

VOTING EARLY AND OFTEN

AN EVALUATION OF CHICAGO DEMOCRACY WEEK 2014





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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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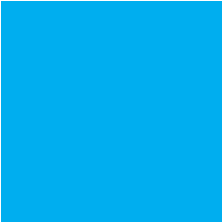


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1

INTRODUCTION

The concept of Chicago Democracy Week (CDW) was based on well-established research that individuals who vote early in life will also vote often in life.ⁱ We built on the initiative of Illinois Governor Pat Quinn’s Suffrage @ 17 legislationⁱⁱ to develop a program that would encourage 17 and 18 year olds to register and vote in the first election for which they are eligible, with the hope that this would be habit forming and help them to become voters for their whole lives.

As it stands, young Americans vote at lower rates than all other American voters.ⁱⁱⁱ This causes distortions in our democracy and reduces the likelihood that representatives will respond to the needs of young people. To address this problem, in September 2013, Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners, the Cook County Clerk, Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights, Chicago Votes, Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago, League of Women Voters of Chicago, Mikva Challenge, Rainbow PUSH Coalition, and Rock the Vote came together to develop a plan to register as many 17 and 18 year olds as possible in Chicago and suburban Cook County (and, ideally, to encourage them to turn out and vote).

The result of this collaboration was Chicago Democracy Week. It ran from February 3-7, 2014, and involved activities such as voter registration drives, full week democracy curricula, one-off classes on the history of voting, and guest speakers addressed the importance of participating in civic society by voting.

This report sets out a background to the organizations involved, a summary of the planning process and the programs each group implemented, and includes recommendations for future Chicago Democracy Weeks or other school-based voter registration drives wherever they may occur.

Brian Brady
Mikva Challenge

Nisan Chavkin
Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Eighteen year olds were granted the right to vote in 1972, and since then 18-24 and 18-29 year old voter turnout has remained persistently lower than that of older citizens, and the recent trend is an increasing gap between these groups of voters.^{iv} Research by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) indicates that the low youth turnout is driven primarily by the large gap in voter registration percentages between the groups.^v This finding suggests that a program to register young voters could have a marked effect on youth voter participation.

In July, 2013 Illinois Governor Quinn advocated for, and later signed, the Suffrage @ 17 bill into law.^{vi} The law allows citizens who will be 18 by a general election to vote in the primary for that general election, even if they are only 17 at the time of the primary.

A host of civic groups and the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners (CBOE), Chicago Public Schools (CPS), and the Cook County Clerk (CCC) met in September, 2013 to discuss how we could use the new Suffrage @ 17 law to register high school students to vote. The goal was not just to do a one time voter registration event, but to formulate an effective strategy for youth voter registration in Chicago in the long term. Additionally, by registering 17 year olds to vote, we hoped to positively affect the lifetime turnout statistics of those young Chicagoans.

In addition to CPS, CBOE, and CCC, the organizations that participated in CDW were:

- Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (CLC)
- Chicago Votes
- Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago (CRFC)
- Mikva Challenge
- Rainbow PUSH Coalition
- Rock the Vote
- League of Women Voters of Chicago (LWV Chicago)

The CBOE developed a new voter registration form, tailored to account for 17 year old registrants,^{vii} and sent approximately 30,000 copies to all CPS high schools, along with a pre-paid envelope in which the completed forms could be sent to the CBOE as well as posters and other promotional materials that schools could tailor and use to publicize their voter registration drive in advance. This meant that all the civic groups needed to do was plan their activities with the schools and turn up, ready to help register students to vote.

Mikva Challenge and Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago created *Vote 2014*, a six lesson curriculum with supplemental resources, for use as part of CDW. The curriculum was distributed to all CPS teachers coordinating CDW at their schools. Another version of the curriculum was created for use in suburban Cook County and the rest of Illinois, and both versions of the curriculum were posted on the CRFC and Mikva websites.

CRFC registered 200 students to vote at six CPS and two suburban high schools.

1972

The year that 18-year-olds were granted the right to vote.

2013

Governor Quinn signs legislation to allow 17-year-olds to vote in Primary Elections if they will be 18 by the General Election.

Mikva Challenge also offered additional support in the form of classroom visits, conversations regarding planning, and direct staff support for the drives themselves to teachers at 19 different Chicago high schools. (They also registered students directly at each election-related event they hosted for students during the season.) In total they registered 1,210 students to vote.

Chicago Votes, LWV Chicago, and Rainbow PUSH ran voter registration drives at thirteen, seven, and eleven high schools respectively, resulting in 1,153, 541, and 1,319 students registering to vote.

CLC partnered with Rock the Vote to present Democracy Class to 49 classes and two assem-

blies at 10 CPS schools across Chicago. In total they registered 786 students to vote.

Overall, the groups involved reached many thousands of Chicago area students with information about voting, voter registration, and democracy in general.

This report describes the background to our project, a summary of the steps taken by each of the groups involved, a summary of the outcomes achieved by each group, and recommendations for future iterations of CDW, and high school youth voter registration programs in general.



In addition to Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Board of Election Commissioners, and Cook County Clerk, the organizations that participated in Chicago Democracy Week were:

- Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (CLC)
- Chicago Votes
- Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago (CRFC)
- Mikva Challenge
- Rainbow PUSH Coalition
- Rock the Vote
- League of Women Voters of Chicago (LWV Chicago)

"because that is the only way I have a voice in my community, and I really believe that it needs to change"



BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

In July 2013 Illinois Governor Quinn advocated for and later signed the Suffrage @ 17 bill which allows citizens who will be 18 by a general election to vote in the primary for that election even if they are only 17 at the time.^{viii} This new law provided an impetus to the many civic groups already operating in Chicago to work together to increase youth voter registration in the historic first year of the law. In order to properly remedy the problem, it was necessary to understand the depth of the problem of low youth voter registration and turnout. This section explains the research on this issue.

JUST HOW LOW IS YOUTH VOTER REGISTRATION AND TURNOUT?

Youth voter registration appeared to be on a new course of steadily increasing in 2004 and 2008 but in 2012 the rates reduced again to almost historically low levels. Figures 1 and 2, based on data from the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and the United States Census Bureau show that since 18 year olds were granted the right to vote in 1972, 18-24 and 18-29 year old voter turnout has remained persistently lower than that of older citizens.

Figure 1: Presidential Election, Voter Turnout by Age, 1972 - 2012^{ix}

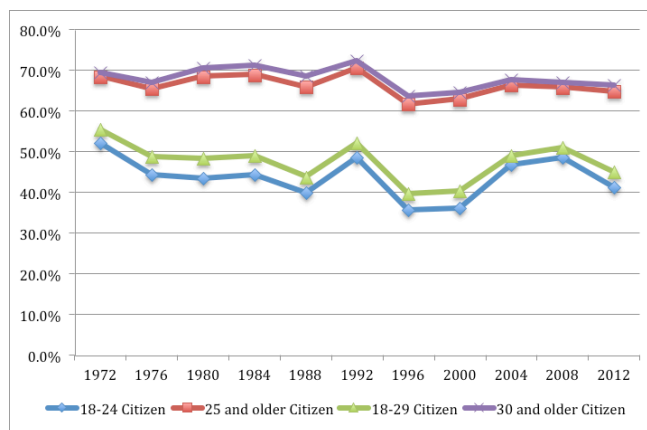
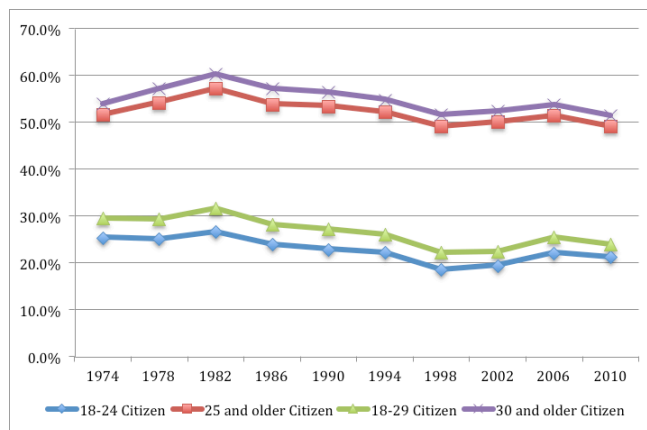


Figure 2: Midterm Elections, Voter Turnout by Age 1974 - 2010^x



Unfortunately, the numbers seem to be getting steadily worse (not just the overall trend since 1972 but in the most recent Presidential election only 45% of young people age 18-29 voted in 2012, down from 51% in 2008).^{xi}

The reason why young people vote at lower rates is not entirely clear but there has been research into what can cause higher turnout. A seminal 1996 study found that the positive correlation between years of school and civic engagement is “the best documented finding in American political behavior research.”^{xii}

