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How Civic Leaders Can Use

All Together Now: Collaboration and Innovation for Youth Engagement: The Report of the Commission on Youth Voting and Civic Knowledge

All Together Now offers a timely overview of civic education, describing the difficult political context for civics, the actual state of students' knowledge and engagement, what works, and what good citizens must know and do. It was written by a bipartisan group of leading experts who reviewed extensive current research. It provides a list of recommendations, but it acknowledges that there are no simple solutions; the best strategy depends on the circumstances. That means that it's valuable to bring people together to discuss how to engage and educate youth. The report can inform such discussions. We encourage you to integrate these findings into the discussions you have about civic education and voting. Among other things, the Commission finds that...

★ **Some of the standard reform proposals are misconceived.**

For example, we often hear that states should require a civics class or make voting easier. But nearly 90% of high school students already take at least one civic class (usually because of a state requirement), and voting reforms have limited effects.

★ **But educating and engaging young people has long-term effects.**

Students who recall better civic education are more likely to be engaged. Discussing controversial current issues seems to boost knowledge and interest. Service-learning is helpful if students feel that they have addressed important social issues (but unhelpful if they do not). Belonging to student groups increases engagement in community life and politics.

★ **Effective practices develop skills as well as knowledge.**

Good civic education develops skills, such as deliberation, collaboration, and public-speaking. Achieving those outcomes requires more challenging standards for civics and better integration with other disciplines.

★ **Yet there are major gaps in exposure and quality.**

Youth who miss out on civic learning opportunities are more likely to be students of color and low-income young people.

★ **Strengthening civic education requires more support of teachers.**

A quarter of teachers thought parents would object if they taught about politics in a government or civics class, and only 38% thought their district would give them strong support. Teachers who perceive support are more likely to be using the promising practices.

We encourage you to integrate these points into your coalition work. Please find the full final report and recommendations of the Commission at www.civicyouth.org.