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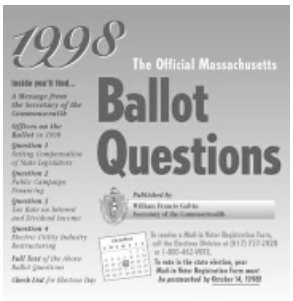
CIVIC EDUCATION

Readying Massachusetts' Next Generation of Citizens



David E. Campbell

Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research

85 Devonshire Street, 8th Floor • Boston, Massachusetts 02109
Tel: 617-723-2277 • *Fax:* 617-723-1880

www.pioneerinstitute.org

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I am also grateful to all those administrators, teachers, and especially students who were willing to play a part in this study.

—D.C.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At a time when Americans' rates of civic participation are falling—with the decline most precipitous among young people—it is imperative that attention be paid to the civic education offered by our schools. At the same time, the public and policy-makers alike are increasingly interested in proposals to reform American education, with charter schools one of the most prevalent innovations. Yet the civic consequences of education reform—and charter schools in particular—are rarely examined.

This paper reports on the state of civic education in Massachusetts, focusing particularly on the performance of charter schools in preparing their students for responsible citizenship. Data were collected in an extensive, original survey project that included schools from across the entire state. Over 2,700 students in 23 schools—12 traditional public, 6 chartered public, and 5 private schools—completed a questionnaire measuring numerous aspects of "citizenship training." Traditional public schools were divided into three categories according to their students' mean performance on the 2000 MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System)—high, medium, and low.

This study includes a wide array of civic measures in order to examine the widest possible spectrum of civic consequences. The components of civic education discussed in this paper include:

- Community Service
- Extracurricular Activities
- Student Government
- Substantive Classroom Instruction
- Civic Skills
- School Environment
- Political Efficacy
- Political Tolerance

This paper focuses on the performance of Massachusetts schools in preparing their students for responsible citizenship.

An overview of school programs indicated that there are no systematic differences in the content of civics instruction provided by the different types of schools in the study.

Overall Findings

The report's most general finding is that students in secular private schools score highly on nearly every measure. These findings are consistent with many national studies but should nonetheless be considered preliminary because of the small number of secular private schools whose students were surveyed.

A second finding regards the level of academic achievement in public schools. The data indicate that students in schools that have high MCAS scores also score highly on an array of civic measures. This suggests, at least among traditional public schools, a tight connection between schools' academic performance and the civic education they offer their students.

Charter School Findings

Charter schools generally fare as well as medium-MCAS, and in some cases better than high-MCAS, traditional public schools. Specifically, the survey findings indicate that:

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• Compared to students in other types of schools, a high proportion of charter school students perform community service. Much of this community service is mandatory.

• Charter schools are less likely to offer their students opportunities for service and extracurricular activities than are other types of schools, and are less likely to have a student government.

• Charter school students are a little less likely to report taking a class that required attention to the news.

• Charter school students score highly in the acquisition of civic skills, such as letter writing, debate and discussion skills.

• Charter school students report a high degree of respect among teachers and students within their school.

• Controlling for demographic factors, charter school students report a relatively strong sense of political efficacy (the desire and belief in their respective abilities to "make a difference" in society).

• Accounting for demographics, charter school students display a level of political tolerance roughly equal to that of other students, with the exception of students in secular private schools, who have significantly higher tolerance scores.

Recommendations

The paper recommends that Massachusetts begin systematically evaluating schools for the civic education that they provide to their students.

This report recommends that Massachusetts begin systematically evaluating schools for the civic education that they provide to their students. While myriad details would need to be worked out, the first step is recognizing the need to examine the civic as well as academic performance of the state's schools. School administrators, teachers, and parents should monitor the civic education provided by their schools in the same way that they pay attention to academics and athletics.

Unfortunately, it is easy to ignore this dimension of education when high-stakes tests dominate the headlines. This is not to diminish the importance of academic rigor—it is an indispensable component of an overall civic education. But society's concern for scholarship should not supplant teaching citizenship. Schools are the logical place to look for a means to reverse the decline in the civic involvement of the young.

CIVIC EDUCATION
Readying Massachusetts' Next Generation of Citizens

David Campbell
Research Fellow, Program on Education Policy and Governance
Harvard University

INTRODUCTION

"Reforming education" is the rallying cry for political leaders of all stripes, as politicians, pundits, and parents alike seem to agree that we must improve America's schools. Just days before the 2000 presidential election, an ABC News poll found that more Americans chose education as the most important factor influencing their vote than any other issue.[1] Almost exclusively, however, debates over education policy center on measures of academic achievement—most often standardized tests like the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). Typically ignored in discussions of education policy is *another* purpose of America's schools. In addition to providing academic instruction, schools have a mandate to prepare students to take on the responsibilities of citizenship. Indeed, the perceived need to instruct immigrant students in the norms of American citizenship was the original justification offered by Massachusetts' own Horace Mann for creating "common" (today, public) schools. The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts reminds us that the instruction offered in public schools is for the "preservation of...rights and liberties."[2] And this is not merely a quaint, anachronistic sentiment; the general public today agrees. In a 1996 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll, 86 percent of Americans reported that they believe "preparing students to be responsible citizens" is a "very important" purpose of the nation's schools, more than the 76 percent who believed that it is equally important that schools should "help people become economically self-sufficient."[3]

In addition to providing academic instruction, schools have a mandate to prepare students to take on the responsibilities of citizenship.

While America's schools have long had a civic mandate, it is especially important that both the general public and policy-makers be reminded of that mandate in the current political milieu. Levels of civic involvement have fallen precipitously over the last 30 years. Numerous commentators have noted this decline, but none have chronicled it as exhaustively as Harvard University's Robert Putnam:

> Since the mid-1960s, the weight of the evidence suggests that, despite the rapid rise in levels of education Americans have become perhaps 10-15 percent less likely to voice our views publicly by running for office or writing Congress or the local newspaper, 15-20 percent less interested in politics and public affairs, roughly 25 percent less likely to vote, roughly 35 percent less likely to attend public meetings, both partisan and nonpartisan, and roughly 40 percent less engaged in party politics and indeed in political and civic organizations of all sorts.[4]

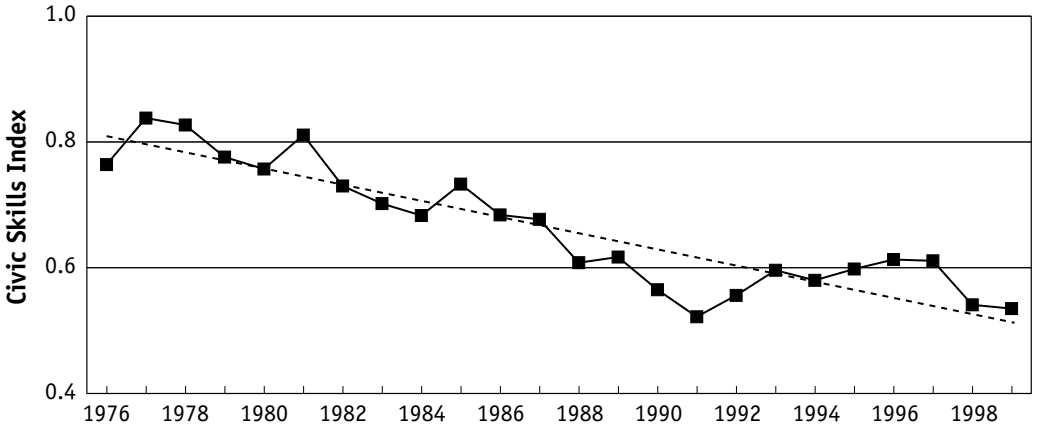
Levels of civic involvement have fallen precipitously over the last 30 years.

For endnotes to the *White Paper,* turn to page 23.

This decline in civic participation is particularly pronounced among America's youth.

This decline in civic participation is particularly pronounced among America's youth. Take, for example, evidence from a long-running survey of high school seniors, the University of Michigan's *Monitoring the Future* study. Every year since 1976, researchers have asked a nationally representative sample of about 3,000 high school seniors a series of questions about their anticipated political involvement in the future. Figure 1 displays the average score on a three-item "civic index" for students from 1976 to 1999. They were asked whether they planned to work on a political campaign, contribute money to a political cause, or write to an elected official; answers were combined in a simple additive index. While there are some fluctuations from year to year, the clear trend is downward. The Census Bureau has reported that voter turnout among 18- to 24-year-olds dropped from 59 percent in 1972 to only 49 percent in 1996. Turnout among 18- to 24-year-olds was only 17 percent in the 1998 congressional election.[5] While these are by no means the only relevant indicators of young people's civic involvement, they are certainly suggestive that participation is low and declining.

Figure 1. Civic Participation of High School Seniors



It is ironic that with all of the discussion about the need to improve our schools and the state of America's civic health, the two issues of education reform and civic participation are rarely linked. This is lamentable, because schools are where our youngest citizens (and citizens-to-be) learn to be engaged in the civic and political lives of their communities. In the words of political philosopher Stephen Macedo, "Given the centrality of civic purposes to public schools it is ironic that studies of 'effective schools' pay so little attention to civic ends."[6]

It is important that charter schools be evaluated for their efforts to prepare the next generation of citizens as well as for academic training.