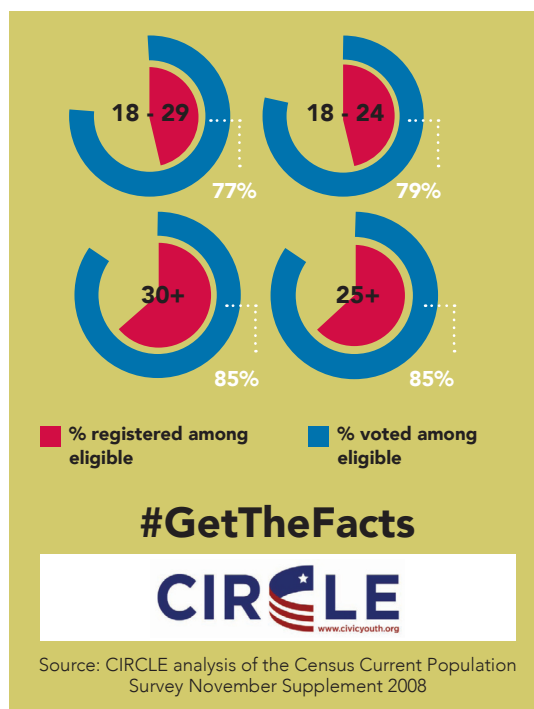
While CIRCLE does not have a list of reasons why young people do not vote at rates comparable to the rest of the electorate, it has compiled a list of things that, in addition to years of schooling and civic education, work to increase youth voter turnout:

- **REGISTRATION:** young voters are registered at rates much lower than the rest of the population;
- **PERSONALIZED AND INTERACTIVE CONTACT:** CIRCLE has found that the type of contact is the most important aspect (rather than the ideology of the message); something personal (a phone call or canvass stop) as opposed to a robocall works best;
- **KNOWING THE BASICS:** Ensuring that any contact includes information about where to vote, and how to use voting machines can increase turnout.^{xiii}

Figure 3 shows that it is not so much that there is a difference in turnout as a percentage of registered voters between young and older voters (though there is a small gap), it is the large gap between the percentage of registered young and older voters that either drives low youth turnout, or certainly isn't helping.

“ THE LARGE GAP BETWEEN THE PERCENTAGE OF REGISTERED YOUNG AND OLDER VOTERS... DRIVES LOW YOUTH TURNOUT. ”

Figure 3: Turnout and Registration Rates by Age^{xiv}



The link between general civic engagement and civics education has been well documented for some time, but it was in 2003 that Carnegie Corporation of New York and CIRCLE made the key finding that students who take civics or government classes are more likely to believe in the importance of voting and be registered to vote.^{xv} Unfortunately, nationally, youth that have access to civics education of any sort at school tends to skew in favor of white and affluent students.^{xvi}

Additionally, there is a well-documented link between parent's voting habits and those of their children.^{xvii} Statistics show that those earning under \$40,000 are registered and vote at lower than average rates,^{xviii} and this carries over to 18-24 year olds in households earning under \$40,000.^{xix} The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 87% of Chicago Public School (CPS) students come from “low-income families,” where low-income is derived from tax information from the IRS.^{xx}

The U.S. Census Bureau collects sufficient information to provide registration and turnout for each age group by state, but not by City. The registration and turnout rate for 18-24 year olds during the most recent midterm elections in Illinois, 2010, was lower than the national rate, while in the most recent presidential elections the registration rate for 18-24 year old Illinoisans was slightly above the national rate (though the turnout lagged even further behind the national average). The exact statistics are set out in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Registration and turnout rates for citizens generally and 18-24 year olds nationally and in Illinois^{xxi}

	2010				2012			
	Registered (%)		Turnout (%)		Registered (%)		Turnout (%)	
	Citizen pop.	18-24 Citizen	Citizen pop.	18-24 Citizen	Citizen pop.	18-24 Citizen	Citizen pop.	18-24 Citizen
National	65.1	45.3	45.5	21.3	71.2	53.6	61.8	41.2
Illinois	66.3	41.3	45.5	20.6	72.7	54.2	61.5	35.2

WHAT DO PREVIOUS STUDIES TELL US ABOUT IMPROVING YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

The 2009 McCormick Foundation report “Creating a Civic Blueprint for Illinois High Schools” found that the following were key elements to include in a civics program:^{xxii}

- Discussion of current issues;
- Service opportunities;
- Extracurricular activities; and
- Simulations of democratic governance.

The CIRCLE focus group study found the following should be included for a civic education program to be successful:^{xxiii}

- Focus on the issues that resonate most with youth;
- Clearly articulate what impact participants can make;
- Highlight examples of changes that have been made in the community as a result of civic action even if small; and
- Provide opportunities for youth to meet adults who hold formal positions in government or who work in activist organizations.

The CIRCLE focus groups also found that civic uses of social networking sites is common across income and education gaps. Due to this popularity, the use of social media in a voter registration program could help to improve its efficacy.^{xxiv}

Additionally, people of all ages are more likely to vote if they have been asked to make a plan for how they will vote (e.g. will they go before work, what mode of transport will they use, do they have necessary identification).^{xxv} Therefore identifying for young voters what happens at a polling place, and how/where they can vote, may result in a similar increase in turnout.^{xxvi}

Finally, person-to-person contact is the best way to determine whether voters will be mobilized by a turnout effort.^{xxvii}

THE CIVIC GROUPS INVOLVED

The nonprofit organizations that were involved in conceiving of and planning CDW were self-selecting, rather than chosen by a person or committee. Some have worked in the field of civics for many years and others are new to the scene. The table was always open for new groups to join, and indeed some joined as the planning was already underway. Below we set out a brief background of each organization and their reason for involvement in CDW 2014.

CHICAGO LAWYERS’ COMMITTEE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS UNDER LAW (CLC)

The mission of CLC is to promote and protect civil rights, bringing the strength and the prestige of the private bar to bear on the problems of poverty and discrimination. CLC provides free legal services to people with civil rights problems and nonprofit organizations that need help with transactional issues. Last year, our member firms donated over 16,000 hours of professional legal services to challenge discrimination and other violations of civil rights in both the public and private sectors.

The Voting Rights Project of CLC was established to prevent, reduce, and eliminate barriers to voting for minority and low-income residents within Illinois. It draws on a large group of volunteer attorneys and law students that regularly provide assistance in election protection polling monitoring to complete its work. CLC utilized the interest and expertise of those volunteers to provide information on voting to high school seniors and to help them to register to vote.

Rock the Vote’s “Democracy Class” is a fun way to help students learn about the history of voting, and because it includes a complete lesson plan and activities developed by experts in education

and civic engagement, CLC partnered with Rock the Vote to have volunteers present the class and register voters at target Chicago high schools.

CHICAGO VOTES

Chicago Votes is a civic organization created for and by leaders from the city's millennial generation that aims to engage young Chicagoans in the political process. Chicago Votes believes in the potential of the next generation to change politics as usual. Millennials have a deep sense of community and a higher rate of volunteerism than any generation before them. Chicago Votes aims to channel these fundamental qualities into the local electoral process. Chicago Votes does this by training new leaders on everything from how to organize other young people on the ground to how issues and candidates affect our lives. Chicago Votes mobilizes hundreds of volunteers throughout Chicago to have millennial-to-millennial conversations about the issues that affect them the most. Chicago Votes also aims to make politics more appealing to young people and brings millennials together across race, ethnic and community lines.

CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS FOUNDATION CHICAGO (CRFC)

Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago strengthens American democracy by providing elementary and secondary students with hands-on learning about the Constitution to prepare them for informed civic engagement. Nonprofit and nonpartisan, CRFC develops and delivers interactive programming, classroom-tested professional development, and problem-based curricula that address rights, law, and policy. CRFC was founded in 1974 as part of the Constitutional Rights Foundation in Los Angeles and in 1990 became an independent 501(c)(3) organization headquartered in Chicago.

CRFC has worked in the Chicago Public Schools since its inception, providing professional development, student programs, and curricula. As part of its work, CRFC develops and provides resources, training, and programming focused on elections, voting, and voting rights.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CHICAGO (LWV CHICAGO)

The LWV Chicago is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. It influences public policy through education and advocacy. It never supports or opposes any political party or candidate. It presents unbiased nonpartisan information about elections, the voting process, and issues.

The League of Women Voters was founded in 1920 when Women's Suffrage (the 19th Amendment) was passed. Voters' rights and voter registration programs have been an important part of LWV activities since its founding. Programs for new voters (newly naturalized citizens and 18 year olds) have also been regular activities.

MIKVA CHALLENGE

Mikva Challenge is a non-partisan nonprofit whose mission is to develop the next generation of civic leaders, activists and policymakers by giving young people the opportunity to actively participate in the political process. By opening up spaces for democratic education and youth participation in Chicago schools and government, this organization strives to prioritize the needs of low-income youth and under-resourced Chicago neighborhoods and schools.

