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Civic Education Policy Change: Case Studies of Florida, Tennessee, and Hawaii

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Project Overview

Preparing the next generation of Americans to engage in their communities civically and politically is a shared responsibility. Although civic education takes place every day in homes and community centers, our nation's K-12 schools are in a unique position to nurture and reinforce the civic development of *all* young people. States influence their K-12 schools by enacting and implementing policies that include standards, tests, credit and course requirements, teacher certification rules, and funding streams.

This paper describes case studies of three states that have recently examined their civic education policies. The goal of this document is to inform other states' policymakers and advocates as they consider K-12 civic education policies.

- In 2010, Florida passed legislation requiring all middle school students to take a high-stakes civics test.
- In Tennessee, 2012 legislation requires a project-based assessment in civics for all students.
- In Hawaii, advocates defeated a proposed change to the state graduation requirements. At stake in Hawaii was a particular course, Participation in Democracy, that was relatively new (launched in 2006) and that embodied the principles of "action civics."¹ Had the proposal passed, this course would no longer have been required.

We chose these three examples because they represent strikingly different approaches to state policy: a high-stakes standardized exam, a project-based assessment, and an interactive course without any state assessment at all. The focus of this paper is on the efforts to influence policy: who was involved, how they worked, and what made the difference in the policy being passed or rejected. We cite the perspectives and experiences of key people involved in these three efforts. We also describe apparent keys to successful advocacy across the three states.

In conjunction with this paper, we have also released a fact sheet that summarizes the main elements of each policy. Both documents were made possible by the support of the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation.

Florida Case Study: Direct Advocacy to Key Policymakers

Making progress on serious statewide civic education required getting it on the agenda ... on the public policy agenda ... it simply was not on anybody's agenda other than a few people who sat around a table occasionally and talked about it.

-Dr. Doug Dobson, Executive Director of the Lou Frey Institute

In July of 2010, the "Justice Sandra Day O'Connor Civics Education Act" took effect in Florida. The Act had taken more than ten years to pass despite having bipartisan support. As its name suggests, retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor was a major champion of the bill, which also received valuable political support from former U.S. Representative Lou Frey (R) and former Florida Governor and U.S. Senator Bob

¹ Action Civics is a type of civic education defined by a focus on youth taking action on issues they care about on top of learning civic content. For more on the concept, see Building an Evidence-Based Practice of Action Civics at <http://www.civicyouth.org/building-the-case-for-action-civics/>.

Graham (D). The legislation requires that Florida students take an end-of-course civics assessment in middle school. Additionally, the bill mandates that civic education content be integrated into the K-12 language arts curriculum.

The Act was driven by the theory that people are more likely to participate in government if they know how it works. According to Dr. Doug Dobson, Executive Director of the Lou Frey Institute of Politics and Government at the University of Central Florida and one of the bill's biggest champions, the purpose of the legislation was to "return civics to the Florida curriculum in a systematic way, in hopes that by doing that we strengthen Florida's overall civic health and the level of civic involvement across the state. What that means, of course, is producing students with the combination of knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be active citizens in their communities."

The bill's language strongly emphasizes instruction in how government functions. The bill has specific provisions that require that: (a) civics content be included in the reading portion of the language arts curriculum for all grade levels, and (b) middle school students complete an end-of-course (EOC) assessment in civics.

Key Findings from Florida

One of the driving forces behind the development of the Sandra Day O'Connor Civics Education Act was the national rise of high-stakes testing and, specifically, the new Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The introduction of the FCAT was perceived to expand the teaching and testing of reading and math, leaving little room for social studies instruction.

The Sandra Day O'Connor Civics Education Act developed over many years with the help of several key organizations. The Florida Law Related Education Association (FLREA) played a key role in the early stages of the Act's development. In 2004, that organization surveyed Florida school districts to determine the status of civic education at all grade levels. According to the FLREA's Executive Director, Annette Boyd Pitts, "As a result [of the survey], participating gatekeepers such as the League of Women Voters and Common Cause in Florida were instrumental in securing legislation in 2006 mandating the teaching of civics in middle school. Representative Curtis Richardson and Senator Ron Klein introduced the inaugural legislative language which was included as a single line in a 160-page Middle School Reform bill which successfully passed both Chambers and ultimately became law" (2011).