As the nation debates ways to improve America's schools, this is a propitious time to renew the civic commitment of our education system. This paper's aim is to combine the concerns over education reform and civic involvement, by offering a preliminary examination of civic education offered by schools in Massachusetts. In particular, it examines the civic education offered by a subset of the state's charter schools. While the research community knows little about the civic education offered by schools in general,[7] it knows even less—indeed virtually nothing—about the civic environment within charter schools. As charter schools proliferate, it is important that they be evaluated for their efforts to prepare the next generation of citizens as well as for their performance in delivering academic training.

By focusing on schools in Massachusetts, this paper also addresses a lacuna in the literature on civic education. Most of the research conducted on the subject of civic education in the past has looked only at the United States as a whole and not at individual states. This is unfortunate, since education policy is still almost entirely set by the states. Perhaps this study will encourage other similar state-level analyses.

The evaluation of civic education offered by charter schools is especially relevant in light of the conclusions of the bipartisan National Commission on Civic Renewal. One of the commission's recommendations for civic renewal is that "within five years, every state should enact meaningful charter school legislation, and the federal government should dramatically increase its support for charter schools."[8] This is quite a statement of confidence in the civic potential of charter schools, especially in light of the fact that the commission was unable to reach a conclusion regarding the civic consequences of a second major proposal for education reform—vouchers to offset the costs of private education. Yet charter schools have also attracted their critics. The authors of *Charter Schools in Action* list as one objection to charter schools that they "balkanize American society and weaken the principal institution that knits us together."[9] Writing in *The New Republic*, Michael Kelly summarizes the critics' view as follows:

Do charter schools strengthen or weaken the nation's civic infrastructure?

> Public money is shared money, and it is to be used for the furtherance of shared values, in the interest of *e pluribus unum*. Charter schools and their like are definitely antithetical to this American promise. They take from the pluribus to destroy the unum.[10]

So which is it? Do charter schools strengthen or weaken the nation's civic infrastructure? This study is a first step toward answering that question.

Definition of Terms

A term like "civic participation" is notoriously difficult to define precisely, as people often have normatively divergent views on what it entails. By way of definition, the term *civic participation* will here be used to refer to collective action with a public end. It may or may not be partisan in nature, but it is by definition directed at benefiting a collectivity. Of course, the very essence of political activity is that people disagree on what is beneficial; the key for this definition, therefore, is that the participant is motivated by the desire to assist a collectivity. *Civic education*, therefore, refers to the preparation to be engaged in civic participation. As will be elaborated upon below, this can include both behavior (like the skills necessary for participation) and attitudes (like the acceptance of pluralism encouraged by normative political theory).

Civic education *refers to the preparation to act collectively toward a public end.*

There are many facets of civic education. Indeed, we might consider *all* education to be civic in nature since numeracy, literacy, and a familiarity with history, science, and the arts all contribute to a knowledgeable electorate, a precondition for representative democracy. This is the context in which the Massachusetts Constitution refers to public schools as guardians of our rights and liberties. So while this paper will focus on elements of education that the literature on political socialization defines as "civic" in nature, the reader should remember that every aspect of education is relevant for the preparation of responsible citizens.

Because of the exploratory nature of this study, it includes a wide array of civic measures. For each one, a brief justification for its inclusion is offered. Interested readers will find that the footnotes contain numerous suggestions for further reading on that topic. Undoubtedly, readers will disagree on the relative worth of each component of a civic education. They have all been included, however, in order to examine the widest possible spectrum of civic consequences. Briefly, the components of civic education discussed in this paper include:

This study includes a wide array of civic measures in order to examine the widest possible spectrum of civic consequences.

- Community Service
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METHODOLOGY

In reading this or any other paper on the perceived effects of schools on their students, the reader should keep in mind the extraordinary difficulty social scientists have in isolating schools' effects independent of other influences. Even attributing a student's academic performance to what she has (or has not) learned in school is problematic, given the myriad factors contributing to both the school a student attends and his academic achievement. The soundest method to determine a causal relationship is a randomized experiment, a method rarely employed in education research. And even when it has been employed—in studies of school vouchers and class-size reductions for example—the results have still been controversial. When a randomized experiment is not possible, the next best approach is to account statistically for factors other than the school that might affect what is being measured. Even with statistical controls, however, the question remains: have all the confounding factors been accounted for? Can we be sure that the school is having an independent effect? In this paper, "school" will be used as a shorthand term to mean all those aspects of a student's educational experience that might have an impact on civic education: the school's staff, faculty, atmosphere, curriculum, etc. Indeed, the sheer length of the list for which the term "school" is shorthand suggests why it is difficult to specify the factors contributing to any aspect of education. How do we know which aspect of a student's experience in his school is responsible for the (alleged) effect?

This study focuses on those aspects of civic education that are most directly the result of actions taken by a student's school.

Some aspects of civic education can be attributed with greater confidence to a student's school than others, however. This discussion, therefore, will begin with those aspects that are most directly the result of actions taken by a student's school—what the school does, or at least the opportunities the school makes available. With these measures, we can be fairly confident that the school is the cause of what we are observing. We are left to infer the *effects* of these activities and experiences on a student's level of civic

engagement. The discussion will then move to attitudinal measures that are more difficult to attribute to a student's experience in school. These measures are some of the effects we are interested in evaluating, but we are left to infer their *causes*. How much of what we observe is due to the school a student attends, and how much can be attributed to other unobserved factors?

Data Collection

For this study, 2,710 students in grades 7 through 12 were surveyed across the state of Massachusetts. The survey instrument was designed by drawing on the research literature on political socialization, including measures of many different components of civic education. In order to facilitate comparison with national benchmarks, many of the questionnaire items were drawn from the 1996 National Household Education Survey, a project of the National Center for Education Statistics. Wherever possible, results from the 1996 National Household Education Survey are included as a benchmark against which to compare the results from our sample in Massachusetts. Reported results are always for students who attend a traditional public school.[11] The questionnaire was developed in consultation with scholars in political science and education, and it was pre-tested with a focus group of adolescents from the Boston area.

Twenty-three schools participated in the study—including traditional public, chartered public, parochial, and secular private schools.

Twenty-three schools participated in the study—including traditional public,[12] chartered public, parochial, and secular private schools. Pioneer Institute researchers contacted school administrators for permission to administer the paper and pencil surveys to their students. In larger schools, surveys were administered to students in non-elective courses in order to keep the sample as representative as possible. In smaller schools, all or virtually all students had the opportunity to participate in the study. Data collection took place during the 2000-2001 school year.

The validity of survey research, of course, rests on whether the sample drawn is representative of the population in question. It is important, therefore, to note that while this sample is not random, it is reasonably representative. Nonetheless, there are at least two points at which bias could creep into the sample. First, school administrators had to agree to allow their students to participate. It might be that schools with a "civic ethos" are most likely to have administrators willing to play a part in the study. Note that we were unable to obtain access to any public schools in the Worcester school district, as the school district office rejected our request that Worcester schools participate in the study. In Boston, administrators in the district office granted permission, but it proved impossible to obtain the cooperation of a traditional public school in the Boston school district. The absence of schools from school districts in the state's two largest urban areas is unfortunate and could potentially mean that our results are non-representative of the state as a whole.

While this sample is not random, it is reasonably representative.

The second way that our sample could have been biased is self-selection on the part of students. Students themselves had to agree to complete the questionnaires. As with all survey research, it could be that people who agree to participate differ systematically in important ways from those who are not willing to take part. While it is impossible to determine precisely the extent of bias in the sample, both on-site observation and reports from administrators suggest that it is not a major concern. Furthermore, this research protocol is consistent with similar studies.[13]

Even with these concerns, however, drawing a sample of schools is an analytic strategy better suited to the objective of this study than a random sample of all adolescents in the state. In addition to the expense involved, drawing a random sample of adolescents in Massachusetts would produce too few charter and private school students to allow for statistical inference about them. Thus, this research strategy allows us to make the comparisons in which we are most interested. However, because these data were not collected using a randomized probability sample, they *cannot* be used to infer characteristics about the secondary school population in general.

Table 1. Schools in the Sample

School	# students surveyed	# students in school
■ **High MCAS**		
Duxbury High School	89	843
Acton-Boxborough Regional High School	125	1490
Brookline High School	143	1771
■ **Medium MCAS**		
Ayer High School	58	347
Walpole High School	211	928
Norwood High School	176	933
Shepherd Hill Regional High School (Dudley-Charleton)	178	1587
■ **Low MCAS**		
Malden High School	42	1433
Palmer High School	55	805
Wilmington High School	131	769
Clinton High School	53	503
Henry K. Oliver School (Lawrence)	200	914
■ **Private Secular**		
Noble and Greenough (Dedham)	58	109
Boston Academy	43	114
■ **Catholic**		
Austin Preparatory (Reading)	163	688
St. Mary's Junior-Senior High School (Lynn)	292	502
North Cambridge Catholic High School	153	245
■ **Charter**		
Murdoch Middle School (Chelmsford)	77	87
Somerville Charter	30	53
Sabis-Foxboro Regional Charter	115	646
Pioneer Valley (Hadley)	129	263
City on a Hill (Boston)	124	204
Lawrence Family Development	65	76

Participating Schools

Six charter schools participated in the study. They include a school situated in the heart of Boston; a performing arts high school; a suburban school; an embattled K-12 school in Somerville; and a school that serves mainly Spanish-speaking students. Almost by definition, charter schools are diverse, since they are meant to fill educational niches not currently served by traditional public schools. This diversity is reflected in the sample of charter schools, as they are located in many different types of communities and serve a wide array of students.

