

# Being a good American: Citizenship education at a U.S. high school

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## ABSTRACT

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Citizenship education in the United State has historically taken many forms. Since Horace Mann laid the foundations for the common school in the mid-19th century, many have claimed that producing citizens is the prime function of public education and a necessity for the maintenance of a healthy democracy. Others have taken a more functional view on the role of schools in educating citizens, focusing their attention on the acquisition of foundational skills like literacy and numeracy, and some knowledge of government. Citizenship education "for" democracy has always been confounded by the stark inequalities, and lack of democratic processes, that characterize most American schools. This ethnographic essay explores these topics through an investigation of citizenship education in one "diverse" American high school, where competing agendas and principles are readily visible in curricula and school management. The essay concludes by asking not just how citizenship education is delivered, but what kinds of citizens are envisioned, and what kinds are produced.

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Since the beginning of public schooling in the United States in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, citizenship education has held a prominent place in mission statements and curricula. In fact, the first schools a hundred and fifty years ago were set up with the idea to express the purpose of bring young people into a shared democratic citizenry, different from that of the countries from which their families have immigrated. These were called common schools and were designed to serve the entire populace, not a single class or religious group. But from the beginning, the conviction that schools ought to be a primary site in which one might become a valued and valuable citizen has harbored contradictions, which have continued with us until today (Cremin, 1957; Taylor, 2010).

The notion of producing citizens, equal by definition, runs into another prime objective of American schooling, to sort students on the basis of achievement and motivation, a sorting with enormous effects on social mobility. Everybody is meant to learn how to be equal while simultaneously attempting to get ahead of the other. That political equality can co-exist easily with economic and social inequality might well be taken for granted in the classroom, as a condition for harmony, but this “naturalness” in itself provokes serious questions about the nature of the American democratic project (Guttman, 1987).

At different times in American history there has been significant tension between these two elements, reflected in educational polity and practice, never perhaps more so than today with the ascendance of neo-liberal market ideologies in schools, and the acceptance of a regime of constant assessment. One might ask in response, can schools resolve conflicts between orientations of individual achievement and democratic participation that undermine the teaching and practice of “civic virtues”? But the present truth appears to be that schools make little effort to resolve this conflict, and that they are much more interested in covering over, misrecognizing, or simply denying any conflict. I would argue, though, that schools remain pivotal sites for the production of citizens, but that the better question is how American students do learn to be citizens and what kind of citizens do they learn to be.

A related question concerns the differing positions of individual students when asked to participate in the “American democracy”. What is the place of multicultural and multilingual in citizenship education, when over 75% of students in most city school districts come from minority groups, and separation by race, class and ethnicity is on the increase? What does learning about political equality and participation mean to students with few material or social resources, and manifestly limited opportunities to succeed? While the ideology of schooling continues to feature centrally the possibility of everyone achieving the American Dream, the rate of dropping out, and the prevalence of plain old apathy amongst high school populations must be taken as an indication that most young people are not believers (Levinson, 2012). The problem of citizenship in many high schools is not experienced in terms of democratic participation in a shared enterprise, but rather is understood by school personnel and policy-makers as a problem in social control, and is understood by many students and parents in terms of belonging, irremediably, to the have-nots instead of the haves.

Notwithstanding, and generally indifferent to the ways in which the context of fairness might affect the meaning of citizenship education, a wide variety of curricular programs with a putative relationship to citizenship education are sponsored in American schools by federal, state and local authorities.

The goals of these programs have in many cases been formalized through their inclusion in the core curricular standards that are in the process of nationwide adoption. For instance, most state law requires that students learn about American government and law – the core topics of traditional civics lessons – at every level of their schooling. Different aspects of “citizenship education” are addressed in all social studies textbooks, if not in actual classroom instruction using these textbooks. Instruction in community relations, with emphases on service and tolerance, are also part of school curricula and extra-curricular programming. “Americanization” programs for immigrants that include English-language instruction with exposure to U.S. cultural norms and history are also part of schooling. Districts have also adopted a range of programs designed to improve everyday citizenship in classrooms and schools, and to promote environments of tolerance and appreciation of difference, on one side, and pro-social character traits and virtues, on the other side. This trend is encapsulated nicely in the credo of the KIPP (high achieving) charter schools: “Be nice. Work hard.”

