

THE URBAN AGENDA-CIVIC LITERACY PROJECT

and the

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF URBAN YOUTH

“promoting citizenship and inclusion in the school and the community”

draft report by Otto Feinstein
Detroit, 12 January 2000

Table of Contents

Part I: Executive Summary	2
The Youth Urban Agenda Project: What is it?	2
The Youth Urban Agenda Process: How is it done?	3
Recommendations for the Future	4
Part II: The Youth Urban Agenda Project	5
A Systems Approach to a Systems Problem	5
The critical role of the Michigan Department of Education Curriculum Framework	6
A Responsible Citizen	6
The Purpose of Social Studies	6
The Basic Elements – The skills to be learned	7
The Three Element System	9
The Training of Teachers, Facilitators and Resource People	10
The In-Class Activity	11
The Convention	11
The Support System	12
Web-site and Communications	12
Resource People	12
Use of the Media	13
Outreach: Michigan, National, International	13
Organization	13
Evaluation-Research	13
History – How we got here	14
The First Stage – Political Science 101 (1986-1998)	14
The Second Stage – middle schools, high schools, adult education (1994-present)	15
The October 1998 Convention	16
Resources	1
Desired Outcomes	17
Part III: Analysis-Recommendations	17
Impact on Inner-city Middle, High school and Adult education Students	18
The realities of the project	18
Recommendations	19
Expansion of the Project into 120 Southeast Michigan Schools	19
Disseminate Nationally (30 cities), internationally (30 cities)	19
Evaluation-Research on long-term effects on students and teachers	19
Part IV: Addendum	20

Part I: Executive Summary

The Executive Summary is divided into three parts: the issues which the Youth Urban Agenda addresses, how it functions and recommendations for the future.

The Youth Urban Agenda Project: What is it?

The Youth Urban Agenda Project is an active learning model and curriculum developed to help teachers and school organizations provide students with the necessary knowledge, skills and experiences to participate actively in civic life, to act within the constraints of democratic norms which are appropriate to the urban-metropolitan and multicultural reality in which the majority of Americans live, and to attain high standards of academic performance¹.

In this well recognized area of educational crisis the project has achieved some remarkable achievements. The responses below come from a survey taken of middle school, high school, adult education, and post-secondary students whose classes participated in the October 1998 Southeast Michigan Youth Urban Agenda Convention at Cobo Hall. Three thousand two hundred students from sixty schools attended this convention and participated in the educational process leading up to it².

Would you be willing to talk with other students about the problems and their solutions (the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Project)? **Yes-85% No-15%**

Would you be willing to contribute some of your time, money or skills in developing this proposed program (the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Project)? **Yes-78% No-22%**

Would you be willing to devote time to this project (the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Project) outside of school? **Yes-67% No-33%**

But, how does this project address the students otherwise alienated from the study of American government and American politics? Are they willing to continue participation in the project?

Degree of willingness to continue participation in the Youth Urban Agenda by students with a negative attitude to the study of American Government and of American politics: **Yes-77% No-23%**

These responses from average American students, to both participation in the democratic process and the learning of civics, social studies and communications, makes the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy project a major resource for dealing with one of the key problems confronting U.S. education.

“A rising number of surveys and political analyses suggest that democratic participation in the United States is declining. The attitudes emerging from many of the nation’s youth are particularly alarming: Young people feel increasingly powerless to change society and indifferent toward the “common good”. Since its inception in the United States, public education has been viewed as a cornerstone of democracy. But today the role of education in strengthening democracy can get lost in the school reform rhetoric. The education dialogue in Congress, state legislatures, school boards, and the media focuses on meeting the nation’s economic needs, while democratic needs often go unaddressed”.³

¹ See Charles Smith., December 1999, “Comprehensive Evaluation of the Youth Urban Agenda Project Part I: What Have We Learned from a Decade of Implementation?” Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Evaluation Report-Reading 6.