For the last 15 years, Mikva has worked with teachers at a plethora of high schools to run their Elections in Action programs with thousands of CPS students. Their Student Judge Program recruits juniors and seniors to be trained and then serve as Election Judges at polling stations across the city of Chicago in each election while their Campaign Program both helps students learn about candidates, issues and the electoral process and then creates opportunities for them to serve as campaign volunteers for local, state and national candidates. Given their presence in so many schools and the existing relationships they held with so many teachers already interested in providing students with authentic and transformative democratic experiences (as well as the Chicago Board of Elections), Mikva was a natural partner for this effort.

RAINBOW PUSH COALITION AND PUSH EXCEL

The Rainbow/PUSH Coalition is a multi-issue, multi-cultural, international membership organization, founded by Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr., whose mission is to defend, protect and gain civil rights; to even the playing field in all aspects of American life and to secure peace in the world. Their National Headquarters are located in Chicago, IL with satellites in New York City, NY, Atlanta, GA, Detroit, MI, Washington, DC, Oakland, CA, London, England and Johannesburg, South Africa.

The mission of PUSH Excel is to promote educational excellence by engaging the stakeholders in education to work collaboratively to create opportunities implementing strategies designed to transform the lives of students and improve communities.

ROCK THE VOTE

Founded twenty-three years ago at the intersection of popular culture and politics, Rock the Vote has registered more than five million young people to vote and has become a trusted source of information about registering to vote and casting a ballot. Since its inception it has used music, popular culture, new technologies, and grassroots organizing to motivate and mobilize young people in our country to participate in every election, with the goal of seizing the power of the youth vote to create political, economic, and social change.

Rock the Vote was the first organization to introduce a 1-800 number to register to vote and since has expanded the technology to include an online voter registration tool, used by thousands of individuals, organizations, corporations and media outlets and most recently integrated into state based voter registration systems. Their work doesn't stop at the voter registration process, they continue to follow-up with individuals and remind them when to request absentee ballots, when/where to vote and other useful election information.

In 2009, they launched "Democracy Class" a high school civics education program. The program sets out a lesson plan for high school students and any educator or volunteer (that have permission to run the class in a school) can sign up to teach the class. The class includes a video, classroom discussion, and a mock election to teach young people the skills to navigate the elections process and engage as active citizens. A core component of the lesson



plans involves a step by step guide for the educators to help their students complete a registration form and a "pledge to vote" card that Rock the Vote can use to track the potential voter's information (for younger students this means they will be sent a registration form on their 18th birthday, for older students, they can register in class, depending on state rules, and be reminded about important deadlines and details by Rock the Vote).

The success of the program is clear. In only two years of national operation, the Class has been taught in over 3,000 schools, and the statistics show that:

- 73% of eligible students register to vote as part of the lesson;
- 45% take a pledge to vote; and
- 25% of students sign-up to volunteer with Rock the Vote.

Rock the Vote became involved at the request of CLC. They provided CLC and some CPS high school teachers resources including their lesson plan, DVD, sign up sheets, as well as t-shirts, posters, and buttons to make the classes fun and accessible. The students that registered to vote filled out Chicago Votes pledge-to-vote cards. This means their information is now permanently stored with Chicago Votes and Rock the Vote. Chicago Votes and Rock the Vote can email, text, and call the students to remind them of important information and deadlines, and, hopefully, will keep them as lifelong voters.

JULIET BIRNBAUM

The coalition meetings also included Juliet Birnbaum, at the request of CPA and Mikva Challenge. Juliet volunteers with Chicago Public Schools and Big Brothers/Big Sisters. She has advocated for young people to participate in their communities by voting.

7

Civic Groups

10,023

17-19 year olds
registered to vote
in Chicago in 2014

6,659

CPS students
registered to vote...



Photo credit: Tilden Tv & Radio

CHICAGO DEMOCRACY WEEK, FEBRUARY 3-7, 2014

A host of civic groups and the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners (CBOE), Chicago Public Schools (CPS), and the Cook County Clerk (CCC) met in September, 2013 to discuss how we could use the new Suffrage @ 17 law to register high school students to vote. The goal was not just to do a one time voter registration event, but to formulate an effective strategy for youth voter registration in Chicago in the long term. Additionally, by registering 17 year olds to vote, we hoped to positively affect the lifetime turnout statistics of those young Chicagoans.

The groups that initially met, or later joined, the CDW team, in addition to CPS, CBOE, and CCC were:

- Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (CLC)
- Chicago Votes
- Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago (CRFC)
- Mikva Challenge
- Rainbow PUSH Coalition
- Rock the Vote
- League of Women Voters of Chicago (LWV Chicago)

The groups decided that it would be most efficient for each group to collaborate with as many schools as they could and to run whatever programs they thought would help increase turnout: whether it be one or multiple voter registration drives, curricula for the teachers, classes, or drives offered by volunteers, or voter registration run by groups already operating in the schools.

With the support of the McCormick Foundation the groups held an information evening on December 3, 2013 for 60 CPS teachers. Mikva Challenge and CRFC created *Vote 2014*, a six-lesson curriculum, with supplemental resources, for use as part of CDW, that they introduced at this information evening. Rock the Vote and CLC previewed their Democracy Class and shared resources for it with the teachers. Langdon Neal, Chairman of the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners encouraged teachers to take advantage of the new Suffrage @ 17 law and help their students make history by being the first ever 17 year olds to vote in Illinois.

The efforts taken by each organization leading to the voter registration deadline of February 18, 2014, primarily, but not exclusively, during the week of February 3 - 7, 2014, are outlined below:

CHICAGO BOARD OF ELECTIONS

The CBOE developed a new voter registration form, tailored to account for 17 year old registrants, and sent approximately 30,000 copies to all CPS high schools, along with a pre-paid envelope in which the completed forms could be sent to the CBOE. This meant that all the civic groups needed to do was plan their activities with the schools and turn up, ready to help register students. The CBOE estimated how many forms to send to each school based on figures derived by CPS.

The CBOE also planned and participated in a number of voter registration activities including creating a website listing and linking to resources for all the civic groups involved and sending Chairman Langdon Neal to speak at Steinmetz College Prep and Tilden High School about the new Suffrage @ 17 law.

CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS FOUNDATION CHICAGO

CRFC distributed their six lesson curriculum (produced with Mikva Challenge) to all CPS teachers coordinating CDW at their schools. Another version of the curriculum was created for use in suburban Cook County and the rest of Illinois, and both versions of the curriculum were posted on the CRFC and Mikva Challenge websites. In addition to developing and distributing the curriculum, CRFC registered 200 students at six CPS and two suburban high schools.

CHICAGO LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND ROCK THE VOTE

CLC teamed up with Rock the Vote to present Democracy Class to 49 classes and one school assembly at 10 CPS schools across Chicago. At the request of one volunteer, we also sent volunteers to the Gary Comer Youth Center for an after school assembly at which we registered students to vote. In total, CLC volunteers registered 786 students to vote.

The 10 schools were chosen because either they had the lowest percentage of students that go on to college of all the CPS schools, or they reached out directly and asked for assistance. In addition to young people registering and voting at low levels, citizens that never attend or finish college vote at rates 20-30% lower than the rest of the population. CLC wanted to see if there was an institutional way to target these people before they go out into the community and are difficult to contact with voter registration information. Teaching Rock the Vote's Democracy Class (which includes a portion where the students complete voter registration forms) was its attempt at an institutional approach to voter registration for this population.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CHICAGO

Seven LWV Chicago members working on the voter registration project with Chicago Public High Schools collected and submitted over 500 registration forms from 6 high schools.

MIKVA CHALLENGE

In addition to creating and sharing the aforementioned curriculum along with CRFC, Mikva Challenge also used its own teacher lists to populate a list of teacher contacts that various other partner organizations could reach out to at different schools; required teachers participating in its Student Judge Program to hold a voter registration drive at their school; and offered additional support to teachers at 19 different high schools. (Said 19 schools were those participating in either of Mikva's Elections in Action programs that remained after other partner organizations had adopted other schools on that list.) Of the 19 schools to which Mikva offered direct support:

- 4 never responded to multiple requests to set up a classroom visit
- 8 teachers held their own drives without additional Mikva support
- 7 teachers accepted help in the form of classroom visits (about the importance of voting), logistical conversations about different ways/times/places to promote and hold their drive, and direct staff support in implementing the drive.

Mikva staff also registered students directly at each election-related event they hosted for students this season (candidate forums, a campaign fair, etc.). In total they and their teachers registered 1,210 students before the February 18th deadline.