Despite the passage of the 2006 bill requiring that civics be taught, students were still not experiencing the level of civic education that the bill's sponsors and civic education advocates had envisioned.

Following the passage of the 2006 legislation, the Florida Association of Social Studies Supervisors (an organization dominated by teachers) and the Florida Council for the Social Studies began advocating for legislation to include civics in the FCAT. According to Dobson, "The general theory driving this Act was that in Florida's very test-driven system ... unless civics and social studies in general was tested, it was very unlikely to be actually taught despite the provision in 2006 calling for civics instruction [in middle school]."

The next step involved building a team of civic education advocates among Florida's political leaders. In late 2006, former senator Bob Graham and former congressman Lou

Frey joined forces in an effort to return civics to the Florida curriculum. In 2007, they released a white paper outlining the need for more civics education. They went on to secure then Florida Governor Jeb Bush's support for the idea of testing civics. In addition, in 2009, Florida State Representative Charles McBurney began to champion the legislation and helped push it through the Florida House of Representatives. That effort was topped off by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who championed the bill before the state legislature.

Despite the desire of many leaders to pass a civic education bill in Florida, it did not pass easily. In 2007, 2008, and 2009, civic education bills were introduced in the Florida legislature but died in session. State Senator Steve Wise, then head of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Education, reported that the cost of statewide civics assessments was a major reason the bills failed; it was estimated that a new standardized test, once up and running, would cost about \$1.5 million per year (Postal, 2010).

Educators in Florida posed another obstacle. Originally, it was proposed that students would have to pass the civics EOC assessment in order to receive credit for the course, regardless of the grade the teacher assigned the student. The Florida Association of Social Studies Supervisors argued this put too much weight on the civics EOC assessment. The organization did, however, support a measure to make the civics EOC assessment account for 30 percent of the student's final grade.

The bill finally passed the Florida House and Senate in 2010. Dobson attributes the bill's passage to several factors. First, the legislation's advocates had to figure out the detailed processes for getting a bill through both the state House and Senate. This took inside knowledge of legislative procedures, including who should introduce and sponsor a bill. (State Senator Nancy Detert introduced the bill in the Senate and played a key role in its passage.) Second, they had to trim the bill down so that it was fiscally acceptable. According to Dobson, "We started the process asking for the world. We wanted civics to be taught and to be tested exactly like other subjects were tested in the FCAT." In the end, the bill passed with a provision for an EOC assessment just in the middle school grades.

It will likely be years before the Act is fully implemented. The middle school EOC took three years to develop and pilot. The requirement to include civics instruction in the reading portion of the K-12 language arts curriculum will likely take even longer to be fully realized. According to Linda Whitley, Supervisor of K-12 Social Studies for the Pinellas County, Florida, schools, "it has been difficult to inform teachers about legislation that is passed at the state level." She notes that there are many mandates for teachers coming from both the state and federal level, making it difficult to keep up with changing requirements. In addition, each county is responsible for interpreting the mandates and may implement them differently.

Another challenge to implementation is teacher preparation and professional development. Administrators like Whitley have worked closely with Dobson to develop professional development opportunities for middle school teachers who are starting to teach civics. The Lou Frey Institute also worked with elementary teachers in Pinellas County to provide curricular materials and professional development opportunities. According to Whitley, "We continue to offer extensive professional development but, as civics is now a required course, it is more difficult to ensure that all teachers have sufficient professional development before tackling the curriculum."

Time will also tell whether or not the civics EOC assessment can fully measure student civic learning. According to Dobson, "The Florida experience offers a perspective on the difficulty of testing civic skills." He points out that Florida instructional benchmarks call for students to have "experiential" learning opportunities in a variety of ways, such as through simulations, problem-based learning, discussion, or other methods. He notes, "The test, however, emphasizes those benchmarks that are susceptible to objective, multiple choice testing. Thus, the question of whether the Florida approach will result in increased levels of civic participation by students who have completed civics remains unanswered."