Since this paper is premised on the need to consider civic performance next to academic performance, MCAS scores provide a convenient means of creating categories of schools with which to compare charter schools. Does the average academic performance in a school correspond to the civic education it provides? Twelve traditional public schools were thus classified according to their average performance on the 2000 MCAS: high, medium, and low. The sample includes two other types of schools—Catholic (parochial) and private secular. Three Catholic schools participated in the study, as did two private secular schools with high tuition and stringent admission requirements. While MCAS scores are not available for private schools, past research suggests that both types of schools have students who exhibit stronger academic performance than their peers in public schools—private secular schools more so than Catholic schools.

Most of the schools in the sample are high schools. A few are middle schools because some of the charter and private schools combine a wider range of grades than is common in traditional public schools. This makes it difficult to match schools by their grade range across the categories used in this study. That and the fact that few charter schools are high schools means that the average age of the charter school students in the sample is lower than for the other categories of schools. Where appropriate, this difference is accounted for statistically.

Table 1 lists the schools and the number of students sampled in each, while table 2 summarizes the mean MCAS[14] scores for each category of public school. Academically, students in charter schools perform at a level in between the traditional public schools classified at the medium and low levels.[15]

Table 2. Mean MCAS Scores of Public Schools in the Sample

Type of School	Mean MCAS score (2000)
High MCAS	240.5
Medium MCAS	235.5
Low MCAS	223.2
Charter	228.0

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Over the last decade or so, much attention has been paid to volunteer community-based service as an integral component of civil society. Robert Putnam, for example, notes that volunteerism is an important indicator of the civic health of a community. Across the United States, more and more schools are encouraging community service—or "service learning"—among their students, sometimes even requiring it for graduation. Communitarian political theorist Benjamin Barber argues that "civic education rooted in service learning can be a powerful response to civic scapegoatism and the bad habits of representative democracy."[16] Good arguments can be made for and against requiring students to perform community service. On the one hand, mandatory service might only breed resentment among students, lessening their likelihood of engaging in volunteerism after graduation. On the other hand, mandatory service might introduce community service to students who would not otherwise engage in it. However, before any normative judgments can be made about the merits or demerits of community service, and whether it should be mandatory, empirical evidence is needed about the frequency of and motivations for community service. Some evidence on this question has begun to accumulate, but it rarely includes an examination of how different types of schools facilitate community service.[17]

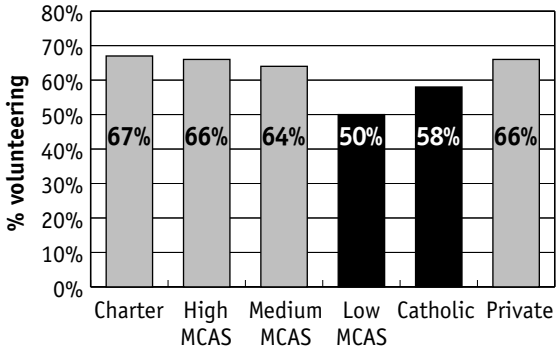
Good arguments can be made for and against requiring students to perform community service.

In order to gauge the extent to which students are engaged in community service, they were asked the following question, which was also included on the 1996 National Household Education Survey.

> *Now we would like to ask you about community service or volunteer activity in your school or community. This includes ongoing activities like tutoring other students, visiting senior citizens, and so on, but does not include for pay. It might be something done through your school, through your church or synagogue, or on your own.*
>
> - *During this school year or last school year, have you participated in any community service activity or volunteer work at your school or in your community?*

The bars of figure 2 indicate the percentage of students in each type of school who report participating in community service. A black bar indicates that the difference between charter schools and that

Figure 2. Community Service

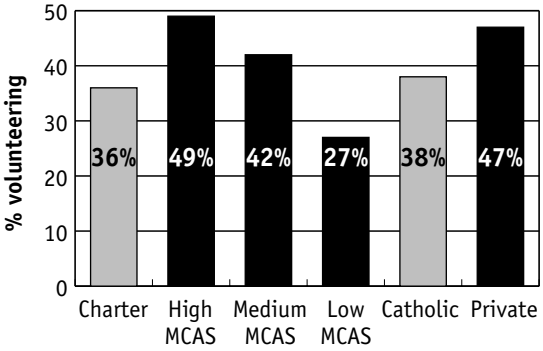


Note: In this and succeeding figures, a black bar indicates that the difference between charter schools and that category is statistically significant at the .05 level.

category is statistically significant at the .05 level, a practice that will be continued throughout this paper. All references to statistical significance are in comparison to charter schools.

Figure 2 demonstrates that of the students in this sample, essentially identical percentages of charter, high-MCAS, and private school students report participating in community service (67 percent). By comparison, students in low-MCAS schools report a slightly lower rate of volunteerism, but the difference is not statistically significant. Students in low-MCAS and Catholic schools both report lower levels of voluntary service (50 percent and 58 percent respectively), each difference reaching statistical significance. The result for Catholic school students is somewhat unexpected given that national-level data have indicated that Catholic schools often promote an ethic of service among their students. These results also suggest that relative to a national sample of students, the students we sampled in Massachusetts are far more likely to participate in community service. In the 1996 National Household Education Survey, only 47 percent of students indicated that they perform volunteer work.

Figure 3. Parents' Community Service

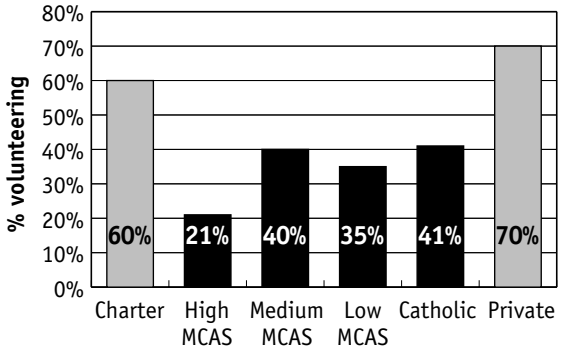


The high percentage of charter school students who participate in community service is striking, given the comparatively low percentage of charter school students whose parents engage in community service.[18] As displayed in figure 3, while almost half of high-MCAS school students' parents participate in volunteer service, only 36 percent of charter school students' parents do (a difference that is statistically significant). While figure 3 is suggestive, a more rigorous test of whether demographics are driving these results requires controlling for multiple demographic factors simultaneously. To that end, the dichotomous question of whether a student engaged in community service was modeled by accounting for parental volunteerism, mean level of parents' education, student's age, student's ethnicity, and student's self-reported academic performance. While this list does not exhaust the possible factors influencing student volunteer activity, it includes the major influences. Controlling for parental volunteering accounts for a general proclivity for community service within a student's home, while parental education accounts for both social class and the well-established relationship between educational attainment and civic participation. The student's age is important, because voluntarism is more likely as youth get older and, as noted previously, charter school students are, on average, a little younger than the other students in the sample. Ethnicity is measured as whether the student is Hispanic, owing to the fact that many Hispanic-Americans are immigrants to the United States and therefore may not live in homes with a strong attachment to the American political process (especially if their parents are not citizens of the United States and are therefore unable to vote in U.S. elections). Also, we might expect Spanish-speaking families to confront a significant language barrier when considering participation in civic activities. Or it could be that immigrant families are more likely to impress upon their children the importance of participating in the political process of their new nation. Either way, it is informative to account for whether a student is Hispanic. Finally, the model also accounts for the student's self-reported academic performance, on the assumption that just as educational attainment is strongly related to civic participation among adults, so is academic performance related to the civic measures of young people.

Logistic regression, a standard econometric method for modeling either/or measures, has been employed. Using the coefficients generated from the model, predicted probabilities of the dependent variable (in this case, volunteering) were generated by setting each independent variable to the means of charter and high-MCAS school students respectively. Full results can be found in the appendix.[19] Based on demographic characteristics alone, this multivariate model predicts that charter school students should engage in voluntary service at a rate 13 percentage points lower than students in high-MCAS schools.

Mandatory Service Requirement

Figure 4. Mandatory Community Service



There is a straightforward explanation for the frequency of community service in charter schools. As indicated in figure 4, a greater percentage of charter school students report that their service was required by their school or teacher than students in Catholic schools and all of the other public school categories. An even higher percentage of students in the private secular schools in the sample report performing mandatory service. The means of each school type in our sample far surpass the national average, which is only 15 percent. For people who believe that mandatory service is beneficial, these results for charter schools should be heartening, as enrolling in these charter schools leads to a greater likelihood of performing community service than would otherwise be expected. This is not so with the private school students, as demographic characteristics alone would predict that they participate in community service at the highest rate in the sample.

Motivations for Performing Service

In addition to whether students perform community service, we were interested in the reasons why. It seems logical that service performed solely to impress a college admissions officer or prospective employer is different in kind from service performed purely for altruistic reasons. Furthermore, the relatively high rate of required community service in both charter and private schools would suggest that their students' motivations for performing service are systematically different than the motivations reported by students in the other types of schools. To test this, the survey included a series of items about students' motivations for performing community service. This list was borrowed from a survey conducted by the Gallup Organization for Independent Sector, a national organization that tracks Americans' charitable activities.[20]

In addition to whether students perform community service, we were interested in the reasons why.

People have many different reasons for being a volunteer. Please mark all the reasons that you participated in community service or volunteer work.