I want to offer a short case study of citizenship education in one semi-urban, highly diverse American high school. This will allow us to see the range of programming and teaching and learning that might march under the banner of preparing citizens, and to notice the general lack of conversation between these different enterprises. One could start then by saying that citizenship education, as a unified purpose and project, is missing from this high school – which I will refer to as “City Line High,” to draw attention to the special characteristics of an institution that enrolls students who live on farms in the country, students who live in urban housing projects, and students who live in suburban developments. This site offers an advantage for the purposes of exploring citizenship education because all the actors are present under one roof. One need not to travel from one site to another to see affluent white students and poor immigrant students with limited English proficiency, because in this school they are in the same room.

I will discuss three different and mostly autonomous programs/curricula of which citizenship education, broadly defined, is an important part. Traditionally, citizenship education begins – and often ends – in the civics class, now renamed as American government, which teaches students about how American government works, and introduces them to the Constitution and the law. At City Line High, students are required to take either the half-credit American Government class in their senior year, or a full-credit Advanced Placement course in American government. To address the question of how citizenship is approached differently for different student populations, I will describe some of the policies, programs, and curricula aimed at English Language Learn-

ers, that is, Spanish-speaking immigrants from Mexico and Central America. City Line offers English as a Second Language courses, as well as Spanish for Spanish Speakers, all within a transitional bilingual framework where the main priority is mainstreaming English Language Learners in the regular classrooms. Another citizenship education theme concerns the development of the “civic virtues”, things like honesty, responsibility, respect and tolerance and basically how to get along with one another, and how to live within the rules of shared institutions.

### **Citizenship education as an element of social studies**

Since the 19th century American high school students have studied citizenship as a function of democratic government, learning about laws, courts, legislative procedures, executive action, the Constitution, and the separation of powers among the levels of government in the US. During times of nativist sentiment – such as the periods following the World Wars and 9/11 –these curricula and their presentation have often been imbued with a very patriotic spirit. Since the early twentieth century, civics and citizenship education has been a vibrant interest of political scientists, resulting in an enormous and wide-ranging literature. In this tradition, public education is still often defined in terms of its contribution to the development of citizens capable of participating knowledgably and ethically in a democratic polity (Bankston and Caldas, 2009). But rarely if ever is it so-defined by those who determine what shall actually be taught in American high schools, who generally consign civics and American government to the farthest corner of the curriculum.

One teacher at City Line described the purpose of the course to make sure that students in the high school who were citizens by birth knew as much about their country as those required to take a citizenship course in order to be naturalized. The course “examines how the United States is governed at the local, state, and national levels. There is a special emphasis on the U.S. Constitution and how the three branches of government work.” The class is typically one of the largest in the school, the academic demands are minimal, and the engagement likewise: often it is one of the last courses taken by students, and only because it is required for graduation. This is not to say that students do not learn anything about how American government and the Constitution work, but the institutional and student investment in this species of citizenship education is small, comparable to the required courses in health, computer applications, and physical education.

A small cohort of high-achieving students takes advanced placement American Government (2012) instead of taking the general course. But while the AP course does address all the topics normally associated with citizenship education, developing the disposition of a citizen is not one of the explicit goals of the course. Students are meant to learn important facts, concepts and theories pertaining to government; to understand political processes; to analyze and interpret political data; and to critically analyze concepts and theories, they are necessarily meant to gain a greater appreciation of the rights and obligations of a citizen in a democracy, or to become a better citizen. There is in fact little reference to citizenship per se and only two fact-based questions related to citizenship on the sample examination. Ironically, the AP course is designed to substitute for a college course on American government, where we might thereby led to assume gives as little attention to the traditional stuff of civics as does the AP course.

It is understandable, though, why this course does not focus on dispositional aspects of the students' relationship to the content of the course, i.e. political structures and processes, in as much as the ethics of political participation and democratic practice are not its domain. This AP course, like all high school courses generally, focuses on learning information and skills, leaving dispositions and beliefs to others. One might argue that teaching students to be one kind of citizen or another is tantamount, in the ideological climate of the contemporary American high school, to teaching them to profess one religion instead of another. This agnosticism with respect to student dispositions and beliefs – in contrast to definitive attitudes toward student behavior – correlates, I would argue, with the avoidance of charged cultural and ethnic content, i.e. with really relevant political and social controversy, across the curriculum.