Tennessee Case Study: Collaboration among Policy Champions

"This bill is real significant, because it's the first time that I know that any state's required a project-based assessment for civics-based assessment."

- Janis Kyser, Tennessee Center for Civic Learning and Engagement

In 2012, SB2066/HB2114 passed in the Tennessee legislature, requiring students to take a "project-based assessment in civics at least once in grades 4-8 and once in grades 9-12."² This means that all students would have to conduct some kind of civics project and be graded on it. According to Janis Kyser, a leader of the Tennessee Center for Civic Learning and Engagement (TCCLE), the purpose of the bill was to provide a foundation for students to engage in a local community-based issue and to encourage the teaching of "deeper civics." As Kyser explained, "In order to do the assessment, students would have had to be actively involved in a local community issue." It would not be enough "for them to look at world peace, but a local public policy issue." The assessment, according to Kyser, would therefore promote the teaching of civics, with the long-term goal of helping to "solidify these students in helping to continue to be involved in their communities and government, and show them they have a voice."

Key Findings from Tennessee

The passing of Tennessee's project-based assessment legislation resulted directly from years-long collaboration between several key individuals and support from Tennessee policymakers. Major strategies that led to passing this legislation included: collaboration between practitioners and Tennessee Department of Education staff, relationships with powerful officials, and strategic support from political figures. Additionally, support from the full legislature and strong support from a select group of Tennessee lawmakers played an important role in the bill's passage.

The collaboration between lead organizer Janis Kyser and Brenda Ables, a social studies specialist at the Tennessee Department of Education, was fundamental to the bill's passage. For several years leading up to the bill, Kyser and Ables worked to support teachers in using the Project Citizen curriculum, a national program in which students build an action plan to address an issue of their choice. Both received positive feedback from teachers and students who were able to experience the Project Citizen curriculum. Although the resources to teach Project Citizen were available, and civics standards existed, Kyser and Ables recognized that civics wasn't being tested like math or language arts. A project-based assessment ensured that: a) civics would be taught in the state, and b) students would be tested on their active involvement in the community.

² <http://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/Billinfo/default.aspx?BillNumber=SB2066&ga=107>

These two organizers received support from two key state legislators: Senator Mark Norris (R) and Representative Kevin Brooks (R). The organizers made sure to introduce these legislators to active civic learning. Additionally, Kyser said she “brought in relevant materials to show that civic learning was necessary (including student reflections). We took in all of the relevant materials that he would need to show that civic learning was necessary, that it had the research behind it, so we gathered pertinent intelligence for our legislators.” From her perspective, this legislation was critical because she “witnessed positive outcomes from students and teachers. What [she] found in those [the schools with Project Citizen] was that the attendance improved, kids came to school, their inappropriate behaviors decreased.”

Additionally, Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor challenged Tennessee legislators to consider the policy and emphasized the need for civic learning in the state. Ultimately, the legislation was passed because of collaboration between the lead advocates and public officials.

Currently, there are two major challenges to implementation. First, 114 school systems are each charged with developing their own assessment, which reduces uniformity in how civics is being assessed across the state. Each Local Education Agency (LEA) is also in a different stage of developing their assessment. Kyser noted that there has been a push to revise the bill to address this challenge, so that only one measurement tool is used across the state. Second, given the unique nature of the assessment, new measures must be created. According to Kyser, a pilot assessment is being developed with the schools using the Project Citizen curriculum to evaluate what common measures could be used across each LEA.

Hawaii Case Study: Ground-Up Advocacy

“We always joked they picked the wrong group of people, the wrong discipline to try and reduce credits for because ... we are political agents and, you know, we are active and we are going to make this a teaching lesson for our students, too. And this is an avenue for them to become involved ... this is part of their civic duty.”