CHICAGO VOTES

In order to serve as many students as possible during Democracy Week, Chicago Votes cast a wide net by emailing key contacts at CPS schools throughout the city. Organizers were sent to all schools that asked for assistance with their voter registration efforts. Chicago Votes also partnered with the CLC and assisted with voter registration that took place as part of Rock the Vote's "Democracy Class." During Democracy Week and the week that followed, Chicago Votes went to 13 different high schools and registered 1,153 students to vote. A variety of tactics were used ranging from classroom announcements, tabling and clipboarding during lunch periods, and organizing student assemblies. Chicago Votes plans to continue their voter registration efforts at other high schools that still have a large number of unregistered eligible students until the end of the school year.

1,210

The number of students Mikva Challenge registered before the February 18th deadline.

1,319

The number of students Rainbow Push registered before the February 18th deadline.

1,153

The number of students Chicago Votes registered before the February 18th deadline.

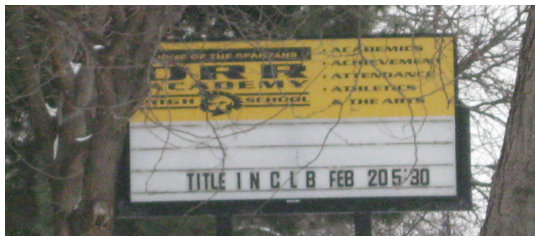
RAINBOW PUSH COALITION AND PUSH EXCEL

Rainbow PUSH and PUSH Excel registered students in both High Schools and Junior Colleges. In 11 high schools, we registered 1,319 students and of that number 300 were 17 year olds who will be 18 by the November 4, 2014 election.

JULIET BIRNBAUM

Juliet worked with Amundsen High School coordinating with Mikva Teacher Colleen Murray. A rally was held for all eligible students that was organized and run by students. The rally had a screening of Rock the Vote's Democracy in Action, guest speaker Ameya Pawar (Alderman 47th) and completion of Motor Voter Registration Cards.

Juliet's team collected 120+ motor voter cards at the assembly and had projected an additional 100 cards by week's end from students who needed to verify identification info.





SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN

Cook County Clerk David Orr's office manages the election process in suburban Cook County and orchestrated a 17-year-old registration campaign in all 89 high schools in the jurisdiction. The result of this campaign was that 3,554 17-year-olds and 2,085 18-year-olds registered to vote in suburban Cook County between January 1st and Feb. 18th.

This registration campaign ran parallel to the Chicago voter registration effort. Many of the same groups that registered students in Chicago also worked with suburban schools. The Clerk's office participated in meetings and correspondence between the organizations outlined in this report, registration methods were similar and suburban schools were encouraged to take part in Democracy Week. However, the Clerk's office campaign was run separately and varied in certain ways.

Building new partnerships

Suburban public schools are broken up into a number of different districts rather than a single district, such as CPS, which could offer comprehensive, top-down leadership and communication.

The Clerk's office had long-standing partnerships with many suburban high schools. But in order to connect with all schools, it was necessary to establish new connections and identify the individuals at schools who would take on a leadership role. This presented both challenges and opportunities.

Expanding the database of high school contacts with updated information including school addresses and contact information for principals, assistant principals, civics teachers and district administrators, was a worthwhile but time-consuming endeavor.

Spreading the word

Working off of the list, the Clerk's office began communicating with the schools in suburban Cook County and offering them information and resources. The Clerk's office:

- Sent emails in the fall 2013 semester to all suburban high schools highlighting the new law and discussing registration options and requirements.
- Sent out packets to all suburban schools in early January with key information, registration materials, posters and tip-sheets for students to understand the election process.
- Organized an "I am 17 and I will vote because..." video contest for suburban students. The winners of this contest, students from Maine East High School, had their video highlighted on our website, in social media and at a press event to help kick off Democracy Week.
- Contacted local officials and civic organizations to encourage their participation and see if they might have contacts at schools that should be involved.

- Created webpages within CookCountyClerk.com that provided comprehensive 17-year-old voting information, lesson plans and other resources. This included promotional materials such as posters, web ads and a Voting at 17 video (featuring students from multiple schools).
- Made multiple follow-up calls to schools to ensure they had the information they needed and a contact was established.
- Built a social media campaign that promoted registration efforts through Twitter and Facebook with a common hashtag, #suffrageat17.

This comprehensive approach allowed the Clerk's office to establish valuable contacts and identify those who were willing to lead campaigns on campus. Building these new contacts also afforded the opportunity to work with more schools to promote the student judge program, which allows high school juniors and seniors to serve in suburban polling places on Election Day.

Community organizations

The 17-year-old registration campaign also provided an excellent opportunity to create and re-establish partnerships with civic organizations and community groups. Many of the groups who participated had been consistent partners over the years or were part of the Chicago effort.

Many suburban civic organizations were invited to take part in this campaign. As a result of the press generated around 17-year-old registration, there were also groups (and individuals) that came to us because they were eager to get involved or already had connections at a specific school where they intended to register students. The Clerk's office conducted registration trainings specifically for new groups and two trainings that were open to the public.

The groups who participated in the suburbs included: Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., League of Women Voters (multiple chapters), Mikva Challenge, National Action Network, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc., Pastors United for Change, Rainbow PUSH, Sauk Village Clerk's office, Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc., and VOX60130.

HOW TO REGISTER

Schools were provided with access to registration forms and a corresponding tip sheet. This tip sheet was valuable as it identified the sections of the registration form where mistakes are often made while also providing key information about the upcoming election. Having a teacher or registrar confirm that forms were fully completed was key to reducing the number of mistakes. Registration forms could be turned in to teachers and returned to the Clerk's office in bulk.

DEPUTY REGISTRAR PROGRAM: Deputy registrars are students or adults who are trained on how to register others to vote. Unlike registration forms where voters fill out the form themselves, deputy registrars complete a specific registration card for the voter after the voter has provided them with two forms of ID. In doing so they are confirming the voter's identity and address during the registration process itself. The voter then reviews the card and signs it.

The deputy registrar process can be slower as deputy registrars in essence have to go one-by-one rather than allowing everyone to fill out a form simultaneously. However, the deputy registrar training provides an excellent opportunity for individuals to learn more about the election process and develop a closer connection to the registration process. Experienced deputy registrars are often more deliberate in the process than students who are completing the form themselves.

ONLINE REGISTRATION: Students could fill-out a registration form online that had to be printed, signed and mailed in. For the fall of 2014, paperless online registration will be available for students with an Illinois state ID or driver's license. This will make online registration an even more appealing registration option.

Having all registration options at one's disposal is ideal, as all methods have advantages depending on the circumstances.

3,554

17-year-olds

&

2,085

18-year-olds registered to vote in suburban Cook County between Jan. 1st and Feb. 18th.

14.7%

of 17 year olds voted in Suburban Cook County

SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL REGISTRATION BY THE NUMBERS

Schools who registered the largest number of students:	
Lyons Township High School	424
William Fremd High School	327
New Trier High School	309
Palatine High School	258
Bartlett High School*	250
Lemont High School	231

*Students from multiple counties attend Bartlett High School

HOW STUDENTS WERE REGISTERED: CASE STUDIES FROM SPECIFIC SCHOOLS

Schools used a variety of methods to encourage student participation in the election process. Of the many notable examples, below are a few valuable case studies.

THORNTON FRACTIONAL SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL: Placed the Clerk's office *Voting at 17* video on all 6 of their school's TVs. TF South also had student deputy registrars working with experienced deputy registrars from the community. This was a mutually beneficial relationship as community members were able to answer questions and offer guidance while students were able to easily connect with peers. "The students who are deputy registrars are doing an outstanding job. They have so much excitement and energy, it's unbelievable. They are a true testament to the fact that there is power in participation." *Rev. Roosevelt Watkins, Pastors United for Change*

WILLIAM FREMD HIGH SCHOOL: Had 5 teachers actively registering and engaging students between January 15 and February 15.

PROVISO MATH AND SCIENCE ACADEMY: Had 30 students train as deputy registrars.

NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL: Handed out "I registered to vote" stickers to students and created a voter registration book display in their main hallway. Made daily announcements in the build up to registration.

OAK FOREST HIGH SCHOOL: Deputy Registrars with civic organization VOX60130 got permission to go to every English class with an eligible voter to briefly discuss registration and provide the students with an opportunity to complete the form.

LEMONT HIGH SCHOOL: Had registrars from the Clerk's office attend each of their block classes over a two day period to provide all students with the opportunity to register.

GLENBROOK NORTH HIGH SCHOOL: Had a program to provide students with a birthday card on their 18th birthday with voter registration information.

THORNTON FRACTIONAL NORTH HIGH SCHOOL: Promoted voter registration through their homepage.