A deeper engagement with the problems of democracy and citizenship is advocated by many organizations and individuals involved with social studies and civic education, but the extent to which they have been, or will be, successful in realizing this agenda in school learning is questionable. The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools (2012), an umbrella organization for many well-funded and influential institutions like the Annenberg Public Policy Institute at the University of Pennsylvania, maintains that [s]elf-government requires far more than voting in elections every four years. It requires citizens who are informed and thoughtful, participate in their communities, are involved in the political process, and possess moral and civic virtues. Generations of leaders, from America's founders to the inventors of public education and to elected leaders in the twentieth century, have understood that these qualities are not automatically transmitted to the next generation—they must be passed down through schools. Ultimately, schools are the guardians of democracy.

The report provides considerable empirical data on the sorry state of Americans' knowledge of how their government works, with an accompanying lack of appreciation for the virtues or means of participation, resulting in the crippling dysfunctions of contemporary American democracy. This report, and others, also provide convincing data to the effect that these failures of democratic participation are remediable, through curriculum and instruction, and that producing knowledgeable and responsible citizens is one of the most important functions of the public school. At City Line HS, though, the spirit that animates this defense of civic education is not generally in evidence, either in pedagogy or curricula. That is not to say that teachers, administrators and parents are not concerned with the development of students' values and character – many of which overlap with the civic virtues championed in explicit citizenship education – but as I will show below, the goals and means to the goals are significantly different, and align with alternate traditions in “citizenship education.”

### **Transitional bilingual education as a path to citizenship**

The right of immigrant and other non-English speaking students to bilingual education was established by the passage of the Bilingual Education Act in 1968. Originally, the intent was for both bilingual and bicultural education, but over the years the cultural dimensions of bilingual education have been eroded, and the right to any kind of bilingual education has been under fire. For example, in the late 1990s, California voters passed Proposition 227, which sought to end bilingual education in favor of rapid immersion in English-only classroom. *No Child Left Behind* (the 2000 re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of which the Bilingual Education Act is a part) further changed the focus of “bilingual education” to English acquisition, and away from the biculturalism that was one of the original impetuses of the Act. State laws passed in the last decade require that limited English-proficient students participate in programs that help their “transition” into the regular education program within three years. For some students, this means having teachers who speak the native languages of students, and some instruction in these languages. Others attend ESL programs with monolingual English-speaking teachers and students who speak many languages. But the emphasis is on academic achievement and English competence, with limited attention to value/preservation of students' languages and cultures.

This trend seems to have been reversed, in part, in City Line HS district, with the creation of new dual-language immersion programs in the elementary

schools in which multicultural issues are more centrally featured as a means to further the diversity goals of the district. Bilingual education within a cultural framework is also part of a strategy for increasing the engagement and persistence of Latino/a students in later grades: research has consistently shown the “culturally relevant” pedagogy – including native-language education – reduces the cultural alienation often felt by immigrant students, alienation that leads to low achievement and high rates of school leaving, both of which are problems that the district is eager to solve. This change in policy can be considered as an aspect of citizenship education, though it is not typically represented as such.

Teaching immigrants to speak English, whether they are children or adults, has always been a cornerstone of formal “citizenship education”. For adults seeking naturalization, there are language and citizenship classes in which aspiring US citizens prepare for their interviews and exams with Citizenship and Immigration service. Schools have historically performed this function for immigrant youth, “Americanizing” them through the assimilative processes of school (and English-language) culture, and through the curriculum (Darder, 2012). While the return of dual-language bilingual/bicultural education in the early elementary grades may signal a new (old) direction in the process of producing citizens out of immigrants and children of immigrants, the more common process of citizen-production in the district’s classrooms, and in City Line HS in particular, is the backgrounding of cultural and linguistic identity to the greatest extent possible, with a single-minded focus on academic achievement. Language proficiency is key, of course, to academic achievement. English language learners are classified, along with students with disabilities, on a scale indicating the required degree of “intervention” necessary to bring them toward proficiency. The non-English speaker, for instance, might be classified at a level three, along with a severely dyslexic child, and receive generally the same educational services.