- *Because it will look good on a resume*
- *Because it will help me get into college*
- *Because of my religious beliefs*
- *Because my friends were doing it*
- *Because I wanted to help make my community a better place*
- *Because my parents expected me to*
- *Because I find it satisfying*

Of course, questions about motivations for behavior are notoriously suspect, as people are likely to attribute socially redeeming characteristics to themselves. Nonetheless, past research has found analytical utility in asking participants in civic activity to report their motivations for getting involved.[21]

Table 3. Motivations for Community Service

Percentage reporting that they performed community service for each of these reasons

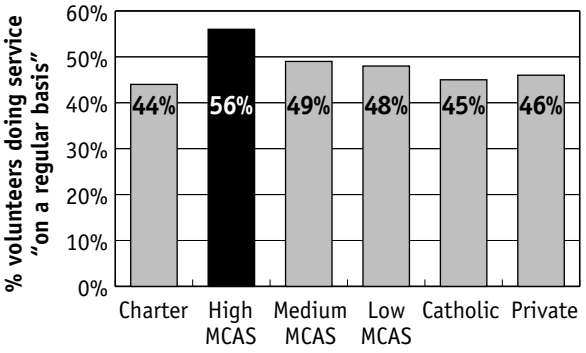
	Charter	High MCAS	Medium MCAS	Low MCAS	Catholic	Private
Look good on resume	47	64**	72**	53*	61**	30**
College admission	42	66**	67**	50**	60**	25**
Religious beliefs	16	32**	32**	20	31**	22
Friends were doing it	21	32**	30**	25	31**	19
Improve community	58	68**	62	62	61	68
Parental expectations	15	20	20*	19	22**	13
Personal satisfaction	61	80**	72**	74**	66	67
N	345-347	243-247	414-424	263-265	352-356	63-64

*p < .10 **p < .05 (in comparison to students in charter schools)

Results are reported in table 3. We find that charter and private school students are the least likely to report each motivation on the list, which is to be expected given their relatively high rates of mandatory service. Mandatory community service will, by definition, lead to volunteering by people who would not otherwise be motivated by any of these reasons.

The first two motivations—enhancing a resume and college admissions—might be considered "ulterior" motives for volunteering. Note that the lowest percentages are recorded for private school students, in each case about 15 points lower than charter school students. Similarly, private school students are the least likely to report that their community service was performed to conform to their parents' expectations. Charter and private school students, in equal proportions, are the least likely to indicate that their service was performed because "their friends were doing it." Charter school students, however, are the least likely to report that they have performed community service because of their religious beliefs, to improve their community, and for their personal satisfaction. In sum, these results indicate that in the two types of schools where mandatory service is most common, students are less likely to report *both* ulterior and altruistic motivations for their community service.

Figure 5. Sustained Service



Frequency of Volunteering

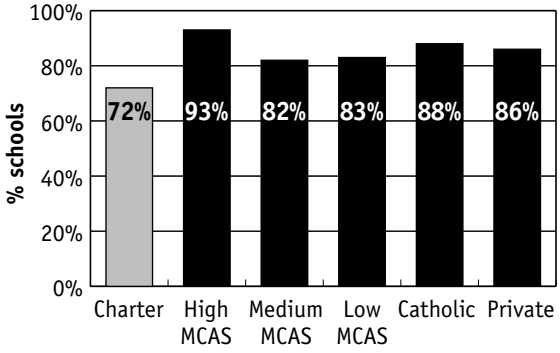
If one believes that volunteering is integral to an engaged citizenry, it would follow that sustained volunteering has more salutary effects than single-shot efforts at community service. In that vein, students were asked whether they performed community service "on a regular basis, or only once or twice." Figure 5 displays the results. Unlike figure 4, here the differences between school types are quite muted. In fact, only students in the high-MCAS schools have a mean that can be distinguished statistically from charter schools. That is, students in the type of school least likely to require service are the most

likely to engage in sustained service. This finding hardly settles the debate over mandatory community service, but does suggest at least one way that mandatory and voluntary community service differ.

School-arranged Service

Past research has found that one major factor facilitating community service among adolescents is that their schools make service opportunities available.[22] Students were asked whether their school "arranges or offers" community service. Note that a mandatory service requirement does not necessitate school-arranged service. Students can be left to find service projects on their own. In light of the high percentage of students in charter schools who report that they are required to perform service, it is interesting that a relatively low percentage says that their *school* offers service opportunities. While the level of 72 percent may seem quite high, as figure 6 shows, it is significantly lower than all of the other types of schools in our sample, and 12 percentage points lower than the national average. That the percentage of charter school students reporting service opportunities is low is no doubt due to the fact that charter schools are often fledgling, bare-bones operations. It is more likely that a well-established school has the resources to devote to facilitating community service.

Figure 6. School Arranges Community Service

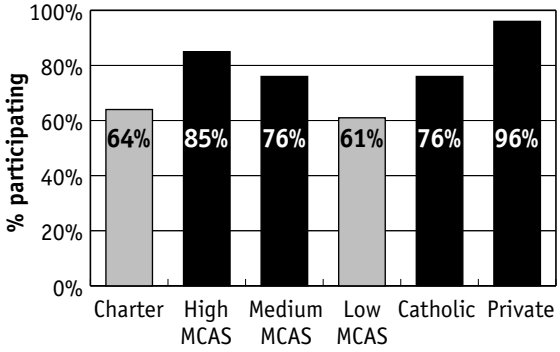


Note also that the low rate of school-arranged service opportunities in charter schools may indicate that students are not made aware of chances to volunteer. A formal system of referring students to service projects is probably only necessary in large schools. With their small student populations, opportunities for service in charter schools might be passed along less formal lines of communication.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Community service has only recently become a concern for scholars of civic education. Research into extracurricular activities, however, stretches back much farther. The most extensive examination of the subject has concluded that involvement in clubs and groups in adolescence is a "pathway to participation" in adulthood.[23] It is in clubs, groups, and teams that young people learn the habits of cooperation and develop the skills that lead to civic participation later in life.[24]

Figure 7. Extracurricular Activities



In-school Activities

To gauge their participation in extracurricular activities, we asked students whether during that school year they had "participated in any school activities such as sports teams, safety patrols, or school clubs."[25] Inspection of figure 7, where the results are

displayed, indicates that charter school students are less likely to have participated in extracurricular activities than students in all of the other types of schools except low-MCAS schools. Among the traditional public schools, participation in school activities tracks average academic performance, as the high-MCAS schools have the highest participation rate, and low-MCAS schools the lowest. Private secular school students are by far the most likely to be involved in school activities (96 percent). In contrast, only 64 percent of charter school students are involved in a school activity, which is close to the national rate of 67 percent.

As noted in* Charter Schools in Action*, "Charter schools tend to eschew the extras that regular schools normally offer."

These results compel the question of whether this low rate of extracurricular involvement is a function of *supply* or *demand.* After all, charter schools are not likely to have as many extracurricular opportunities as traditional public schools or well-established (and well-endowed) private schools. As noted in *Charter Schools in Action*, "Charter schools tend to eschew the extras that regular schools normally offer. Many get by without non-academic programs like sports and drama."[26]

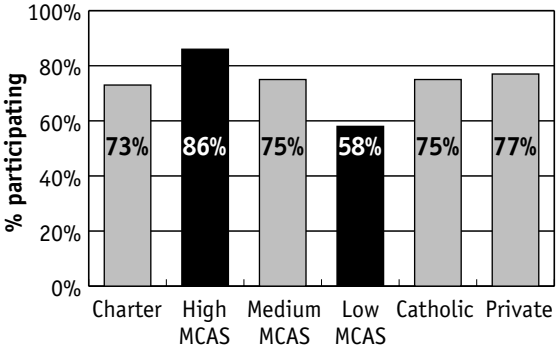
Out-of-school Activities

One way to determine why charter school extracurricular participation is low is to ask students whether they participate in activities outside of school.

> *During this school year, have you participated in any activities outside of school, such as music lessons, scouting, church or temple youth group, or organized team sports like soccer?*

Presumably, if the low rate of extracurricular participation in charter schools is a function only of supply and not of demand—that is, if given the opportunity charter school students would participate at rates comparable to students in other types of school—then they should participate in non-school activities at rates comparable to students in the other school types.[27] Figure 8 compares the rates of participation in non-school activities. In contrast to figure 7, now charter school students are no longer distinctive. While they participate less than students in high-MCAS schools, their rate is comparable to students in medium-MCAS, Catholic, and private secular schools. It is considerably higher than for students in the low-MCAS schools. By way of comparison, the national mean is 62 percent.