LYONS TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL: Lyons Township High School registered the highest number of students, 424. This campaign was orchestrated by the League of Women Voters of the La Grange area who implemented a number of successful strategies that could be utilized by other schools. The LWV:

- Had a strong partnership with the Global Studies Division Chair, Paul Houston. He sent out an email to the parents of all juniors and seniors regarding registration event information and requirements. He included this same information in announcements and encouraged other teachers to discuss registration opportunities and requirements in their classrooms. Houston also collaborated with the League of Women Voters in setting up registration events.
- Identified student leaders who encouraged their peers to register, created and hung posters, recruited volunteers, built a registration Facebook page, etc. (National Honor Society was a valuable source of student involvement.)
- Recruited a large number of parents and students to serve as registrars and keep lines short.
- In total, approx. 35 students, parents and community members volunteered or participated.
- Had registrars move throughout the school in the cafeteria, hallways and study halls so students didn't fall through the cracks.

- Provided a handout for students with primary election information as well as information about how to be a student election judge.
- Challenged a rival school on who could register more students.
- Reached approximately 1,000 students and parents through Facebook.

TIPS AND GOALS

- A program's success was often directly correlated to **teacher and administrator buy in**. This can't be emphasized enough.
- Creating a **comprehensive map** of all suburban schools proved a valuable visual tool for the Clerk's office and cooperating groups.
- Partnering with township and municipal offices so teachers could **drop off registration forms at numerous sites** throughout the suburbs was instrumental to the success of Democracy Week. The Clerk's office then collected registrations in a sweep two days after registration closed. Mailing in registration forms, or dropping them off at our downtown office were options as well, but teachers preferred to drop them off in bulk at a location near their school.
- **Follow-up emails** about how students could confirm their registration status, find their polling place and vote early were important. All registered students received a mailer from our office with their specific election information but reminders from teachers were certainly of value.
- Encouraging class trips to early voting sites or working hard to highlight **Election Day** itself for students needs to be a priority.
- Schools should be encouraged to promote registration events and opportunities through **announcements** and in the classroom.
- Schools that provided students with the **last four numbers of their Social Security or a temporary ID** were helpful as many students don't carry ID or know their driver's license or Social Security number.
- **Facebook and Twitter** were valuable ways to highlight registration efforts and disseminate information. Identifying student leaders who could work to drive social media could pay big dividends.
- Having **web ads** or links will become particularly valuable when paperless online registration becomes a reality.



Photo credit: Tilden Tv & Radio



6

OUTCOMES

The efforts of the CBOE, CPS, and the civic groups involved in CDW, resulted in a total of 6,659 CPS students aged 17-19 registering to vote in 2014. Of them 798 voted, representing a turnout of 12%. The city wide average turnout was 13.5%. As discussed in Section 3 above, youth turnout is usually well below the average turnout, so even though the turnout was low compared to a general election, the fact that the 17-19 year old, first time registrants in 2014, turnout was so similar to average city wide turnout should be considered a success.

The civic groups that conducted voter registration activities at CPS high schools were able to register over 5,000 students, and 17-19 year olds that registered at schools with at least one CDW activity exhibited a voter turnout 2.06% higher than those without a CDW activity.

Though we could not track many variables, we were able to track the registration rates and turnout at

schools that had Mikva Challenge programs operating. One of the most stark findings of the data was that at the schools without a CDW activity, the schools with one or more Mikva Challenge programs had a turnout rate 7.93% higher than those with no Mikva Challenge programs or CDW activity operating at the school.

The data suggests that one-off voter registration by outside groups can be effective, but long-term civic education and activities in schools is still the best way to improve voter registration and turnout of young people.

Findings from data

The groups involved in Chicago Democracy Week registered over 5,000 high school students to vote in advance of the March 18, 2014 primary. There are around 30,000 CPS seniors and not all of them are eligible to vote (either because they will not be 18 by November 4, 2014 or they are not U.S. citizens), so this represents a significant achievement towards the successful implementation of the Suffrage @ 17 law in Chicago.

Figure 6: Number of students registered through CDW activities by organization

ORGANIZATION	NUMBER OF STUDENTS REGISTERED THROUGH CDW ACTIVITIES
Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and Rock the Vote	786
Chicago Votes	1,153
Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago	200
Rainbow PUSH Coalition	1,319
Mikva Challenge	1,210
League of Women Voters of Chicago	510
Juliet Birnbaum	120
TOTAL	5,378

The CBOE counted the total number of people between the age of 17 and 19 that registered to vote in 2014. They divided those teenagers into schools based on a list of names by school given to them by CPS administrators. The CBOE then tracked which of the teenagers that registered to vote in 2014 voted in the 2014 Primary election.

Though we cannot draw hard statistical conclusions from the registration and turnout data gathered, because there are so many variables that cannot be accounted for, we can make some inferences.

Overall, 17 and 18 year olds had higher turnout rates than their counterparts from ages 19 to 45. It was only at the age of 46 or older that turnout rates consistently surpassed those of 17 and 18 year olds. This means that the teens were more likely to vote than many of their parents. The Chicago Board of Election Commissioners has described this result as "remarkable."

Figure 7 shows that the total turnout for 17-19 year olds that registered to vote in 2014 was 10,023 and that of them 11.9% turned out to vote at the primary election on March 18, 2104.

Figure 7: The total number of 17-19 year olds that registered to vote in 2014, divided into those that attended CPS schools and those that did not.

CATEGORY	REGISTERED	VOTED	TURNOUT
CPS Total	6,659	798	12.0%
Non-CPS Teens	3,364	398	11.8%
Chicago Total	10,023	1,196	11.9%

Figure 8 shows that the turnout of 17-19 year old CPS students that registered to vote in 2014, and attended a school with a CDW program was 2.06% higher than those that registered to vote during the same period but attended schools without a CDW program. City wide turnout for 17-19 year olds that registered between January 1 and February 18, 2014 was 11.9%, so having a CDW program may have contributed to this increase.

Figure 8: The total number of 17-19 year olds that registered to vote in 2014, that attended CPS schools, divided into those that were at a school with at least one CDW activity and those that were not at a school with a CDW activity

CATEGORY	REGISTERED	VOTED	TURNOUT
CDW Schools (51 schools)	3,988	511	12.81%
Non-CDW schools (124 schools)	2,671	287	10.75%

It is well known in Chicago that the Mikva Challenge operates civic education programs in hundreds of schools every year. Therefore, even though we could not track all types of civic education programs operating in CPS schools, we were able to track the difference between schools where Mikva Challenge programs were operating and those where they were not. The most striking finding was that in the schools where there was no CDW activity, schools that had one or more Mikva Challenge programs operating had a turnout rate 7.93% higher than those with no Mikva Challenge. This is shown in Figure 9.

The data suggests that one-off voter registration by outside groups can be effective, but long-term civic education and activities in schools is still the best way to improve voter registration and turnout of young people.

Figure 9: The total number of 17-19 year olds that registered to vote in 2014, that attended CPS schools and did not have a CDW activity at their school, divided into schools that had Mikva Challenge Programs operating and those that did not

CATEGORY	REGISTERED	VOTED	TURNOUT
Non CDW with Mikva (27 schools)	1,241	186	14.99%
Non CDW without Mikva (97 schools)	1,430	101	7.06%

Qualitative findings

This section is divided into: findings by the groups that put on the activities; findings from the teachers that were involved either individually or with group assistance; and the responses of the students that registered to vote.

What the Groups Thought

Some of the findings we, as a group made, were:

- It was possible to cold call school teachers, but to develop a relationship took, in some cases, two to three months of calls and emails;
- The programs at schools where strong relationships were developed between the organizing group and the school teacher ran more smoothly than those arranged at the last minute;
- Outside volunteers needed to have a school teacher in the class during their lesson to manage the students and to assist with difficult questions;

- Where activities were occurring all day at a school, having a “staging location” or “base camp” was crucial to the success of ensuring volunteers knew where to go, had the right materials, and that last minute changes to the school day schedule could be accommodated;
- One school, Schurz, had a small group of students that regularly engage in civic activities. They were assigned to “look after” the volunteers that came onto the campus. It made the day run incredibly smoothly and meant we were able to register many students at the school;
- It was harder to run the program with an assembly of 70 students than the classes of 20-30 students, so even though there is an efficiency in grouping students together, the key messages of the Democracy Class program were diluted by the larger group;
- On the whole, taking voter registration cards during classes led to a higher rate of registrations (if all classes could be covered) than running a voter registration drive from a table in the lunch rooms;
- Drives that were student-led seemed to garner more interest and registrations from other students than those that were solely adult-led;
- The Chicago Board of Elections provided detailed instructions for completing voter registration forms that were very helpful. Sharing this kind of information widely and early with both schools and registering organizations will improve efficiency;
- The most effective drives were at schools where posters, announcements, and signage were in place *before* the registration date. This advance publicity is essential to a good school-based voter registration drive; and
- Informational literature (handouts, posters, and other reminders) was a big help. In particular, such literature should include basic, necessary information (e.g., “If you are 17 on or before November 4, 2014 and are a U.S. Citizen”).

