers simply infusing their content knowledge in students. In this view, teachers must provide students with the tools they need to become the citizens that they aspire to be. Academic tools for students include reading, writing, speaking, and communication skills, among others. Additionally, citizenship education should foster the tools, such as letter writing, lobbying, and participating in campaigns, needed by students and citizens to raise awareness, build political will, and make political change. Equipping students with transferable educational tools is in stark contrast to teaching students what to do and how to do it. This approach takes traditional education one step further, ensuring that students can go beyond passing a test and can apply their understanding of the U.S. political system in a real-life context.

Engage: Within the 4E model, goals for engagement are twofold: students should have the opportunity to engage in academic discourse, and the education they receive should prepare them to be engaged citizens in a democracy. An active curriculum can be engaging to students at all levels, providing different entry points that enable students to practice, not just speculate about, citizenship. Bixby (2008) investigated the Mikva program in Chicago and found that two factors that participants reported led to the transformative impact their participation in the Mikva programs had on their sense of themselves as civic actors: (1) the intensely social nature of their experiences, both with high status adults and with youth peers from across the city, and (2) the highly active, engaging, and authentic work that they did within the programs. (p. 254)

Empower: Citizens and students who are not engaged in American government have not yet been empowered to believe they are capable of participating actively in civic society. Empowering students involves making students cognizant of their capabilities and being able to imagine and realize the impact they can have in a variety of social and political contexts. Facilitating the development and awareness of civic identity, then, is a crucial step in the process. Empowering the individual is not limited to the social studies classroom; rather, the empowered individual understands that he or she can put authentic education and tools developed in the classroom to good use in the world outside of school.
The 4Es create a comprehensive approach to active learning in the social studies that invites students to practice citizenship just as they would rehearse a ballet. All the components are necessary to build an authentic civic identity. The process is linear, in that the recommended process begins with education and ends in empowerment, and also also recursive in that once individuals are empowered, they still go back for more education to equip themselves to present new arguments. Using these stages as a framework, the educator can, to the extent possible, avoid the politicization of issues-based education, allowing students to explore values, morals, and political issues in their own way while providing them with the tools they need to move forward. In other words, the transfer of information is not the goal in citizenship education; rather, it is the steps in the civic process teachers must teach explicitly to students.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: CIVIC AWARENESS OF STUDENTS AND THEIR TEACHERS

The Classrooms’ Role in Citizenship Education

Beyond the societal goals of education, we must also examine what education should achieve for each individual student. Is it fair to include all children in the overarching goal of social improvement? What about the rhetorical claim that education is meant to cultivate the individual student, enhance his or her learning, and draw on special skills and interests? An active, authentic approach must be taken if students are to internalize and master the skills they need to become knowledgeable, self-aware, effective citizens.

The 4E framework can provide a tangible way by which to organize instruction to ensure a comprehensive approach to citizenship education that is in line with teachers, students, school, community, and American democracy. Equipping students to deal with adversity and to think critically as 21st-century citizens means engaging them in potential points of contention that arise, perhaps around a controversial issue in the community. In an authentic, objective, and academic way, teachers can teach students to apply civic participation in different contexts and situations.

After 70 years of conversations based upon social reconstructionist theories and issues-based education, students are often still learning basic facts without necessarily translating them into application. Although community service has become central to some school programs, and such projects are of value to classroom curriculum, the students, and the community, these are separate from projects that exemplify the 4Es by empowering students to contribute to policy making decisions. To achieve larger goals, it is not sufficient to use the educational system simply to promote community service. William Galston, former deputy assistant to President Clinton for domestic policy, asserted that “young people today ‘understand why it matters to feed a hungry person’ but not ‘why it matters where government sets eligibility levels for food stamps for payment levels for Earned Income Tax Credits’” (cited in Westheimer & Kahne, 2003, p. 12).

The ultimate empowerment of young citizens, then, lies in the ability of students to understand structural issues and build solutions.

Thus citizenship education requires educators to think creatively and critically while considering the kind of citizens they are building. A community service assignment is not exclusive in a democratic society. Rather, the participation of citizens in the political pulse of the country,
the empowerment to act upon democratic issues and engage with government, and the ability to organize on a systematic, structural level to make change empowers students to internalize and practice their role in American democracy.

Preservice Teacher Education's Role in Citizenship Education

By extending this framework into preservice teacher education, we can provide exposure to the framework for teacher candidates and emphasize the importance of proper preparation in civic education strategies (like the 4Es) for preservice teachers. Teaching strategies will bring the 4E framework to life for students in the social studies classroom by educating them with necessary concepts, equipping them with strategies to facilitate political action, engaging them with the inquiry process, and empowering them to put it all into practice. Students learn to become active citizens through participatory experiences and opportunities to apply their knowledge in authentic contexts and form a commitment beyond the school classroom to include community activities. This will enable the goals of citizenship education to be achieved in the most effective way.

The authors recommend incorporating the theory and practice of the 4E framework into a preservice teacher program through the social studies methods course before student teaching. This is the appropriate opportunity to explore the nature and purpose of the social studies as it relates to citizenship. The thesis work (Milligan, 2008) that developed the 4E framework came out of such a course that explores the rationales for teaching history and social studies in secondary schools, and then gives the teacher candidates opportunities to practice implementation of their philosophy of social studies education through the creation of unit and lesson plans. The methods course should be followed, where possible, by an opportunity to design a project during student teaching which implements the 4E framework. As more student teachers, particularly those in graduate-level teacher preparation programs, are encouraged to pursue action research projects, implementation of the 4E framework might provide an excellent subject for this reflective research.

Even before student teaching, preservice candidates have an opportunity to imagine ways in which to build the 4E process into current teaching practices. Upon the development of the 4E Framework, The Generation Citizenship Project (GCP) was formed by students at Brown University in an effort to actualize active civic education in Providence Public Schools. The GCP is one recent example of an effort in Providence to promote civic practices in public schools, and the project aims specifically to utilize college mentors’ expertise in civics. The college students who participate in GCP, which expanded as a nonprofit organization into Boston Public Schools in August 2009, bring a variety of civic and educational experience to the program. The GCP provides resources for teachers and helps students to actualize civic goals; however, the project currently operates as separate from mainstream curriculum. Whereas today’s teachers face increased curricular pressures, teacher candidates, perhaps as part of their social studies methods course, can collaborate with teachers to integrate best practices for civic engagement into existing curricular standards and activities. This might take the form of teacher candidates doing a civic engagement projects by partnering with local teachers and their students, and tracking civic attitudes over the semester while using the 4E framework to integrate the project into the classroom.

To facilitate preservice teachers’ views of the 4E framework as part of the existing curriculum rather than separate from curricular goals, the preparation program should incorporate majors
in education or pedagogy and history or social studies content. This provides the future teacher with confidence in content and methods that will be essential for effective classroom instruction. The teacher preparation program that produced the work on the 4E framework is such a program. The overarching goal of the preparation program is to prepare reflective practitioners who see teaching as an active and intellectual activity, while stressing the liberal arts tradition that cultivates many deliberative skills from a commitment to critical inquiry. Such teachers will prepare students who look at citizenship as reflective as well as active. This educated reflection will lead to actualizing their citizenship as they are educated, equipped, engaged, and empowered by well-prepared teachers. The necessity of cultivating active, thoughtful, sustainable citizens charges teachers with the task of reimagining the process through which content is taught and integrating such a process into best practices.

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