-Dr. Amber Makaiau, Director of Curriculum and Research, University of Hawaii Uehiro Academy for Philosophy and Ethics in Education, University of Hawaii, Manoa

In 2011, Hawaii's Board of Education proposed a change to the state's graduation requirement policy that would have reduced the number of social studies courses from four to three. If that change had gone through, “Participation in Democracy,” which had been a mandatory course for students since 2006, would no longer have been required. Ultimately, the policy proposal was not approved, leaving Participation in Democracy (PID) a required course. Thus, the advocacy campaign to save PID had two outcomes: preventing a change detrimental to civics and preserving a relatively recent reform that was fundamentally different from those in Florida and Tennessee (an action-oriented course rather than an assessment). The group facilitating this campaign was Aloha POSSE (Preserve our Social Studies Education), which was made up of social studies teachers, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), associations interested in promoting civic education, university faculty, parents, and students.

The proposal to cut the number of social studies credits was intended to give students more flexibility to take elective courses. According to Amy Perruso, social studies teacher

and department chair at Mililani High School, the proponents of the reduction felt that there's "no real emphasis or priority placed on civics or social studies education in No Child Left Behind or Race to the Top requirements, so [Hawaii's] requirements should also reflect that [lack of] emphasis."

However, Aloha POSSE felt the proposed reduction was a reflection of the low priority given to social studies by public officials in the state.

Key Findings from Hawaii

Collaboration among diverse stakeholders was critical to influencing the Board of Education's decision on this policy. Advocates in Hawaii collaborated and campaigned to push for the rejection of the proposal to reduce social studies credits in Hawaii. Major strategies included: collaboration with multi-sector networks, one-on-one meetings with the Hawaii Board of Education members, and use of media to influence public opinion. Additionally, strategic support from a key political figure, State Senator Les Ihara (D), was essential to the advocacy group successfully navigating the political landscape.

Aloha POSSE, the advocacy group created in response to the Board of Education's proposal, had the biggest influence on the policy outcome. In the years before the proposal, there were efforts in Hawaii to build awareness and support for civic education, through advocates' attendance at national civic education meetings and pushing for the state's Kids Voting results being published in the school trends report. Aloha POSSE originated when members of the social studies community networked at the Hawaii Board of Education meeting at which the policy proposal was first put up for discussion. Representatives from the Department of Education (DOE), social studies teachers, faculty from the University of Hawaii, and representatives from several NGOs were present. As Dr. Amber Makaiau, of the University of Hawaii, explained, "It was through this group's efforts, and community organization and activism, that the board asked the DOE to go back and ... work together to revise the policy." State Senator Ihara supported Aloha POSSE by providing political and strategic advice. His guidance led the organization to meet with each board member and argue their position. By the time the final board meeting was held, said Makaiau, members of Aloha POSSE "had individually met with most of the Board of Education members. So they knew us personally... [and] the reasoning behind why we were taking the stand that we were taking."

In describing the collaboration in Hawaii, Dr. Lyla Berg, founder of Kids Voting Hawaii and former Hawaii state representative, said it was "an example of civic engagement and participation in our representative democracy at its best ... we were able to connect with constituencies on all the islands and influence the decision-making process of the appointed Board of Education." Practitioners, adults, and students from the independent schools were also involved with the campaign to preserve the PID requirement.

Shifting public perception was also critical to Aloha POSSE's campaign. There was a general consensus among interviewees that the public did not see a link between education and a thriving and healthy democracy. One strategy was to leverage media to effectively communicate the group's position. Makaiau said it was critical to continually have "somebody write something that was going to be in the news all the time. So whether it was letters to the editor or an editorial, or a piece of writing in the community voices section of *Civil Beat*, which is an online investigative journalism kind of outlet ... we would constantly have something in the media." Beyond fighting against the policy, it was "an effort to educate the larger population of the role of public schools in preparing people for democracy," Makaiau said.