Figure 8. Out-of-school Activities



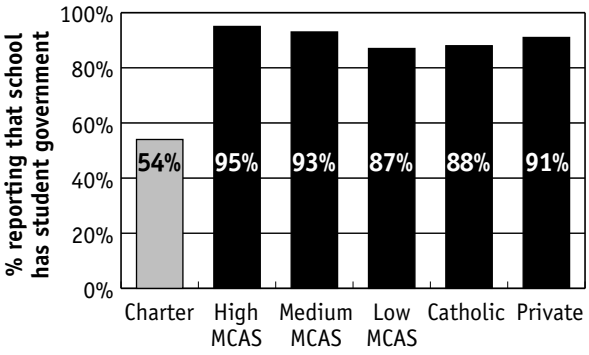
These results suggest that the low rate of extracurricular activity in charter schools is because of a limited *supply* and not limited *demand*. As with schools' assistance to students in finding opportunities for community service, this is almost certainly due to the challenges facing charter schools in their early years. To emphasize curricular over extracurricular activities in the start-up phase of a charter school seems to be a reasonable tradeoff. As charter schools become more established, however, they ought to enhance the associational life within their school. Certainly, small schools cannot offer all of the activities found at a large school. But precisely because they are small, they can probably offer more leadership opportunities per capita than larger schools.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT

Whether School Has a Student Government

One type of extracurricular activity that seems especially relevant for preparing young people for civic engagement is student government. Student council elections allow adolescents the opportunity to engage in a truly Tocquevillian experience—observing political campaigning among their peers firsthand (and possibly even participating in it themselves). Based on an extensive panel study, political scientists M. Kent Jennings and Richard Niemi conclude that "there is some modest support for the argument that participation in the prepolitical world of high-school government is a training ground for later involvement."[28]

Figure 9. Student Government



Students were asked if their school has a student government.[29] Note that this is different than asking teachers or school administrators whether their school has a student government. What is most relevant for this discussion is whether the students themselves are aware that their school has a form of governance that includes their input. In figure 9 we see that charter school students are far less likely to report that their school has a student government. Barely half of charter school students report the presence of a student council or union in their school, in contrast with roughly 90 percent of students in the other types of schools; the national mean is 82 percent.

When the results are broken down by individual school, it becomes apparent that the charter school result is due to the low percentages of students in three schools—Murdoch, Sabis-Foxboro, and Somerville—who indicate that their school has a student government. This is in contrast to Lawrence Family Development Charter School, where 100 percent of students report the presence of a student government in their school. In other words, there is by no means uniformity across charter schools regarding the presence of a student government, suggesting that there is nothing about charter schools *per se* that impedes establishing one.

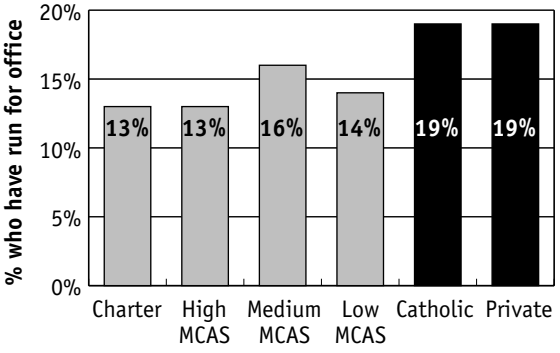
The low charter school result is due to the low percentages of students in the three schools surveyed with a student government.

Running for Office

In addition to allowing students the opportunity to observe the political process writ small, student government also provides the opportunity for students to run for office themselves and enlist in one of what Tocqueville referred to as the "little platoons" of civil society in America. Are charter school students less likely to run for office themselves? At first glance, the answer to this question may seem obvious, as charter school students are the least likely to report that their school has a student government. However, factors other than the presence of a student council affect whether students run for office. We would expect smaller schools to provide more opportunities than larger schools—at least on a per-capita basis—for involvement in the student government process. All of the charter schools in our sample are quite small, and so might be better

Are charter school students less likely to run for office themselves?

Figure 10. Running for Office



able to facilitate student engagement than their larger counterparts. Figure 10 illustrates that while the schools do vary in the percentage of students who report running for office, the differences are not as pronounced as for whether the school has a student government in the first place. Roughly the same percentages of charter school, high-, medium-, and low-MCAS school students have run for office (13 percent), which is slightly lower than the percentages of Catholic and private secular school students (19 percent). The national figure is also 19 percent. When we exclude students in the three charter schools where very few respondents reported that there is a student government, the percentage of charter school students running for office rises to 19 percent, matching the two types of private schools.

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

Schools prepare their students for civic participation inside as well as outside the classroom. While early research into the impact of course content found it to have little impact on students, a more recent analysis of the civics portion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress suggests that classroom instruction does contribute to, at the least, what students know about politics.[30]

There is a long-established link between following current events and participating in political activity.

Attention to Current Events

Determining whether students have been exposed to civics instruction is not as simple as asking if they have taken a particular course, however. Instruction that equips students for civic engagement is unique in that it can extend across many different subjects. Indeed, few if any schools in Massachusetts, or the United States for that matter, have courses devoted exclusively to "civics." Thus, rather than ask students about particular subjects they may have studied, the survey inquired if in the last two years they "had any courses that required you to pay attention to government, politics, or national issues."[31] This is particularly significant given the long-established link between following current events and participating in political activity, and the steady decline in news reading/viewing among America's youth.[32]

Figure 11. Classes with Political Content

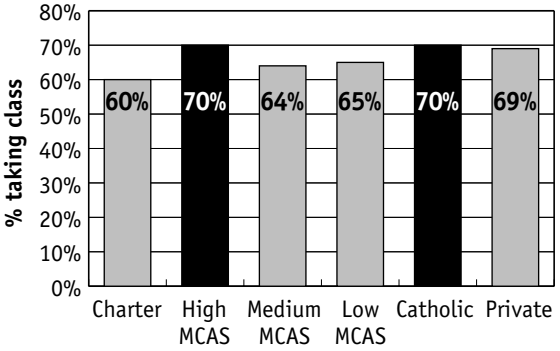
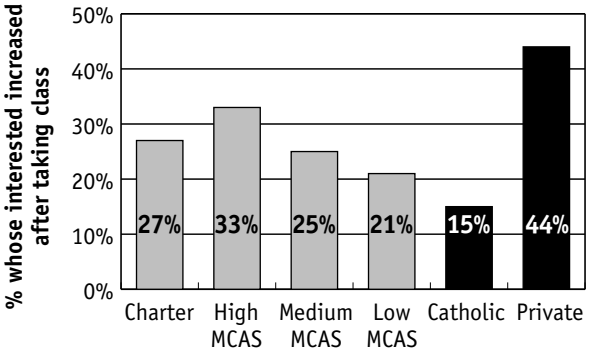


Figure 11 shows that charter school students are slightly less likely than other students to have taken a course that requires attention to current events. Sixty percent of charter school students have taken such a course, compared to roughly 70 percent of students in high-MCAS, Catholic, and private secular schools, and 65 percent of students in medium- and low-MCAS schools. Nationally, 70 percent of students report taking a class with a current-events component.

Effect on Political Interest

Because the question about current events in the classroom does not specify whether the course a student is referring to is mandatory or an elective, it could be that charter schools offer fewer elective courses with current events for content. It could also be that within mandatory courses, less attention is paid to government and politics. Regardless, according to this measure, it is apparent that charter schools can do more to encourage their students to be engaged with politics. However, by another measure charter schools appear to have kept pace with other schools in Massachusetts. When students who took a course that required attention to current events were asked if "as a result of this class...your interest in things like politics and national issues increased," charter schools rank in the middle. In figure 12, we see that 27 percent of charter school students reported that their interest increased a "great deal," more than the percentages for low-MCAS and Catholic schools and about the same as for medium-MCAS schools. It is significantly lower than the totals for high-MCAS and private schools, though. Only low-MCAS schools score lower than the national mean on this question, which is 17 percent.

Figure 12. Increased Interest in Politics



Attention to News

In addition to asking students whether their interest in political issues increased because of a class that required attention to current events, we also asked students how frequently they actually read or watch the news. Of the measures introduced thus far, this one is the most difficult to attribute to the effect of attending one school instead of another. The influence of the home environment is likely to be particularly potent for this question, and so the reader is cautioned not to conclude that observed differences across school types is because of the school alone. Given the assumption that socioeconomic status correlates with news viewing, it is striking that, statistically, there is no difference between school types in the frequency of watching the news on television or listening on the radio. As displayed in figure 13, about 40 percent of students in all types of schools report that they watch or listen to the news "almost every day." This is entirely consistent with the national total, which is also 40 percent. For the question that asks whether students read the news "almost every day," there is less—but still considerable—consistency across school types. See figure 14. While 17 percent of charter school students read about current events daily, 24 percent students in high-MCAS schools do, a difference that is statistically significant. Twenty-two percent of private secular school students read the news daily, but owing to the smaller sample size the difference does not achieve statistical significance. All of these totals far exceed the frequency reported nationally, which is only 9 percent.