This approach to producing citizens – and identifying potential non- or deficient citizens – is consistent with a long American tradition articulated by the Supreme Court (*San Antonio v. Rodriguez*, 1972) of considering basic literacy as the one essential, i.e. minimal, precondition for citizenship. In some ways, contemporary schools, with their emphasis on academic achievement, have adopted this perspective, while not entirely abandoning the tradition of teaching “civics.” But the fact that four full years of English study – toward which a large proportion of institutional resources is devoted – is required for graduation from City Line, while only ½ of a year of study of American government is judged sufficient. Additionally, the core academic standards that are now in the process of national implementation stress, above all, the mastery of read-

ing and writing skills in the social studies, rather than the learning of any particular content, i.e. government.

It is difficult to argue against the importance of literacy for full citizenship, but there is a tendency – however unintended by those who formulate the goals and policies – in school practice to shortchange any curricular interest that does not have the building of these skills as its first priority. The knowledge and skills involved in social studies literacy are defined not in terms of how they will contribute to citizenship, but rather in their value in preparing students for higher education and careers. By the Supreme Court’s understanding, the minimal requirements for citizenship consist only in being able to read the ballot, read other official documents necessary for everyday public life, and perhaps to read the media in which political issues are discussed. The school is charged with providing the opportunity for its students to learn this skill, but the business of deciding what political views one ought to hold or political actions one ought to take, including voting, or how one ought to construe one’s membership or identity in the polity and society, is left largely to the individual, and to his and her private, i.e., civil, associations.

The extent to which schools are disinclined, or required by other political bodies to be disinclined, to citizenship education that engages with cultural, or even political, issues is showcased in the recent controversy concerning the teaching of Mexican-American Studies in a Tucson, Arizona high school (Letson, 2012). The academic and social support program was founded in 1998 with the expressed purpose of increasing the achievement and graduation rate of the school’s predominantly Mexican-American student population. The curricular means to this end involve teaching “alternate history,” that is, history more from the point of view of historically marginalized groups like Mexican-Americans, and the promotion of ideals of cultural citizenship. Additionally, the Mexican-American Studies program offered literature courses featuring Mexican-American authors. As a form of citizenship education, this form of ethnic studies appears to have sought to increase self-esteem and knowledge of the ethnic group experience as means of fostering greater and more successful participation in American institutions, that is, schools. There is little doubt that much of this curricula had an overtly “political” perspective: texts like Rodolfo Acuna’s (2010) *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* and Paulo Freire’s (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* were on the reading list. The Mexican-American Studies program showed evidence of very significant success in terms of graduation, college enrollment, and career success.

In 2009, the Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Horne, began a campaign to restrict and eventually terminate the Mexican-Amer-

ican Studies program. Horne had also been active as Superintendent in enforcing a ban on bilingual education. He began with the request the books like *Occupied America* be removed from classrooms, which led to the passage of Arizona House Bill 2281 (2010) that banned the teaching of ethnic studies in Arizona public schools. The language of the bill specifies exactly what may not constitute citizenship education for public school students:

A school district ... in this state shall not include in its program of instruction any courses or classes that include any of the following:

1. Promote the overthrow of the United States government.
2. Promote resentment toward a race or class of people.
3. Are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group.
4. Advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of the pupils as individuals.

Supporters of the ethnic studies program do not contest that the program violates this law; rather they contest the constitutionality (and moral basis) of the law on 1<sup>st</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> amendment grounds. That is, they claim that the state's actions discriminate against teachers and students on racial/ethnic grounds, as well as violate the right to free speech.

Without doubt, this case could serve as the centerpiece in any citizenship education curriculum, but for the purpose of this essay, I want to point toward the impulse of many school officials and “citizens” to limit education for citizenship to consideration of the “non-political” and the non-ethnic. This goes hand in hand with the impulse to strictly limit the use of Spanish or any other “foreign” language in school settings, to enforce the use of English as the means of enculturation, and the means of promoting cultural citizenship. This draconian solution to the problem of difference in citizenship education, differences among citizens that affect their access to the political process or social and economic opportunities, hearkens back to the Americanization campaigns of first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Education figured centrally in that time – note the largely successful efforts to silence the German language in Midwestern schools – as it does now. A populist anti-foreigner or anti-immigrant movement was given teeth by opportunistic politicians, with the result that the national conversation about the obligations and status of newcomers, as second-class citizens with limited rights, was translated into curriculum meant to legitimate and realize a political ideology. Citizenship education thus becomes schooling in how inequality is made to persist in a democratic society (Darder, 2012).