Through these methods, the advocates sought to explain the role of the social sciences in our democracy; to connect the dots for those who were “not making a connection between all the things that social studies can do and have the potential for — especially civics education,” said Makaiau. Rosanna Fukuda, Social Studies Educational Specialist at the Hawaii Department of Education, reflected on the 2006 mandate:

There was only knowledge-based courses being taught in both political science and civics, and there wasn't a component of being an active citizen in those courses. Knowledge without informed action is only potential. We needed to build something where students would take on real-world issues, locally or nationally, conduct research around them to see what had been done or what hadn't, what had worked or what hadn't, etc. and either propose novel solutions to these issues, or find ways to be 'value added' to people and groups already working on them. The final reflection component that was required of all students engaged this course is vital. This enables the students to think more deeply about what they just experienced and make adjustments in future undertakings.

Perruso, who currently teaches the course, said that the “action component is the best part of the course ... it's when they get the most engaged with civic action.”

Before 2006, PID had been offered as an elective course. The experiences of instructors who taught the courses were valuable once PID became mandatory. However, interviewees noted challenges in implementation. First, in many cases educators require several years to build their PID curriculum as well as their confidence in teaching the course. Second, social studies budgets decreased in the state after 2006; while professional development was offered early on, it did not trickle down to all educators teaching the course. Both of these challenges are also complicated by high teacher turnover in the state. Despite these obstacles, the Hawaii Department of Education and community-based organizations have provided professional development for teachers. Moving forward, advocates are interested in exploring new measures for assessing the type of project-based learning conducted through PID.

Cross-State Findings on Successful Civic Education Policy Advocacy

Despite the varied approaches to policy change in Florida, Tennessee, and Hawaii, some common factors were essential to maintaining or strengthening each state's civic education policy. Theories of policy change emphasize the importance of official leaders, grassroots coalitions, policy entrepreneurs, and the general public (see, e.g., C.W. Mills, 1956; Stone, 1989; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999). We found that policy entrepreneurs and legislators were essential to success in all three states, with some differences in their relative importance. Of the three states, Florida seemingly had the most “top-down” effort, whereas coalition-building and public outreach were most important in Hawaii.

1. Leadership from a Major Advocate

Each state benefited from at least one major civic education advocate who was not a policymaker. In Florida and Tennessee, policies passed after a long period of heightened efforts to increase the quality of civic education. These extended periods of advocacy helped develop continuity in leadership that was critical in passing the legislation. In

Hawaii, leadership from local practitioners was vital to the development and strengthening of Aloha POSSE, which in turn led to the defeat of the proposed policy revision.

2. Developing Connections with Policymakers

In each state, advocates developed important relationships with policymakers. In Florida, sponsors from the state Senate and education committee were vital in helping to navigate the legislative process. They provided seasoned advice on how to get a bill successfully through the Florida legislature. Political advocates for civics education then helped push the legislation through the House of Representatives. In Tennessee, relationships with state legislators facilitated advocates' meeting other policymakers and broadening support. In Hawaii, strategic guidance prompted advocates to initiate direct conversations with Board of Education members who would ultimately make the decision.

3. Navigating the Political System

Understanding and navigating the political landscape in each state was also important. In each case, the major advocates were supported by savvy policymakers who provided valuable strategic advice about who to talk to and how to work within the existing political climate.

Cross-State Findings on Strategies and Challenges to Implementation

As part of the study, we interviewed key stakeholders, asking about strategies, barriers, and next steps. The number of interviews we were able to conduct in each state differed, and in most cases we did not speak to a wide range of school district representatives. However, the three states seemed to share commonalities which could prove helpful to the writing of future state civic education policy.

1. State Department of Education's role in preparing teachers for implementation

Implementing the recent legislation in Florida and Tennessee and the 2006 mandate in Hawaii required the support and time of people in each state's Department of Education. Each state has its own mechanism for communicating state policies to teachers. Each state also differs in the number of people who would be directly involved in implementing policy changes: Hawaii has one school district, whereas Florida has 74 and Tennessee has 142.