Figure 13. Reading the News

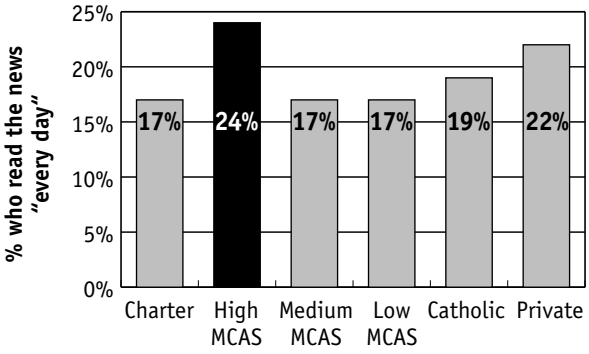
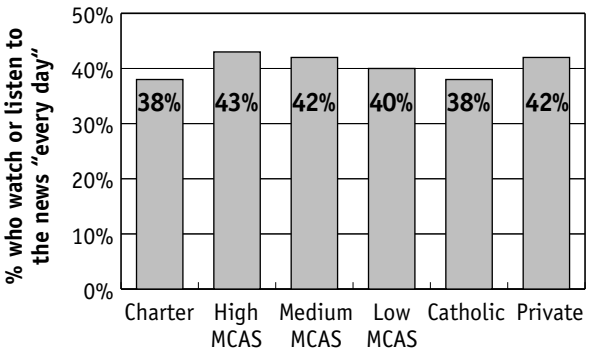


Figure 14. Watching and Listening to the News



The survey also asked students to report on the content of their courses—whether they have studied a number of concepts that are relevant to preparation for active citizenship. Some of these items refer to institutions, others to processes. Taken together, they cover a wide gamut of material necessary for knowledgeable participation in public affairs. Specifically, students were asked whether they had covered the following topics in their courses (listed verbatim as they appeared on the questionnaire):

- *United States Constitution*
- *How laws are made*
- *The courts*
- *The president and the cabinet*
- *Political parties, elections, and voting*
- *State and local government*
- *Principles of democratic government*
- *Other forms of government*
- *Rights and responsibilities of citizens*

Students indicated whether they studied each of these "a lot, some, or not at all." Unlike almost all of the other questions on the survey, these are original, as we were unable to find similar content questions used by other researchers. The hope is that future studies will use this or similar indices to determine the content of what students learn in school, a question often ignored in the literature. Table 4 displays the percentage of students who report learning something about each curriculum topic.[33] There are few differences across school types, and the exceptions suggest no systematic pattern. For example, fewer charter school than high-MCAS school students report learning about the U.S. Constitution, but when compared to medium-MCAS school students, more charter school students report learning about how laws are made. The bottom line appears to be that the content of civics instruction varies little across different types of schools, at least as perceived by the students.

Table 4. Content of Civics Instruction

Percentage reporting that they have studied each of these concepts in the last two years

	Charter	High MCAS	Medium MCAS	Low MCAS	Catholic	Private
Constitution	87	93***	88	88	86	80**
How laws are made	85	86	79**	83	83	80
Courts	79	87***	79	81	78	72*
President and cabinet	85	89**	86	86	87	77**
Parties, elections, and voting	92	93	93	95*	89	82***
State and local government	81	81	80	83	82	71**
Principles of democratic government	78	88***	82	80	75	82
Other forms of government	85	88	86	86	79***	86
Rights and responsibilities	84	86	82	88	82	84
N	469-481	355-365	612-622	438-448	581-587	94-96

*p < .10 **p < .05 ***p < .01 (in comparison to students in charter schools)

CIVIC SKILLS

Letter-writing and speech-giving play an important role in providing the opportunity for specifics to be addressed in the public sphere.

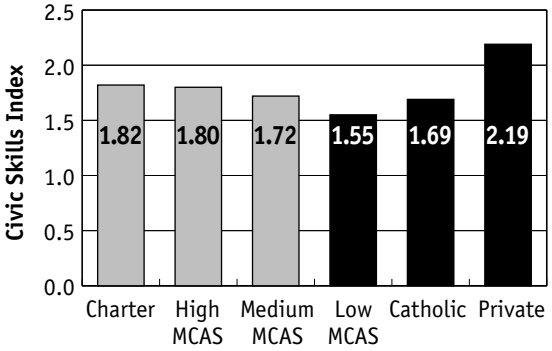
While substantive knowledge about politics is perhaps a necessary precondition for responsible citizenship, it is not sufficient for an active citizenry. Representative democracy requires that citizens exercise voice in the political process. And as Sidney Verba, Kay Schlozman, and Henry Brady have demonstrated, citizen engagement requires a certain set of skills. By "skills" they mean being able to perform activities like writing a letter and giving a speech, as these are some of the most common means by which citizens' preferences are expressed.[34] Indeed, given the bluntness of the ballot as a tool to communicate one's opinions, letter-writing and speech-giving play an important role in providing the opportunity for specifics to be addressed in the public sphere. If young people are going to be prepared for engagement in civic life, they need to learn these skills. And school is the primary place for them to do so. To gauge the extent to which students in our sample have been given the opportunity to develop these civic skills, our survey included a short battery of items first asked in the National Household Education Survey.

During this school year, have you done any of the following things in any class at your school?

- *Written a letter to someone you did not know*
- *Given a speech or oral report*
- *Taken part in a debate or discussion in which you had to persuade others of your point of view.*

Adding together the responses to these questions produces a civic skills index that ranges from 0 to 3. As reported in figure 15, students in private secular schools have the highest score. However, the next highest score on the index is shared by students in charter and high-MCAS schools. Mirroring other measures reported above, we see a monotonic decrease in the index as average academic performance decreases among traditional public schools. Catholic school students fall in the middle, with a score that is essentially identical to medium-MCAS school students, which in turn is on par with the national mean.

Figure 15. Civic Skills



SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Another way in which schools might affect the civic education of their students is through the relationships between students and teachers, and among students themselves. Schools are central institutions in young people's lives, where they spend more hours than any single place except home. Just as the skills taught in school "spill over" to the civic sphere, so we might expect antagonism in a school environment to affect how young people approach political involvement. In the words of two scholars of political learning among young people:

> Schools provide students with their first opportunity to experience a community. Belonging to a school community can afford significant training in getting along with others and working together. Thus, to the extent that schools generate a genuine sense of community, they should be better able to develop a sense of citizenship and its practice.[35]

Similarly, political philosopher Amy Gutmann stresses the importance of embracing "mutual respect among persons" as a vital component of what she describes as democratic education.[36]

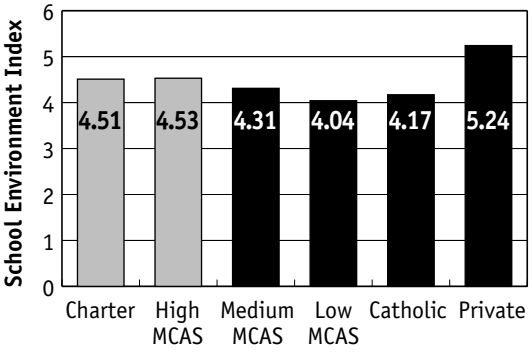
In order to examine the extent to which students perceive their schools as places that foster mutual respect, we again borrowed from the National Household Education Survey. Students were asked to respond to two statements about the overall "civic environment" in their schools.

In my school, most students and teachers respect each other

In my school, the opinions of the students are listened to

- *Strongly Agree*
- *Agree*
- *Disagree*
- *Strongly Disagree*

Figure 16. School Environment



Responses to the two items have been combined in an additive index. Results can be seen in figure 16.

In a pattern that has become familiar, private school students have the highest mean score on the school environment index, followed by charter and high-MCAS school students who have essentially identical scores that, in turn, match the national mean. Again, scores on the school environment index are clearly related to the level of academic performance in traditional public schools, with Catholic schools falling in between medium- and low-MCAS schools.

These data do not indicate why it is that some schools have a more respectful environment than others. Myriad factors are likely involved: the students who enroll in each type of school, the teachers and administrators who teach in them, the size of the schools, etc. Clearly, it is not simply the case that students who excel academically also act more respectfully (or facilitate teachers showing respect toward them), as the charter schools in our sample have relatively low average test scores but high school environment scores. There is almost certainly more to it than these sterile indicators. It probably starts with the way teachers and administrators view their students—as members of a community rather than wards in a bureaucratic fiefdom. In the words of Chester Finn, Bruno Manno, and Gregg Vanourek, "Creating a charter school presents those involved with the opportunity to build their own education community." They also draw the logical link between the small size of charter schools and the community built within them:

> With small scale comes intimacy, familiarity, and safety that are often missing from the larger and more anonymous institutions of American public education. One of the cherished attributes of many charter schools is that everyone in the school knows everyone else—children and staff alike—by name.[37]

The comments are intuitive and suggest that careful ethnographies of various schools—and charter schools in particular—could serve to shed light on the specific process(es) by which a school creates a respectful environment.

POLITICAL EFFICACY

People who feel that they can "make a difference" are likely to expend the energy to get involved in civic and political activities.

Political scientists have long studied the degree to which Americans perceive that their government is responsive to the general public by inquiring about individuals' sense of political efficacy. Political efficacy is thought to contribute to an engaged electorate, as people who feel that they can "make a difference" are likely to expend the energy to get involved in civic and political activities. Here is an example of an attitude that could conceivably be related to the school environment—perhaps attending a school where "the opinions of students are listened to" leads to a general sense of efficacy. The reader should be cautioned, however, that these questionnaire items are like those regarding watching and reading the news. Many factors beyond the school affect a young person's sense of efficacy. Differences across school types, therefore, should be interpreted with care.

The survey included two questions to gauge students' sense of political efficacy. Each of these is based on questions included for decades on the National Election Study surveys, the primary source of data on the attitudes of American voters. More specifically, students were asked,

> *People might say, "Politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on." Is this true for you?*
>
> *Also, people might say, "My family does not have any say in what the federal government does." Is this true for you?*

A "no" answer to both questions was counted as an efficacious response. Responses to the two items were added together, producing an index that ranges from 0 to 2.

Figure 17 displays the mean political efficacy score for students in each type of school. Charter school students share the same score as medium-MCAS and Catholic school students, exceed low-MCAS school students, and fall behind students in high-MCAS and secular private schools. Students in each type of school score higher than the national mean, which is only 1.16 on the 2-point scale. These results do not show a clear relationship between school environment and political efficacy, as charter schools ranked alongside private schools in the former but fall behind in the latter. Yet the results are not totally inconsistent with such a relationship either. With the exception of charter school students, the rest of the scores mirror the relationship in figure 16. That is, political efficacy tracks academic performance.