## Good Citizenship as Good Behavior in U.S.

Students at City Line HS receive high marks for citizenship when they behave and achieve well, but this does not mean that classroom communities in which they achieve these grades are democratic. Many teachers do create democratic classrooms where citizenship is meaningful, but often in practice, good citizenship is the same as good behavior, that is, compliance with the norms and rules of the school culture. But teachers' inclinations to make classroom democratic spaces – an inclination that one could not say is not shared by a majority of teachers at City Line – are always under pressure from many sources to value individual academic achievement more than civic virtue, except insofar as the having of civic virtues can be shown to lead to academic achievement. The result can be good citizens without democracy, and good behavior and good citizenship without much community. On the other hand, many would argue, schools that actively promote solidarity among students and teachers through character education, and through positive behavioral systems, can achieve meaningful community with shared goals. I will describe two recent initiatives at City Line HS – and district elementary and middle schools – that fall into this category: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports ([www.pbis.org/default.aspx](http://www.pbis.org/default.aspx)) and the KIPP School's ([www.kipp.org](http://www.kipp.org)) core set of operating principles known as the Five Pillars, and their accompanying “character work.” The adoption of system-wide schemes to encourage (and reward) particular kinds of social, personal, and academic behavior has a complex relationship with the goals of both citizenship education as civics, and citizenship education as part of multicultural education.

KIPP (the “knowledge is power program) began as a single charter school in 1994, and now is a national network of 125 schools in 20 states, mostly located in urban areas, enrolling low-income, minority students. The mission of KIPP (2012) is overtly political also, but of a different slant than Arizona House Bill 2281 or the Mexican-American Studies Program in Tucson. In seeking to prove that “demographics is not destiny” KIPP echoes the goals of the Ethnic Studies program, but rather than pursue this end through the strengthening of identification with a rehabilitated ethnic culture and language. But KIPP promotes instead a “culture of achievement” that might not offend the authors of HB 2281. The singular goal of rendering disadvantaged students, mostly students of color, with poor academic and life prospects into high-achieving college students can be considered a form of citizenship education, in the spirit of W.E.B. DuBois (Alridge, 2009). For these students, DuBois might have said, to gain the skills and knowledge required to succeed in higher education equates with the opportunity for fuller participation in the business of citizens.

That said, KIPP has many detractors also, who wonder what happens to “real” culture in an environment dominated by the culture of achievement.

The relevance of KIPP to City Line HS is that it has adopted, in name if not practice, many of the precepts in the “five pillars” on which a KIPP education rests. The seven key words of KIPP’s character education program – grit, zest, self-control, optimism, gratitude, social intelligence, and curiosity – are displayed in every hallway. The five pillars (2012) constitute a philosophy (or business plan) for achieving college graduation for all students, with no excuses or apologies for their starting point near the bottom.

1. The focus must be on college graduation and success in life.
2. Both academics and character are critical to a college-prep education.
3. Outstanding leaders are critical to every school’s success.
4. A strong school network must foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement.
5. What you measure matters.

Visiting a KIPP school, one is struck immediately with the fidelity of the school operations, at all levels, with these principles. Students in first grade wear t-shirts bearing the year of their college graduation, pennants from the colleges attended by the teachers—often very prestigious colleges—adorn classroom doors, results of ongoing assessments are posted everywhere, students and teachers are seriously and undistractedly engaged in the business of learning, and the language of self-efficacy and growth is always in the air. The same cannot be said of City Line HS, but since adopting these basic principles – and adding surveillance cameras and an increased police presence – the sights and sounds of an “unproductive” education have markedly decreased.