Volunteer Feedback

CLC asked volunteers to complete evaluations after class. Though we only got responses from seven volunteers, five strongly agreed that the program should be run in future years and two agreed; and as to whether the students were engaged, four strongly agreed, and three agreed.

LWW Chicago asked volunteers to complete evaluation forms. The comments ranged from finding that teachers were very appreciative and hundreds of students were registered, to frustration that the school had done an internal registration session before LWW Chicago volunteer arrived, so her attendance was not needed. One volunteer found the class to operate worse with a substitute teacher as s/he was unable to control the class, and others found that teachers wanted LWW Chicago to return and do this again. The students responded well to being given stickers, pins, and t-shirts, so they should be incorporated where possible in future years. Overall, the volunteer experiences seem very tied to the level of coordination with the teacher in advance of the visit, and the enthusiasm of the teacher for the program, and thankfully in most cases there was good coordination so the volunteers gave positive feedback and were able to register hundreds of students.

What the teachers thought

We conducted two different sets of evaluations with teachers. The results of each are set out below.

Online survey by CPS

The then CPS Civic Engagement Coordinator, Jon Schmidt, sent out a survey with ten questions to all the civic education coordinators at the schools. He received 22 responses. The groups with which the respondents had worked included the Mikva Challenge, Rock the Vote, CLC, CRFC, Juliet Birnbaum, Chicago Votes, and Rainbow PUSH. We believe that the results overestimate the rate of registration across the board at CPS schools. For example, Mikva Challenge found that the average rate of registration at the nineteen schools they attended for voter registration was 29%, while the survey found an average of 62%. Though the following described results are not representative of CPS as a whole during CDW, we think they are representative of the results from schools with lead teachers and external volunteers that were highly engaged with CDW.

Sixteen teachers responded to the question of what percentage of their eligible students registered to vote. The mean percent of eligible students registered was 62% and the median was 69%. Twenty teachers responded to how many students were involved in voter education activities in total, with an average of around 164 students. Most respondents (17/22) used both classroom activities and voter registration tables during the week. The types of resources used by the teachers included (and the count):

- Teacher generated material (16/22)
- Voter registration posters from the CBOE (14/22)
- The Board of Education website (11/22)
- Mikva Challenge's Student Judges program (16/22)
- Outside speakers (11/22)
- Mikva and CRFC *Vote 2014* curriculum (9/22)
- A mock election (4/22)

In response to whether CDW was a success at their school 10 chose "strongly agree" and 11 "agree." One teacher chose "disagree," explaining that he/she would have preferred better coordination with the outside group. The school was one of the last to agree to be part of CDW, so this response is in keeping with our other findings and recommendations.

When asked for a highlight of the program at their school, some of the responses included:

- A teacher at William B. Ogden International High School: "Having students convince their peers to register because it was fast and it made them feel like adults;"
- A teacher at the Northside Learning Center said "34 students with cognitive disabilities are now registered;"

- A teacher at Steinmetz: "WTTW debate & Chicago Board of Election speakers;" and
- A teacher at Lincoln Park High School: "Students discussing the elections with Rev. Jackson on field trip to [Rainbow] PUSH."

Finally, the teachers were asked for recommendations for what would be helpful resources for similar weeks in the future. The responses fell into four categories:

- TIME: Lead-in time for coordination with groups;
- TARGETS: Lists of eligible students (that include only citizens);
- PROMOTION: Press and social media coverage, and plenty of posters, flyers, and other promotional materials; and
- OUTSIDE SPEAKERS: Outside presenters and candidates were popular with the students.

Democracy Class Evaluations

CLC asked the teachers who witnessed volunteers present Rock the Vote's Democracy Class to complete an evaluation form (on paper directly after the class(es)). We received responses from at least one teacher at each of six of the schools we attended, with nine teachers in total completing the form. The responses to the three questions about how the class went were:

- "My students were engaged with and interested in the lesson"
 - Six teachers strongly agreed and three agreed;
- "I feel my students are more likely to vote"
 - Six teachers strongly agreed, two agreed, and one was neutral;
- "I would recommend this program to other educators"
 - Nine teachers strongly agreed.

“ 17 AND 18 YEAR OLDS HAD HIGHER TURNOUT RATES THAN THEIR COUNTERPARTS FROM AGES 19 TO 45... THE CHICAGO BOARD OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS HAS DESCRIBED THIS RESULT AS REMARKABLE. ”

"I would like to contribute to my community"

"I would like to be a good citizen"

"People in the past fought for the right for young people to vote so I want to take advantage of that"

"to have a better future for all the people"

"I want to vote for people who will actually benefit the city"

"because that is the only way I have a voice in my community, and I really believe that it needs to change"

"I think everyone should vote"

"Young people have voices too. Our voices need to be heard"

"I have the right to make history"

WHAT THE STUDENTS THOUGHT

Students who completed Chicago Votes' Pledge to Vote Cards were asked to include a reason why they would be voting. Some of the responses included:

"I want to have a choice of a person, who would offer the better future towards me and my siblings"

"I want to be in control of what happens around me"

"I want to take part in what will make my future better"

"I want to make a difference in my community & city. I want lower rent cost and higher minimum wage"

"I have a voice and now I have a chance to let people hear it!"

"This will be my first time voting and I'm excited to do this"

"because I think democracy is important"

"I want to change my future"

"I care and want to put a stop to racial profiling"

"I've been waiting for the day I could make a decision that matters"

"IT IS MY RIGHT"

"I want a better environment in my community and stop the violence as well. Eliminate the guns"



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEXT CHICAGO DEMOCRACY WEEK

Based on the findings, we make the following recommendations for the next time Chicago Democracy Week is run:

■ Relationships matter

Planning with all the groups that will participate/volunteer from four months beforehand seemed to be enough for the coordination between groups, but it is important that those working with schools contact them at least two months before the event and maintain contact with them to solve administrative issues before the Democracy Week begins.

Teachers are incredibly busy and not always near their phone or email. Those contacting the schools should not assume that teachers are not interested if they do not respond to a phone message or email but should be persistent and try multiple methods of communication. We recommend a face-to-face visit with the coordinating teacher and the group lead on the program whenever possible in order to forge a working relationship so that any last minute changes can be made effectively.

■ Focus on classroom activities

Voter registration is very technical and therefore it requires some very specific guidance. Asking a large group of students to follow along as they fill out forms can be problematic. The consequences of incorrectly completed (or incomplete) forms is sufficiently severe (the student might not get on the voting rolls, if a non-citizen accidentally completes a form they can be subject to deportation) that ensuring this portion of any class goes smoothly should be a priority. We recommend against using assemblies to conduct voter registration (though they can be a fun way to kick off or end a week of voter registration activities!).

■ Use props

The schools responded to the influx of outside volunteers, and the students responded well to posters, t-shirts, buttons, and entry to competitions. We recommend involving as many people and resources as possible to make the week an exciting explosion of activity, that is different to everyday school life for the students (in coordination with the teachers, of course).

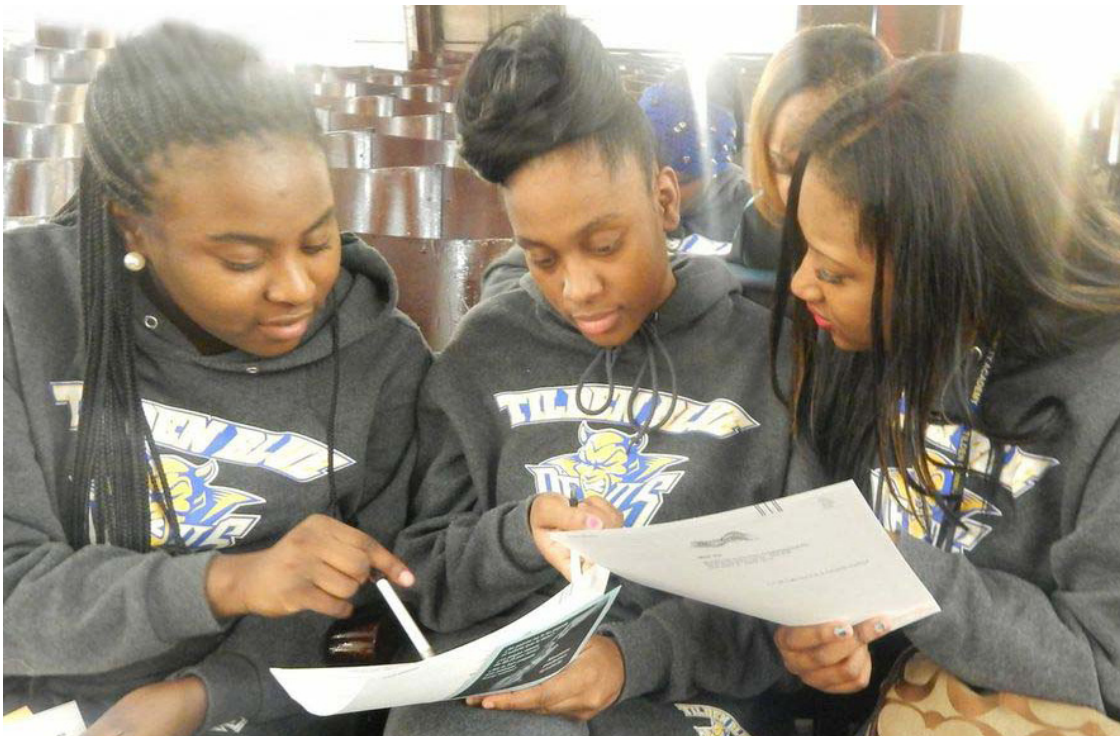


Photo credit: Tilden Tv & Radio

■ Use an expert produced curriculum

The response to the CRFC and Mikva Challenge produced curriculum and Rock the Vote's Democracy Class curriculum was overwhelmingly positive. These were both developed by experts in the field of education and civic engagement. We recommend that these materials be used in the future.

