

## RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

*From Research to Practice, a column dedicated to recognizing successful "bridges" between researchers and practitioners, reports on research with practical implications for youth civic engagement. Additionally, it presents concrete examples of how practitioners have applied this research to encourage the participation of young people in civic and political life.*

### CIRCLE HOSTS RESEARCH FORUM FOR PRACTITIONERS

On October 3rd, 2006 at the National Press Club CIRCLE released the 2006 National Civic and Political Health Survey (CPHS), the most up-to-date and detailed look at how young Americans are participating in politics and communities. The full results can be found at [www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org).

Following the release, CIRCLE hosted a Practitioners' Forum that had the following goals:

- to create a professional development opportunity for practitioners to learn about and discuss research relevant to their work;
- to provide an opportunity for practitioners to discuss the research findings relevant to their work with other practitioners; and,
- to open a two-way conversation between researchers and practitioners to address what opportunities exist to capture youth civic engagement even more accurately.

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More than 40 individuals representing over 25 organizations in the youth civic education and civic engagement fields attended the forum. During the event CIRCLE presented the overall findings from the *2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation* survey and facilitated small group discussions on particular topics related to youth civic engagement practice. Topics included: (1) how young people inform themselves and why it matters, (2) youth electoral engagement and political voice, (3) the civic engagement of youth of color, (4) young people's attitudes about and trust in government, and, (5) youth community service and volunteering.

The small group discussions were organized around the following questions:

- Does this research echo your experiences with young people in your work? If not, what surprises you about it?
- What may cause the patterns revealed by the survey?
- Based on this research, what opportunities are there to measure youth engagement more accurately?
- What questions do these research findings raise about youth civic education and engagement practice?

Feedback from the Practitioners' Forum on the CPHS findings provided CIRCLE with critical comments for incorporation into future research. "Listening to the large and very engaged group reinforced our view that practitioners are eager to use and to influence research," said CIRCLE Director Peter Levine. "Dialogue with practitioners is one of our fundamental purposes."

The Forum closed with a focus on practical ways that participants could use the CPHS in their work. This discussion generated tangible ideas such as using specific research findings in grant

#### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2006 CPHS

- ★ 26% of young Americans say they vote regularly (age 20-25 only).
- ★ 30% have boycotted a product because of the conditions under which it was made or the values of the company that made it.
- ★ 72% of young Americans say they follow what's going on in government and public affairs at least some of the time.
- ★ 67% say they have confronted someone who said something that they considered offensive, such as a racist or other prejudiced comment.
- ★ Although young people remain more favorable toward immigrants and gays than their elders, there has been a decline in youth tolerance for those two groups since 2002.
- ★ Young people who are more engaged in their communities have more positive views of government than those who are less involved. However, substantial numbers of young people, no matter their level of engagement, say government is almost always wasteful and inefficient."

*For more findings from the 2006 CPHS go to:*

[www.civicyouth.org/research/products/youth\\_index\\_2006.htm](http://www.civicyouth.org/research/products/youth_index_2006.htm)

applications, distributing the CPHS report at board of directors' meetings, and using the CPHS as a tool for staff discussion and critical reflection.

*CIRCLE promotes and conducts research that has practical implications for those who work to increase young people's engagement in politics and civic life. The Practitioners' Forum was one way in which CIRCLE is striving to provide opportunities to make the connection between youth civic engagement research and practice.*

Additionally, forum participants received a copy of the pen-and-paper survey CIRCLE has developed that allows people to assess their own civic engagement, or that of a group. This survey is available on CIRCLE's website ([www.civicyouth.org/research/products/youth\\_index\\_2006.htm](http://www.civicyouth.org/research/products/youth_index_2006.htm)) along with suggestions for its use and a way to easily compare results to the national findings.

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#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

The Civic and Political Health Survey (CPHS) can be a helpful tool for organizations interested in promoting civic engagement. CIRCLE staff are available to make presentations about the CPHS and other research findings. Please contact Abby Kiesa ([akiesa@umd.edu](mailto:akiesa@umd.edu)), youth coordinator at CIRCLE, if you are interested in finding out more about customizing a professional development and/or reflection opportunity for your organization.

#### CIRCLE IN THE NEWS

##### RECENT NEWS ARTICLES CITING CIRCLE RESEARCH...

- ≡ "Few U.S. youths involved in civic life," by D. Alexander, **Reuters**, 10/03/2006
- ≡ "American youth largely uninvolved in civic activities," by L. Linn, **Fox News**, 10/03/2006
- ≡ "Civic involvement tied to education: high school dropouts unlikely to vote," by Amy Goldstein **The Washington Post**, 09/19/2006
- ≡ "Youth movement at the polls" by Z. Goldfarb & P. Slevin **The Washington Post** 11/12/2006
- ≡ "Generation Y gets involved" by S. Jayson **USA Today** 10/12/2006
- ≡ "Civic Priorities" by J. Bridgeland & P. Levine, **Washington Times** 10/05/2006
- ≡ "More and more, governing has become a process that leaves ordinary Americans watching from the sidelines," by M. Hill, **The Baltimore Sun**, 11/05/2006
- ≡ "Young voters are back" by G. Kim, **The Sacramento Bee** 11/04/2006
- ≡ "America's youth becoming engaged in community, political activity" by M. Stearns **San Jose Mercury News** 10/04/2006
- ≡ "Young voters turn out, shape midterm vote" **Indianapolis Star** 11/10/2006
- ≡ "Younger voters get first taste of victory" by R. Dissel **Cleveland Plain Dealer** 11/13/2006