The character education component of the five pillars is especially relevant to citizenship education, in that it encourages and rewards what could be thought of as the virtues of a culture of achievement, most of which are quite consistent with a more traditional set of American civic virtues (Seligman, 2006; Borghan et al., 2008). KIPP defines four elements of excellent teaching, and two of them focus on character and community. What distinguishes KIPP schools themselves from City Line HS in this regard, at least in the present, is the extent to which character education – developing grit, zest, self-control, for example – is integrated with traditional academic learning. It is also measured, modeled, and demanded, in keeping the institutional culture of continuous improvement and proactive leadership. At City Line HS, implementation of these principles lacks unanimity of vision and purpose, as well as reflects the ongoing “normal” conflicts between administrators and faculty,

which have been exacerbated by anti-union legislation, increased workload, and budgetary belt-tightening. There is also much less communication, if any at all, between faculty in different subjects, much of which is a function of size. Whether one appreciates KIPP character education or not, or whether it is compatible with the comprehensive high school model that continues to inform practices at City Line, are open questions. But for now, students in only a few classes are introduced to the notions of grit and optimism, certainly traits of the paradigmatic American citizen, but most just wonder why these words are pasted all over the hallways.

In contrast, City Line HS has more zestfully adopted a systemic behavior management program known as PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) as a means of getting students to be “good citizens” in the school. According to administration (Beloit Memorial High School, 2012), [t]he behavior and conduct of students in the School District shall reflect standards of good citizenship, self-discipline, responsibility for one’s own actions, and respect toward others. Our vision for discipline is systematically focused on prevention and education, striving to provide students with knowledge and skills through the implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports” ... City Line HS operates as a privilege based institution and we are very proud of all the good decisions our students have made within this system.

We can consider self-discipline, responsibility, and respect as components of the good citizenship the school wishes to teach and enforce, though PBIS, and we will see some important differences with the KIPP approach. The absence of virtues like curiosity and gratitude from the school’s list is instructive, but perhaps more telling is the implicit relationship to school rules and conventions implied in these two ways of thinking about “good citizenship.” In the KIPP environment, the development of character tends to be understood as an end in itself that relates essentially to the overall goal college graduation, whereas at City Line HS, “good citizenship tends to be conceptualized as means to an end, i.e. discipline or order, which is understood as a necessary component to fulfilling City Line’s primary goal, high school graduation.

The contrast becomes clear in looking more closely at where PBIS comes from and what its goals are. George Sugai and Brandi Simonsen (2011) maintain that PBIS should be defined “as a framework for enhancing the adoption and implementation of a continuum of evidence-based interventions to achieve academically and behaviorally important outcomes for all students.” What does this mean? PBIS began as a “framework” for the management of children with behavioral and emotional disturbances, and sought above all to be systematic with respect to which of the behaviors of its clients were rewarded and which were not, to carefully document outcomes and to adjust conse-

quent treatments in light of past data. That is to say, PBIS is not intended as a recipe for behavior management, saying which rewards and punishments should be awarded in what circumstances, rather it is a framework for processing data related to behavior that can be used effectively system-wide – in a school – to affect conformity to whatever behavioral goals the school decides upon. In keeping with decades of behavioral research, PBIS stresses the value of rewards over punishments and the value of explicitness and consistency in achieving the institution's goals (see Pierce et al., 2003, for example). PBIS is also used, in conjunction with other system-wide frameworks like Response to Intervention (<http://www.rti4success.org/>), to categorize students with respect to their performance within the system, that is, on the basis of how “good” or “bad” they are, and to formulate interventions for those whose citizenship leaves something to be desired. At City Wide HS, all teachers are expected to use PBIS in a consistent way, and the chart indicating what constitutes “good citizenship” is available on the wall of every classroom. PBIS was adopted with the very express purpose of dealing with students' disruptive behaviors and ineffective teacher responses to such behavior in a way that preserved the peace, allowed other students to learn, and created a systematic way for those who were disruptive to repair the damage and return to regular classrooms.

The national organization that promotes and supports implementation of PBIS is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Special Education division. PBIS has the virtue, from the point of view of funding agencies, of producing data that indicates clearly whether or not it works. And it would appear that it is effective in achieving its ends. While the national organization asserts that PBIS does not, of itself, promote use of external rather than internal rewards, its form at City Line HS is “privilege based,” meaning that students receive tangible rewards – like access to the upscale student lounge during study hall – when they “make good decisions.” Those who do not make good decisions are not allowed to attend special events, like dances, their participation in athletics is limited, and they may be required to stay in school after regular hours. Without question – and with the help of surveillance that helps administration detect good and bad decisions everywhere – system-wide implementation of PBIS has increased the congeniality of the school environment with respect to acting out, though at some cost to student privacy and agency, and to teachers' freedom. While the virtues enforced through PBIS – self-control, personal responsibility, and respect for others – seem wholly congruent with traditional citizenship education, there is the sense of visible conformity to these principles, that is, behavior that cannot be said to violate these principles, is more highly valued than a sincere commitment to these values. That seems less congruent with the values normally associated with citizenship education.