² See **Addenda I: COBO 1998 Schools and Convention Program.**

³ Erik W. Roberts, “Reengaging Young People” in **INFOBRIEF, an Information Brief of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development**, Issue 13, June 1998. Other recent documents identifying this educational crises include: National Association of Secretaries of State. *New Millenium Project – Phase I: A Nationwide Study of 15-24 Year Old Youth*, January 1999; Alvaro Cortes, unpublished masters thesis *Generation X or X Institutions: America’s Urban Youth and Political Particiaption*, Wayne State University: 1997; Sheila Mann “What the Survey of American College freshmen Tells Us About Their Interest in Politics and Political Science” *PS-Political Science and Politics*, Volume XXXII #2 p263-268; Harry Boyte and Elizabeth Hollander, *Wingspread Declaration Renewing the Civic Mission of the American Research University*, Council of Europe: 1999; Margaret S. Branson, *The Role of Civic Education*, National Task Force on Civic Education-Center for Civic Education:1998; Benjamin R. Barber in the foreword to Grant Reehar and Joseph Cammarano *Education for Citizenship: Ideas and Innovations in Political Learning*, Rowman and Littlefield: 1997.

Describing the fundamental ideas which shaped the development of the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Project since 1986, the core project staff identified **five** concepts about the intersection of educational organization, learning models and civic participation essential to the project:

- **Experiential Learning:** *civic experience is the best platform upon which to build retention and use of civic knowledge;*
- **Political Talk:** *talking is the first political act – the articulation of need and expression of reasoning behind the perceived need is the most basic form of political participation;*
- **Participatory Democracy:** *teaching democratic habits requires the experience of power without the simultaneous concentration of the authority to use that power;*
- **Urban Pluralism:** *a majority of young people are motivated to cross the economic, cultural and racial boundaries which divide metropolitan areas when provided with a psychologically secure environment in which to do so;*
- **Environment Building:** *the primary participatory problem in America is an institutional one – people lack environments in which to be active.*

These in turn lead to **five** project goals:

- *to support teachers and schools in the implementation of civics related active learning projects to serve as a foundation for academic growth and intellectual development;*
- *to provide an environment in which young adults can gain experiences and learn skills which are critical to participation in civic life;*
- *to foster the habit of participation in civic life which will extend into the future;*
- *to create opportunities for students to come together across the economic, racial and ethnic lines which sharply divide metropolitan America;*
- *to support teacher and schools in the creation of vibrant and sustainable educational communities.*

Two major developments have created a short-term window of opportunity for implementing the Youth Urban Agenda Project in Southeast Michigan and in other major U.S. urban areas. The **first** of these is the recent inclusion of civic literacy education into the mainstream assessment of education in Michigan schools and nationally. The **second** is the thirteen year experience of the Urban Agenda Project in developing curriculum and teaching methods for civic education-community service at Wayne State University, in Southeast Michigan school systems, in Michigan, and internationally.

The Youth Urban Agenda Process⁴: How is it done?

The Urban Agenda process starts with a teacher or a project facilitator posing five questions to a class for discussion:

- where do you want to be in five years ?
- where do you want your community to be in five years ?
- what kind of education do you need to get there ?
- what kind of urban agenda needs to be in place to get there ?
- what are you willing to do about it ?

Once the questions have been discussed the teacher starts the urban agenda process. The students in the class are divided into groups of five and, based on their own experience, asked to identify five issues they feel need to be on the youth urban agenda. They are informed that this process will lead to a regional youth urban agenda, requiring agreement within their own school and between participating schools.

When the small group agenda has been established the entire class is convened to integrate the agendas into a class agenda. In this context students research both the nature of the needs and nature of the responses the agenda will deal with. The next stage involves a meeting of all of the teacher's classes out of which a new agenda emerges. We now leave direct democracy and start the process of indirect democracy as all of the participating classes within the school send representatives to work out a common school agenda which then must be ratified by all of the participating students. The individual school agendas are then presented by elected representatives to the five partnering-schools participating in the cluster. The agenda prepared by

⁴ For a detailed description of the methodology and the theoretical framework of the Urban Agenda see D. Chesney and Otto Feinstein, *Building Civic Literacy and Citizen Power*, Prentice Hall: 1997;

these delegates is then brought to the five school cluster meeting of students from the participating classes to be integrated into a cluster youth urban agenda. The final stage is achieved when the delegates of all the participating clusters work out a common agenda presenting it to the Youth Urban Agenda Convention for debate, amendment and ratification. Resource people (elected officials, issue experts, community leaders) and facilitators are available to participating classes at all stages of the project.