■ Get online

Almost every classroom had access to the internet, and many students have smart phones. We recommend creating and promoting a single website with a memorable URL to the students during and after registration activities will allow for ongoing engagement. Adding a mobile app, Facebook page, and twitter handle would

probably expand the reach even further as the students could interact with their friends about whether they had registered, get badges for checking their registration, and be sent push notifications reminding them of deadlines and election information.

We also recommend developing a separate intranet page for teaches to access information and contact details for participating civic organizations.

Though there will be online voter registration available in Illinois from July 2014, we do not recommend switching to online voter registration in classrooms because many students do not have a driver's license or state ID card (and one of these is required for online registration).



8

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RUNNING A DEMOCRACY WEEK IN A SCHOOL DISTRICT OR CITY

In addition to the recommendations in Part 7, we believe the following characteristics of our work helped to assure a positive outcome from the week and should be considered before other cities or towns run their own Democracy Weeks.

■ **Involve all the key players**

Our group started with the school district administrators, the relevant election authorities, community stakeholders, and an interested foundation involved from the beginning. This was a key to the week's success. Without the program being approved of, and promoted by the school district leaders, the program could not have been as wide ranging as it was. Without the election authorities, we could not have so quickly developed programs and messaging that explained the law clearly and simply. Without the civic groups we would have had no enthusiastic volunteers to make the program happen. Without the McCormick Foundation we could not have put on an information evening for an initial group of teachers, and ensured their buy-in from the start.

■ **Build on existing civic education infrastructure**

Chicago is lucky to have so many great groups that already promote civic education. Mikva Challenge, CRFC, and the McCormick Foundation already have strong ties to many teachers and schools in Chicago. All the organizations

were able to build on those relationships in developing their activities with the schools. For example, Mikva Challenge did not have to be at the 60+ schools that run Mikva programs, but all those schools were involved through the enthusiasm of the rest of the civic groups.

■ **Identify your target population**

Before Democracy Week, CPS was able to provide the election authority with the number of students that would be 18 by the date of the general election (though it did not have access to citizenship data). The over-inclusive list was utilized to determine how many voter registration forms and posters to supply to each school so we could ensure no one ran out of materials. Civic groups also used this information to help them target the schools with the largest amount of eligible students.

■ **Provide voter registration materials and a convenient return option**

The election authority supplied voter registration forms, promotional posters, and postage-paid mailing boxes to every school in the city. The civic groups and the school district provided the names of the teacher responsible for the program at each school. This meant that in the 3-4 weeks before the Democracy Week occurred, every teacher in city received all the materials they would need to register their students. The postage-paid mailing-box meant that at the end of the week the teachers could simply seal the box of completed voter registration forms and put it in the mail. There

175

The number of schools that CPS warehouse team delivered

30,000

voter registration forms to, between

2

 blizzards.

would be no extra cost to an enthusiastic teacher, and the election authority would get nicely ordered boxes of completed voter registrations correctly addressed to them in a timely manner.

■ **Allow Groups and schools to choose how they will be involved**

We decided early on that having central coordination whereby every school had to do the same series of activities would not be right for a school district with such a large diversity in the size and focus of schools. This turned out to be a fantastic decision. Each participating organization tailored their program around their available resources, but no two schools were exactly the same. This made it easier to plan (we simply had to be aware of what other groups and schools were doing, rather than work together on every step), and meant the programs offered were those that the people who know the students best (the teachers) chose.

Non-profit organizations are always subject to changes in funding, staffing, and new activities. Allowing these groups to determine their level of commitment as the project developed meant that no one had to over-promise and under-deliver, and those that could take on more than they originally expected could expand to help more schools.

Allowing flexibility with respect to programming over a one week period was helpful, but allowing teachers and civic groups to run activities in the 4-6 weeks before the deadline may expand the pool of teachers and organizations that can participate.

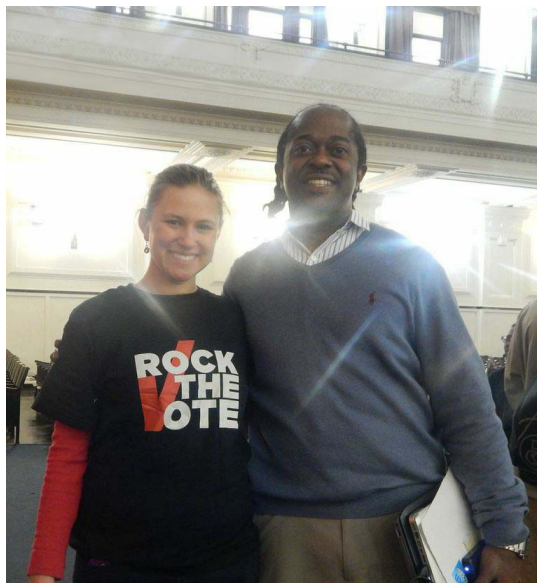


Photo credit: Tilden TV & Radio



9

CONCLUSION

Overall, Chicago Democracy Week was a big success. Through the hard work of the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners, the Cook County Clerk's office, Chicago Public Schools administrators and teachers, Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Chicago Votes, Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago, League of Women Voters of Chicago, Mikva Challenge, Rainbow PUSH Coalition, and Rock the Vote, over 5,000 high school students, including many thousands of 17 year olds, who were able to register and vote for the first time in an Illinois primary election. We were also able to close the gap between youth turnout and overall turnout in the Primary Election.

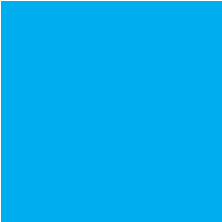
This report has shown that working together in a coordinated but flexible manner can ensure that each civic organization and teacher can bring their unique brand to the civic engagement process, while ensuring that similar outcomes are achieved across a school district or region. It has set out a number of best practices for future iterations of Chicago Democracy Week, and a series of recommendations that can be adopted by teachers, schools, school districts, or civic organizations across the United States to develop a similar program.

We hope the 17 year olds that we registered through Chicago Democracy enjoyed their first election and, having now voted early in their life, will continue to vote often in life.

“ THE CIVIC GROUPS THAT CONDUCTED VOTER REGISTRATION ACTIVITIES AT CPS HIGH SCHOOLS WERE ABLE TO REGISTER OVER 5,000 STUDENTS, AND 17-19 YEAR OLDS THAT REGISTERED AT SCHOOLS WITH AT LEAST ONE CDW ACTIVITY EXHIBITED A VOTER TURNOUT 2% HIGHER THAN THOSE WITHOUT ANY CDW ACTIVITIES. ”