In Florida, steps have been taken at the state level to prepare a guiding framework for civics, including course descriptions, instructional benchmarks, and the civics assessment. However, the state is not required to provide the curriculum to meet those benchmarks. As we heard from Linda Whitely, Content Specialist for K-12 Social Studies for Pinellas County Schools, administrative support is a barrier to implementation in Florida, because it is challenging to communicate with multiple districts at the county level.

The Florida policy is particularly complex, because it includes mandates for elementary school reading teachers to incorporate civics content so that students coming into junior high will be prepared for the civics assessment. As Whitely explained, "It's statutory for K-12 ELA (English Language Arts) students to read civics content within those classes. That is statutorily required. I can say that this is not happening across Pinellas County." Dobson said "more than half of ELA teachers don't even know it's a requirement." The interviewees suggested that staff from middle schools could have influence on the elementary schools and encourage integrating civic content into K-5 lesson plans.

The Tennessee legislation, which requires a project-based assessment in civics, specifies that each Local Education Agency create its own assessment. The fact that there is no required uniformity among LEAs to measure civic learning has posed a challenge. According to Kyser, LEAs have not taken the required steps, and, to her knowledge, neither has the Tennessee Department of Education. There is confusion as to whose responsibility it is to craft this assessment, because other state tests come from the state, rather than being developed by each LEA. Said Kyser: "School systems aren't provided the opportunity to decide what standardized test to take for math, or language arts, or social studies, so why would they be given the opportunity to design their own measurements of civics [education]?" Currently, there is a push for the Tennessee Department of Education to develop measures for the assessment, and there have been statewide efforts to pilot an assessment in the upcoming year. Kyser "look[s] forward to working with the Tennessee Department of Education to develop a project based civics assessment that can be utilized on a statewide basis."

The mandate for Participation in Democracy was present in Hawaii since 2006. Planning for the implementation started prior to the mandate. According to Fukuda, experts from around the state were brought together to talk about what a course with an action component, like PID, would look like. According to her, schools were given three years' notice that the course would be a graduation requirement. Several interviewees described how community-based organizations played a major role in professional development for the PID course.

However, Hawaii faced similar challenges in outreach as the other states. Says Fukuda, "The end result was that while professional development was offered to [the state Department of Education], it didn't always filter back to the schools evenly. So, the actual implementation of Participation in Democracy ... and the completeness of it, the rigor of it, varied depending on who and how messages were being delivered." Although the proposal to eliminate the course mandate was defeated, interviewees still indicate that social studies and civics may not be a priority for the Hawaii Department of Education. As Berg says, "the state civic education policies in Hawaii are sorely lacking ... there is implied 'civic education' attention in the Hawaii DOE strategic plan and goals, but nothing really specific or substantive."

2. Need for teacher development (pre-service & in-service)

No state mandate will work well unless the teachers who must implement the policy are educated appropriately. But interviews in all the states suggest that professional development for civics has been weak.

As Dobson explained, "Colleges of Education need to pay attention to social studies, and they haven't for a very long time, by and large." The teacher workforce is turning over rapidly (which makes it especially challenging to ensure that all teachers receive the necessary in-service training). Future teachers must develop identities as civics educators while they are undergraduates. Most often, a civics teacher sees herself or himself as a "1st grade teacher," or "social studies teacher" first, rather than as a "civics teacher." According to Kyser, in Tennessee, "especially in teacher education programs, [education majors] were not taught any civics at all ... if they were taught civics it was in a social studies methods class." As Makaiau of Hawaii explained, "It's a really small scattering of people who identify as civics teachers, or who say 'civics' is my specialty. In the process of becoming civics teachers, educators find themselves learning a lot of new

skill sets, or content knowledge ... and that takes time."

3. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) provide professional development, but more is necessary

In all three states, NGOs have provided some professional development of current teachers. The Tennessee Center for Civic Learning and Engagement has been providing professional development to teachers despite a lack of funding allocated specifically for that purpose. In Florida, the Lou Frey Institute was funded through the legislation; however, according to Dobson, it's a "drop in the bucket" given the number of teachers and students who need to be served.