## Conclusion

As I write this, less than a month before another U.S. presidential election, the pundits speak often and loudly about the failures of American schools to produce either a knowledgeable and competent workforce or and a knowledgeable and competent electorate. But complaints about the quality of the American electorate tend to reflect the partisanship of contemporary politics, with each side arguing that schools have not provided students' with the knowledge or disposition to decide "correctly" in favor of one party or the other. On the other hand, complaints regarding the traditional province of citizenship education, knowledge about American government, in league with a disposition to participate in the political process, seem legitimate. Many of City Line High School's graduates, for instance, don't know much about how the government works and aren't inclined to involve themselves in the political process, manifested in rates of young voter turnout under 50%. What does this say about citizenship education as it is currently envisioned and how is it currently practiced in the U.S.?

Our glance at how City Line High approaches citizenship education provides some insight. First, citizenship education, as "civics" or other courses in American government, is very limited, with respect to the whole curriculum and school agenda, in scope and value. Those who would like social studies to be a central part of school curricula, and citizenship education to be a central facet of social studies, can only be very disappointed by current policies (Bankston and Caldas, 2009). Of the core subjects, social studies have definitely been the poor cousin, and citizenship education is not an integral part of what social studies does remain in the curriculum. At City Line High, neither students or faculty take the required American government course seriously, nor is there indication that citizenship education is taken up seriously in other social studies offerings.

The ways in which immigrant – "non-American" students – are educated is illustrative of how citizenship is regarded by schools and by society at large. The emphasis is on assimilation to mainstream values, adoption of English as the primary language, and the discouragement of curricular or programmatic offerings that emphasize "other" histories or "other" ethnic identities. At City Line, multicultural education is devoted to equality, not of the sort that actively explores and recognizes inequality, but of the sort that enforces formal equality. The extreme version of this tendency observed in Arizona is not present at City Line, where there is neither a burning interest in ethnic studies, nor a strong political or administrative urge to suppress expressions of ethnic solidarity. Nonetheless, even though the district motto is "Celebrate Diver-

sity,” the everyday practice tends more to the celebration of everyone getting along without too much drama, which entails discouragement of any form of solidarity that interferes with public harmony and order.

The core practice of citizenship education at City Line HS seems to me to reside in the formal and informal means deployed by the institution in the name of character education and discipline. These two are not always distinguished, such that a good character results in appropriate self-discipline (and the attendant rewards), where poor character results in being disciplined by the system itself, with the attendant loss of privileges. More accurately for many students, privileges are not lost because they were never gained in the first place. The systems of character and behavior management produce an economy of privileges where some are chronically impoverished and some are affluent from beginning to end (Bourdieu, 1998). To discuss matter in this way, however, is – in the parallel worlds in which the character and behavior of teachers and parents is managed – transgressive. But, on the other hand, it might be argued that the public school has never been a democratic place, and that its proper function is not to model some kind of simulated democratic process in which students and teachers could practice citizenship. Its function, the argument might go, is to prepare young people for higher education, where they can learn to participate fully and successfully in the social and economic world. To imbue young people with grit, zest, optimism, self-control, gratitude, social intelligence, and curiosity – not to mention a healthy dose of willing conformity to “things as they are” – is, according to this view, the prime purpose of public education, bringing with it all the necessary citizenship outcomes. These are the values intrinsic to individual achievement. This is bound not to satisfy those who wish for more practice with democracy, or respect for difference without willing difference away, or for a robust conversation about inequality. These are the values intrinsic to beliefs about the importance, first and foremost, of community, including the political community. At City Line HS and most other public schools, individualism as the controlling ideology of citizenship education, with its supporting cast of virtues and social practices, is the order of the day. Citizenship education as building political, democratic community is generally an extra-curricular concern, to be pursued outside of the normal school day.

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