ENDNOTES

- ⁱ Kevin Denny & Orla Doyle, *Does Voting History Matter? Analyzing Persistence in Turnout*, AM. J. POL. SCI., 53:1 (2009) 17. See also Alan S. Gerber, Donald P. Green, Ron Shachar, *Voting May be Habit Forming: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment*, AM. J. POL. SCI., 47(3) (2003) 540; Marc Meredith, *Persistence in Political Participation*, U. PENN WORKING PAPERS (2009), available at <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~marcmere/workingpapers/PersistenceParticipation.pdf>; Eric Plutzer, *Becoming a Habitual Voter: Inertia, Resources, and Growth in Young Adulthood*, AM. POL. SCI. REV., 90:1 (2002), 41.
- ⁱⁱ H.B. 226 of 2013, Public Act 98-0051, now codified in 10 ILL. COMP. STAT. 5/3-6.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Amanda Cox, *The Elusive Youth Vote*, THE NEW YORK TIMES, October 10, 2010. Available at http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/10/10/the-elusive-youth-vote/?_r=0. See also United States Census Bureau, *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2012 – Detailed Tables*, Table 1. Available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html> (18-34 year old registration rate: 60.63% vs. 35+ registration rate: 75.59%; 18-34 year old voting rate, as a percentage of citizen voting age population: 48.14% vs. 35+ voting rate, as a percentage of citizen voting age population: 67.48%).
- ^{iv} See pages 4-6 in this Report.
- ^v Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (hereafter “CIRCLE”), tabulations from: *United States Census Bureau, Voting and Registration Supplements, CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY NOVEMBER (1972-2012)*.
- ^{vi} H.B. 226, *supra* note ii.
- ^{vii} The section of the voter registration form that explains the voting qualifications was amended to: “Be at least 18 years old on or before the next election – except that for the March 2014 Primary, you may register and vote if you are 17 and will turn 18 on or before the Nov. 4, 2014 General Election.”
- ^{viii} H.B. 226 of 2013, Public Act 98-0051, now codified in 10 ILL. COMP. STAT. 5/3-6.
- ^{ix} CIRCLE, *supra* note v.
- ^x *Id.*
- ^{xi} CIRCLE, *supra* note v.
- ^{xii} NORMAN H. NIE, JANE JUNN, AND KENNETH STEHLIK-BARRY, *EDUCATION AND DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP IN AMERICA* (Chicago, 1996), 31.
- ^{xiii} CIRCLE, *supra* note v.
- ^{xiv} CIRCLE, *supra* note v.
- ^{xv} Peter Levine, Cynthia Gibson et al, *The Civic Mission of Schools*, CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK AND CIRCLE (February 2003). Available at <http://www.civicyouth.org/special-report-the-civic-mission-of-schools/>. See also, McCormick Foundation, *Creating A Civic Blueprint for Illinois High Schools*, MCCORMICK FOUNDATION CONFERENCE SERIES (2009) 7. Available at http://documents.mccormickfoundation.org/civics/programs/democracyschools/resources/EducatingforDemocracy_FINALWholeReport.pdf.
- ^{xvi} CIRCLE, *supra* note v.
- ^{xvii} PLUTZA, *supra* note i, 41.
- ^{xviii} Average voter registration 18 and older: 72.4%, average voter registration 18 and older family income under \$40,000: 66.1%; Average turnout 18 and older: 63.6%; average turnout 18 and older earning under \$40,000: 53.7%. United States Census Bureau, *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2012 – Detailed Tables*, Table 7. Available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html>.
- ^{xix} Average voter registration in 2012 18-24: 52.9%, average voter registration 18-24 family income under \$40,000: 47.4%; Average turnout 18-24: 41.2%; average turnout 18-24 family income under \$40,000: 34.9%. United States Census Bureau, *supra* note xviii.
- ^{xx} Chicago Public Schools, *Stats and Facts* (last updated August, 2012). Available at http://www.cps.edu/about_cps/at-a-glance/pages/stats_and_facts.aspx; and United States Census Bureau, *Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates* (undated). Available at: <http://www.census.gov/did/www/saiper/about/index.html>.

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- ^{xxi} United States Census Bureau, *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2010 – Detailed Tables*, Tables 2(2,4,6), 4b and 4c. Available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2010/tables.html>. See also United States Census Bureau, *supra* note xviii, Tables 2(1, 2,4,6), 4b and 4c.
- ^{xxii} McCormick Foundation, *supra* note xv, 23.
- ^{xxiii} CIRCLE, *That’s not Democracy: How Out-of-School Youth Engage in Civic Life & What Stands in Their Way* (Tufts University, August 2012), 48, citing SIDNEY VERBA, KAY LEHMAN SCHLOZMAN & HENRY BRADY, *VOICE AND EQUALITY: CIVIC VOLUNTARISM IN AMERICAN POLITICS* (Cambridge, MA, 1995).
- ^{xxiv} *Id.*, 14.
- ^{xxv} David W. Nickerson and Todd Rogers, *Do You Have a Voting Plan? Implementation Intentions, Voter Turnout, and Organic Plan Making* *PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE* (2010) 21:2, 194.
- ^{xxvi} *Id.* The results were only found when the calls or canvass stops to discuss making a plan were made in the days leading up to an election, so plan making weeks or months before an election may be less successful.
- ^{xxvii} Yale University Institute for Social and Policy Studies, *Lessons from Recent GOTV Experiments, GET OUT THE VOTE* (undated). Available at: <http://gotv.research.yale.edu/?q=node/10>.
- ^{xxviii} CIRCLE, *supra* note xxiii, 13 (“Youth turnout varies by election, but the gaps in turnout by educational experience are constant”).

APPENDIX:

Table of Public and Charter High Schools in Chicago attended by civic groups as part of Chicago Democracy Week and the types of Mikva Challenge programs offered at each (if any)

School	Organization Responsible for CDW Activities	Mikva Program already offered
Al Raby High School	CLC	ITA, PS, SJ
Albert G. Lane Technical High School	Rainbow PUSH	
Alcott High School for the Humanities	LWVChicago / Mikva Challenge	ITA, PS, EIA, SJ
Benito Juarez Community Academy High School	Chicago Votes	SJ, PS
Carl Schurz High School	CLC, Chicago Votes	SJ
Charles Allen Prosser Career Academy High School	LWVChicago	ITA, PS
Charles P. Steinmetz College Preparatory HS	LWVChicago, Chicago Votes	SJ, EIA
Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences	LWVChicago	
Chicago Talent Development	LWVChicago	
Chicago Virtual Charter School	Mikva Challenge	SJ, PS
Chicago Vocational Career Academy High School	CLC	SJ, ITA
Christian Fenger Academy High School	Mikva Challenge	PLC, SJ, PS
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. College Prep HS	CRFC	ITA
Edward Tilden Career Community Academy HS	CLC	PLC, SJ
Edwin G Foreman High School	CLC	ITA, PS
Eileen H. Richards Career Academy High School	Mikva Challenge	PLC, SJ
Emil G. Hirsch Metropolitan High School	CRFC	
EPIC Academy High School	Mikva Challenge	SJ
Frederick A. Douglass Academy High School	CLC	
Frederick W. von Steuben Metropolitan Science HS	LWVChicago	SJ
George Westinghouse College Prep	Mikva Challenge	ITA, PS, EIA, SJ
Gurdon S. Hubbard High School	Chicago Votes	SJ
Hyman G. Rickover Naval Academy High School	CRFC	SJ, ITA
John M. Harlan Community Academy High School	CRFC, Mikva Challenge	EIA, SJ
John Marshall Metropolitan High School	CLC, Rainbow PUSH	ITA

KEY FOR MIKVA PROGRAMS:

- PS = Project Soapbox
- SJ = Student Judges
- ITA = Issues to Action
- EIA = Elections in Action
- PLC = Peace and Leadership Councils

School	Organization Responsible for CDW Activities	Mikva Program already offered
Kelvyn Park High School	Chicago Votes	SJ
Lake View High School	Mikva Challenge	EIA, PS
Lincoln Park High School	LWVChicago, Rainbow PUSH,	PS, SJ
Marie Sklodowska Curie Metropolitan High School	Chicago Votes	SJ, PS, EIA, ITA
Neal F Simeon Career Academy High School	Beverly Civic Assoc., Rainbow PUSH	
Nicholas Senn High School	CRFC	
North Lawndale Charter HS - Christiana		PS, ITA, SJ
North Lawndale Charter HS - Collins	Mikva Challenge	EIA, ITA, SJ, PS
North-Grand High School	Mikva Challenge	SJ, ITA, PS
Northside College Preparatory High School	Mikva Challenge, Rainbow PUSH	SJ, EIA
Orr Academy High School	CLC	ITA, SJ
Percy L. Julian High School	Mikva Challenge, Rainbow PUSH	ITA, SJ, PS
Roald Amundsen High School	Juliet Birnbaum	EIA, SJ, PS
Robert Lindblom Math & Science Academy HS	CRFC	ITA, SJ
Roberto Clemente Community Academy High School	CLC	PLC, SJ, PS
Stephen T. Mather High School	LWVChicago, Chicago Votes	ITA, SJ
TEAM Englewood Community Academy High School	Mikva Challenge	ITA, SJ
Uplift Community High School	LWVChicago	ITA, PS, SJ
Urban Prep Academy for Young Men - Englewood	Mikva Challenge	EIA, SJ
Walter Payton College Preparatory High School	LWVChicago	SJ, PS
Wells Community Academy High School	CLC	PLC
Wendell Phillips Academy High School	CLC, Chiago Votes	EIA, SJ, PS, ITA
Whitney M. Young Magnet High School	Rainbow PUSH	
William Howard Taft High School	Mikva Challenge	SJ, EIA, PS, ITA
William J. Bogan High School	CLC, Chicago Votes	
William Jones College Preparatory High School	LWVChicago	

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