A better, although still not complete, test of the effect attending a certain type of school might have on political efficacy is to account for any systematic demographic differences in the students attending each type of school. Figure 18 presents the results of a linear regression model that controls for the same potentially confounding factors as in the regression model for volunteerism discussed above. In addition, the model also contains a dummy variable for each school type. The predicted values displayed in figure 18 were generated by setting the demographic control

Figure 17. Political Efficacy, without Demographic Controls

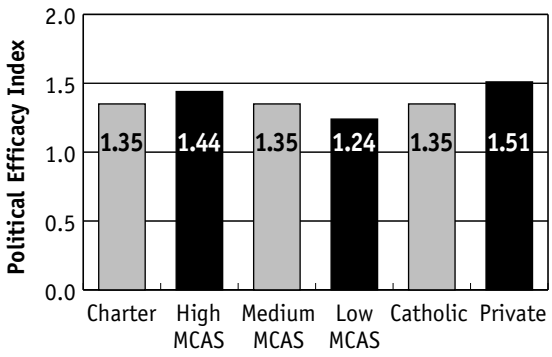
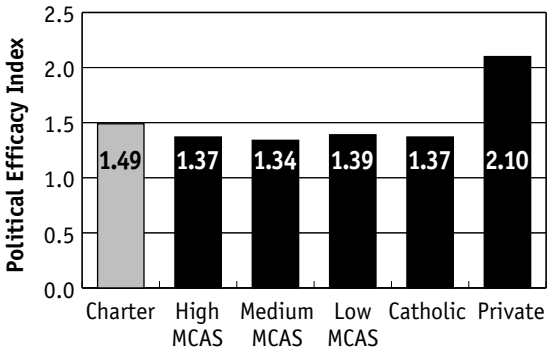


Figure 18. Political Efficacy, with Demographic Controls



variables to their means, and then progressively setting each school variable to one. The appendix contains the full results. When controlling for these factors, the picture changes. No longer do charter school students land in the middle. Instead, they now rank second in efficacy behind private school students. The remaining school types all share virtually identical levels of efficacy. While we cannot be certain that the comparatively high level of efficacy among students attending charter and private schools is a direct result of the school itself, we do know that it is not owing to the factors accounted for in the regression model. A reasonable conclusion to draw until the subject is studied further is that the type of school has *something* but not *everything* to do with a student's sense of efficacy.

POLITICAL TOLERANCE

Some critics have argued that because of their exclusivity, private schools foster intolerance. The empirical evidence suggests otherwise.

The final component of civic education studied here is one that has long generated enormous interest among scholars, but that is perhaps most difficult to link to an adolescent's experience in school. Political tolerance, measured as whether respondents are willing to grant civil liberties (free speech typically) to individuals holding unpopular opinions, is essential for discourse in a liberal democracy. Some critics have argued that because of their exclusivity, private schools foster intolerance, although the empirical evidence suggests otherwise.[38] At least one author has applied the same logic to charter schools, although until now there have not been the data to test the charge.[39]

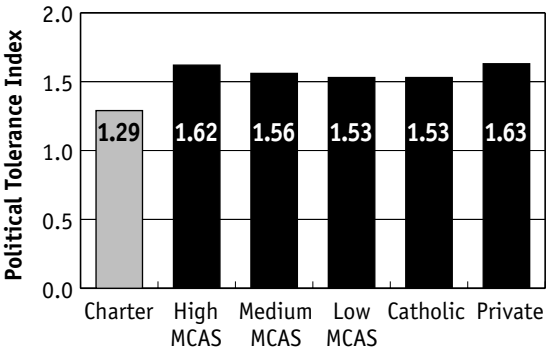
The survey was designed for a preliminary test of political tolerance among students in Massachusetts. The questionnaire included two items to gauge the level of respect for the civil liberties of unpopular groups, modeled after questions with a long pedigree in survey research, and included on the 1996 National Household Education Survey.

> *If a person wanted to make a speech in your community against churches and religion, should he or she be allowed to speak?*
>
> *Suppose a book that most people disapproved of was written, for example, saying that it was all right to take illegal drugs. Should a book like that be kept out of a public library?*

A "yes" answer to the first question and "no" to the second were coded as tolerant responses.

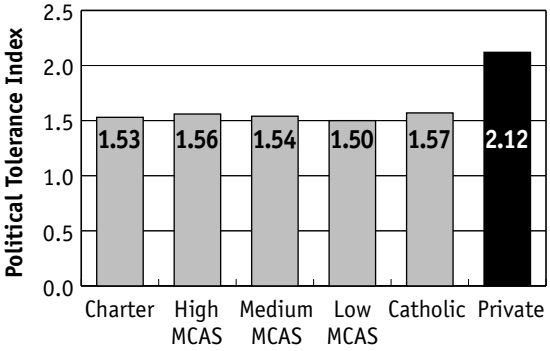
As with political efficacy, it is clear that numerous factors—some well understood, some not—affect an individual's degree of political tolerance. In particular, Norman Nie, Jane Junn, and Kenneth Stehlik-Barry present an array of evidence that political tolerance is a function of educational attainment.[40] For adults that means more education translates into more tolerance. For adolescents it presumably means that higher test scores lead to higher levels of tolerance. As shown in figure 19, that is precisely what we find. Charter school students, whose schools have low mean MCAS scores, also have the lowest level of political tolerance. Secular private school and high-MCAS school students have the highest, followed by medium-MCAS, low-MCAS, and Catholic school students. The national mean of 1.43 falls below all but the charter school students.

Figure 19. Political Tolerance, without Demographic Controls



However, as with political efficacy, these results do not hold when demographic controls are introduced. Figure 20 displays the results of a model accounting for demographic factors as in figure 18 above. Again, secular private school students top everyone, itself another repudiation of the charge that private schools foster intolerance. But the other types of schools, including charter schools, all have essentially the same score.

Figure 20. Political Tolerance, with Demographic Controls



CONCLUSION

Our schools do more than produce workers for the labor force and consumers for the marketplace. They also serve to produce citizens for a republican democracy. It is not likely that all readers will agree that every component of "civic education" discussed here is equally important, or important at all. Hopefully, however, enough ground has been covered to satisfy people with far-ranging perspectives on what our schools should teach their students to prepare for participation in our democratic system.

On the question of "how charter schools are doing," the evidence is mixed. A high proportion of charter school students perform community service, although much of it is mandatory—which, depending on your perspective, might be good, bad, or perhaps a little of both. Charter schools are less likely to offer their students opportunities for service and extracurricular activities than are other types of schools, and are less likely to have a student government. In addition, charter school students are a little less likely to report taking a class that required attention to the news.

A striking pattern is the tight connection between schools' academic performance and the civic education they offer their students.

Charter school students score highly in the acquisition of civic skills and report a high degree of respect among teachers and students within their school. On these measures, they rank alongside students in high-MCAS schools, but behind students in the secular private schools included in our sample. Controlling for demographic measures, charter school students also report a relatively high level of political efficacy, again only falling behind secular private school students. Accounting for demographics also results in charter school students scoring at about the same level of political tolerance as other students, except those in secular private schools, who have significantly higher tolerance scores. There are no systematic differences in the content of civics instruction provided by the different types of schools in the study.

Charter school students score highly in the acquisition of civic skills.

One striking pattern in the data reported here is the tight connection between schools' academic performance and the civic education they offer their students, at least among traditional public schools. However, it also seems clear that it need not be the case that students who attend schools where average test scores are low are destined to have fewer opportunities to prepare for engagement in civic life, as demonstrated by the charter schools in this study. While charter schools fall short on some of the civic measures discussed here, these are typically "institutional" factors that can be corrected easily, like offering more extracurricular activities. Where they excel relative to other schools is in providing an environment of "mutual respect among persons," which presumably involves more than simply implementing a new policy or offering a particular program.

Charter school students report a high degree of respect among teachers and students within their school.

Admittedly, with a single cross-sectional survey it is impossible to know whether being educated in such an environment has a long-term impact on the civic engagement of young people. This is true, however, for most of the measures included in this study (or any like it). Certainly, normative political theory suggests that being educated in an atmosphere of respect is an essential building block for reasoned democratic engagement.

This study is only a first step in evaluating the civic education provided by schools in Massachusetts. More needs to be learned. Not only must policy-makers—and the voters who elect them—consider the implications charter schools hold for civic education; all education policy should be viewed through this lens. Some attention has been paid to how school vouchers affect a few measures of civic education. But what about high-stakes testing? Inter-district choice? Bilingual education? Rarely are the consequences for civics instruction considered as debates rage about these and other policies.

Academic rigor is an indispensable component of an overall civic education.

In particular, school administrators, teachers, and parents should monitor the civic education provided by their schools in the same way that they pay attention to academics and athletics. Unfortunately, it is easy to ignore this dimension of education when high-stakes tests dominate the headlines. This is not to diminish the importance of academic rigor—it is an indispensable component of an overall civic education. But society's concern for scholarship should not supplant teaching citizenship. Schools are the logical place to look for a means to reverse the decline in the civic involvement of the young. As America welcomes a new generation of immigrants, it would be wise to remember that our schools play an essential role in ensuring that youth who are new to America's shores become familiar with its political process.

More specifically, schools in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts should be evaluated regularly for the extent to which they prepare their students for civic participation. The survey instrument used in this study is a starting point for the criteria by which schools can be evaluated, although further discussion among educators, academics, legislators, parents, and even students themselves would be needed to determine mutually agreed-upon civic standards. The evaluation need not be restricted to survey research, as there are other ways to supplement our understanding of what schools are teaching, and students learning. Perhaps a few schools per year could be selected for on-site examination of civic practices and interviews conducted with students and teachers.