Several community-based organizations (such as Kids Voting, Project Citizen, the Hawaii State Bar Association, and the Center for Civic Education) provided teachers in Hawaii with curricula to teach Participation in Democracy. As Makaiau explained, "This is not an endeavor that's just done by the Department of Education; it really takes the support of all of these different community organizations and groups. We're starting to break down the walls between ... the legislature, the Department of Education doing its own thing ... making it more of a collaborative effort on what we mean by civic education."

4. Relationship to the Common Core and C3 Framework

Two new frameworks for state standards are relevant to civic education policies. The Common Core English Language Arts standards are being adopted by 45 states and have some provisions relevant to civics. Meanwhile, the National Council for the Social Studies has published its own College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework for the social studies (2013).

In Tennessee, implementation of the state's project-based assessment policy was put on hold until the new C3 Framework was implemented, so that the assessment could be aligned with the framework. The Tennessee Department of Education has also provided trainings on the Common Core and C3; however, this left little funding for professional development for the new civics assessment. Additional efforts in Tennessee were made to connect project-based learning with the Common Core. As Kyser said, "We wanted them to see that project based learning was great for Common Core learning because it involved challenging questions based on what students were interested in, because students chose their own issues."

In Florida, some teachers are confused about how the civics assessment aligns with the Common Core, which is an additional challenge for implementation. Dobson said, "More recently, Common Core has become a political issue in the state. The state has withdrawn from the testing consortium and has dropped the name 'Common Core' in favor of 'Florida Standards.' As recent developments in New York suggest, this may not be over yet."

Conclusion

Florida, Tennessee and Hawaii exemplify three distinct strategies for improving civic education. No firm evidence exists yet about which approach will benefit students the most, but all have promise. This paper has suggested strategies for passing ambitious state policies, whether they involve tests or course mandates. The details vary in important ways, but in all three states we attribute success to a coalition of educators

and other civic specialists who received support from political leaders, including current or former legislators. In each case, the implementation of the policy after its passage has proven challenging. These are lessons to be considered in other states that wish to strengthen civic education.

Methodology & Limitations

CIRCLE explored these three unique state civic education policies by collecting perspectives from stakeholders involved with either the policy passing or implementation. The research question was: Why did each of these states pass the policy that they did, and what will be done to implement the policy?

We used a qualitative methodology and a convenience sample. Two CIRCLE staff interviewed stakeholders who were selected based on their knowledge and expertise in the state policies. In total, CIRCLE staff contacted 31 people: 12 from Hawaii, four from Tennessee, and 15 from Florida, each of whom were contacted multiple times via email. From the sample of 31, we received on-the-record interviews from 7 interviewees.

In order to grasp nuances and details in the data, we used a thematic analysis strategy for this report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The goal of thematic analysis is to understand themes that are common across interviews. We followed a set of procedures recommended by Braun & Clark (2006):

- **Become familiar with the interviews by listening to each tape:** In this project, we generated an initial skeleton coding scheme which included higher-order headings based on post-interview synopsis from the initial listening of the recordings.
- **Collaboratively categorize theories under higher-order headings:** In our case, it was important to discuss recordings that were categorized by sub-research questions under the main research question.
- **Review candidate themes, define and name themes:** For this project, there were three primary coders (two of the coders conducted the interviews). Four out of the seven interviews were double-coded by the coders, and in successive meetings, coders agreed on a list of codes. During the sessions, codes were revised iteratively.
- **Code checking:** The remaining three interviews were coded individually by each coder. Any questions were discussed as a coding group to ensure there was agreement on coding and themes.
- **Limitations:** The sample selected for this study is a convenience sample with a limited number of perspectives. Consequently, all perspectives of the policy change and implementation are not accounted for.

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CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) conducts research on civic education in schools, colleges, and community settings and on young Americans' voting and political participation, service, activism, media use, and other forms of civic engagement.

It is based at the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University.