But society's concern for scholarship should not supplant teaching citizenship.

Indeed, the very process of deciding *what* should be evaluated and *how* that evaluation should be accomplished could itself be an exercise in civic involvement. Public input should be welcomed as meetings are held to discuss what it is our schools should be doing to prepare students to be engaged in civic activity. In addition to determining the criteria and method by which schools are evaluated, many details would remain to be decided upon. Will private schools be mandated to participate, or should their participation be left to their discretion? Will results be reported for schools only, or will individual students also be given a civics score? How often will the evaluation be done? Deciding these (and many other) issues will take a sustained conversation among many people. But it is a conversation well worth having.

ENDNOTES

[1] ABC News Poll, November 3, 2000.

[2] *Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, Article V, Section II.

[3] Stanley M. Elam, Lowell C. Rose, and Alec M. Gallup, "The 28th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan*, September 1996.

[4] Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Democracy* (New York: Simon and Schuster 2000), 46.

[5] U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1996*, P20-504 (Washington, D.C., 1998); Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1998*, P20-523RV (Washington, D.C., 2000).

[6] Stephen Macedo, *Diversity and Distrust: Civic Education in a Multicultural Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 235.

[7] This fact is summarized nicely by Stephen Macedo: "The comparative success of different types of schools at teaching civic virtues is not much studied." In *Diversity and Distrust*, 234.

[8] National Commission on Civic Renewal, *A Nation of Spectators: How Civic Disengagement Weakens America and What We Can Do About It* (College Park, Md.: National Commission on Civic Renewal, 1998).

[9] Chester E. Finn, Jr., Bruno V. Manno, and Gregg Vanourek, *Charter Schools in Action: Renewing Public Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 160.

[10] Michael Kelly, "Dangerous Minds," *The New Republic*, 30 December 1996, 6.

[11] There are a number of reasons why this type of comparison should be made carefully. First, the NHES was conducted in 1996, so any differences could be attributed to changes among all adolescents over the last five years. Second, the NHES was a telephone survey, while ours was a written questionnaire. Our survey was also completed in the classroom, which might have affected how students responded to the questions. Changing the way students respond to the questions might change the results. Third, the NHES used a probability sample of adolescents in the United States. As already discussed, the non-random nature of our sample might affect our results.

[12] The term "traditional public" is meant only to distinguish these schools from charter schools, which are also public.

[13] See, for example, Carole L. Hahn, *Becoming Political: Comparative Perspectives on Citizenship Education* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998); Pamela Johnston Conover and Donald D. Searing, "A Political Socialization Perspective," in Lorraine M. McDonnell, P. Michael Timpane, and Roger Benjamin (eds.), *Rediscovering the Democratic Purposes of Education*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2000).

[14] More specifically, schools were selected on the basis of their district's mean MCAS scores in 2000. Based on a rank-ordering, district scores were divided into thirds.

[15] Because of the way the schools were selected for this study, this should not be taken as an indication of academic achievement of students in charter schools generally.

[16] Benjamin R. Barber, *An Aristocracy of Everyone: The Politics of Education and the Future of America* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992), 252.

[17] For examples, see: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Student Participation in Community Service Activity* (Washington, D.C., 1997); Richard Niemi, Mary A. Hepburn, and Chris Chapman, "Community Service by High School Students: A Cure for Civic Ills?" *Political Behavior* 22, no. 1 (2000); and the symposium on service learning in the September 2000 issue of *P.S.: Political Science and Politics*. There is a small literature that compares the extent to which public or private schools facilitate volunteerism. See David Campbell, "Making Democratic Education Work," in Paul E. Peterson and David E. Campbell (eds.) *Charters, Vouchers, and Public Education*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, forthcoming); Jay P. Greene, "Civic Values in Public and Private Schools" in Paul E. Peterson and Bryan Hassel (eds.), *Learning from School Choice* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings), 83-106; Anthony S. Bryk, Valerie Lee, and Peter B. Holland, *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[18] The specific question, again borrowed from the NHES, is, *Do either or both of your parents participate in any ongoing community service activity, for example, volunteering at a school, coaching a sports team, or working with a church or neighborhood association?*

[19] The reader is reminded that the data modeled are not the result of a probability sample of all students in the state. Thus, it is incorrect to read the results of these models as estimates of relationships between the variables among the population in general. Instead, these models account for potentially systematic differences in the student populations of each type of school.

[20] Virginia A. Hodgkinson and Murray S. Weitzman, *Volunteering and Giving Among Teenagers 12 to 17 Years of Age* (Washington, D.C.: Independent Sector).

[21] Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univeristy Press, 1995), chapter 4.

[22] Niemi, Hepburn, and Chapman, "Community Service," 53.

[23] Paul Allen Beck and M. Kent Jennings, "Pathways to Participation," *American Political Science Review* 76 (March 1982).

[24] Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, *Voice and Equality*.

[25] Again, this question was included on the 1996 National Household Education Survey.

[26] Finn, Manno, Vanourek, *Charter Schools in Action,* 95.

[27] Or we might expect the charter school rates to exceed the rates for other schools if they compensate for the lack of extra-curricular activities at school by participating in even more activities outside of school.

[28] M. Kent Jennings and Richard G. Niemi, *Generations and Politics: A Panel Study of Young Adults and Their Parents* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 46.

[29] The question is simply, "Does your current school have a student government?"

[30] Richard G. Niemi and Jane Junn, *Civic Education: What Makes Students Learn* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[31] Actually, students were asked about "this year" and "last year" separately; results are essentially the same if one or the other question is used. To simplify the presentation, they have been combined.

[32] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, chapter 13.

[33] The substantive results do not change when the comparison is of students who report learning "a lot" about each subject.

[34] Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, *Voice and Equality*.

[35] Conover and Searing, *Political Socialization*, 108-109.

[36] Amy Guttman, *Democratic Education* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[37] Finn, Manno, and Vanourek, *Charter Schools in Action*, 227, 228.

[38] Campbell, "Making Democratic Education Work,"; Patrick J. Wolf, Jay P. Greene, Brett Kleitz, and Kristina Thalhammer, "Private Schooling and Political Tolerance: Evidence from College Students in Texas" in the same volume. Greene, "Civic Values in Public and Private Schools."

[39] Kelly, "Dangerous Minds."

[40] Norman Nie, Jane Junn, and Kenneth Stehlik-Barry, *Education and Democratic Citizenship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

APPENDIX

Table A1. Logistic Regression Model of Engaging in Community Service

Variable	Coefficient
Parent volunteers	0.884***
	(0.106)
Parents' mean education	0.130**
	(.058)
Student's age	0.198***
	(0.038)
Hispanic ethnicity	-0.180**
	(0.088)
Student's grades	0.598***
	(.065)
Constant	0.675**
	(0.300)

N = 1943 **p < .05 *** p < .01
Log likelihood = –1152.99
X^2 = 218.49***

Table A2. Linear Regression Model of Political Efficacy

Variable	Coefficient
High MCAS	-0.118*
	(0.073)
Medium MCAS	-0.148**
	(0.067)
Low MCAS	-0.105
	(0.076)
Catholic	-0.111
	(0.1080
Secular Private	0.617*
	(0.342)
Parent volunteers	0.043
	(0.034)
Parents' mean education	0.101***
	(0.021)
Student's age	0.052***
	(0.016)
Hispanic ethnicity	0.060
	(0.58)
Student's grades	0.062***
	(0.021)
Constant	1.083***
	(0.118)

N = 1606 *p < .10 **p < .05 *** p < .01
Adj. R^2 = 0.033
Standard error of the estimate = 0.682

Table A3. Linear Regression Model of Political Tolerance

Variable	Coefficient
High MCAS	0.028
	(0.071)
Medium MCAS	0.010
	(.066)
Low MCAS	-0.031
	(0.074)
Catholic	0.040
	(0.067)
Secular Private	0.586*
	(0.312)
Parent volunteers	-0.021
	(0.033)
Parents' mean education	0.053***
	(0.020)
Student's age	0.051***
	(0.015)
Hispanic ethnicity	-0.153***
	(.056)
Student's grades	-0.005
	(0.020)
Church attendance	0.063***
	(0.013)
Constant	1.101***
	(0.118)

N = 1606 *p < .10 **p < .05 ***p < .01
Adj. R^2 = 0.057
Standard error of the estimate = 0.621

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David E. Campbell spent 1999-2001 as a Research Fellow with Harvard University's Program on Education Policy and Governance and is currently a Research Fellow with Princeton University's Center for the Study of Democratic Politics. He has written on a range of issues relating to both education policy and civic participation. In particular, he is an editor of *Charters, Vouchers, and Public Education* (Brookings, 2001) and a co-author of *The Education Gap: Vouchers and Urban Schools* (Brookings, forthcoming). His work has appeared in *Education Next: A Journal of Opinion and Research* and *P.S.: Political Science and Politics*, with another article forthcoming in the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*. He also has written for the popular press, including the *Boston Globe*, *San Jose Mercury News*, and *Education Week*, and his research has been featured in an array of media, including the *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Having earned a Bachelor's degree in Political Science (Honors) from Brigham Young University, and a Master's in Political Science from Harvard University, he will receive a Ph.D. in the same field from Harvard University in 2002.