To indicate the seriousness of the agenda process the students engage in a number of activities: voter registration, voting pledge cards, cable channel or radio candidate job interviews, and the submission of the agendas to elected bodies and community organizations for support resolutions. The students also develop community service projects on issues of their concern. By means of this process students communicate by computer and other means with the students in other schools – locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Efforts are also made for student/teacher exchanges.⁵

The project is structured around a *Three Element System*: of teacher training, in-class activity, and the agenda convention. Critical for the implementation of the project is the preparation of teachers, facilitators, resource people and organizers and a system of back-up services, materials, evaluation and communications. Our experience in these areas is explained in the report which follows.

The Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Project has been part of Wayne State University since 1986. It functions within the basic required course of Political Science 101 for undergraduate students and the training for Political Science graduate students⁶. Since 1992, as the Youth Urban Agenda, it has been an instructional unit in a significant number of middle schools, high schools, adult education and other post secondary institutions. Collaboration with the Detroit Public Schools and other school districts resulted from this work. In 1993 the post-secondary institutions in Southeast Michigan through the Southeast Michigan Education Television Consortium (SEMTEC) have collaborated with the project. It worked on the state level with the Michigan Campus Compact (housed at Michigan State University)⁷. In 1994 it became an element in the Urban Education Course at Wayne State University in the training of teachers. In 1998 and 1999 a summer teacher training institute on the Youth Urban Agenda - Civic Literacy was organized in collaboration with the Wayne County Regional Education Service Agency (Wayne RESA), the Wayne County Chief Executive Officer and the Wayne County Board of Commissioners. Out of this experience, a learner and teacher based curriculum and materials⁸ have emerged which deal with the **systems-problems**: motivation and learning, thought and action.

Recommendations for the Future

The need to involve younger people in the democratic process is now a well established area of major concern both in the U.S. and abroad. Dealing with this concern also has major implications for critical thinking, communications, calculations and thus the functional education of younger people. The experience of the Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Project and its ability to deal with these major concerns makes it an important resource locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

As a result of this need and our years of experience we propose three local, national and international steps for the dissemination of the model which would result in a locally-based, international telecommunications Youth Urban Agenda Convention in October 2000.

- expansion of the project into 120 Southeast Michigan schools by fall 2000, bringing 20,000 students to the **OCTOBER 2000** convention;
- linked nationally into the other 29 major urban areas of the U.S. and internationally to 30 major cities by means of the **OCTOBER 2000** convention;
- implementation of evaluation/research on the long term effects of the project on students, teachers, and the community.

The contacts and plans for such strategy have been developed and can be implemented for October 2000.

#####

⁵ The project also introduces students to the next level of education – high schools, colleges/ universities, and adult education. This makes the project a significant factor in increasing access to education and retention of students.

⁶ It was awarded the WSU President's Award (David Adamany) for educational service to the community.

⁷ In 1993 it won the Michigan Campus Compact Award for Community Service Learning from Michigan Governor Engler.

⁸ See **Addenda** for evaluation, published materials and key events.

Part II: The Youth Urban Agenda Project

The issues of school reform, violence in the schools, and the interest of students in civic participation are major areas of concern across the United States and in most other parts of the world. The Youth Urban Agenda Project is one means for addressing these concerns.

This section of the report, explaining the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Project, is divided into seven sections. The first, *A Systems Approach to a Systems Problem*, looks at the educational issues as a systems problem which requires a systems approach. The second, *The Critical Role of the Michigan Department of Education Curriculum Framework*, reviews key elements of the Michigan educational assessment process and the relevance of the Youth Urban Agenda Project to teachers implementing these policy decisions. The third, *The Basic Elements – The Skills to be Learned*, presents the key skills and concepts of the projects instructional approach. The fourth, *The Three Element System*, shows the inter-relation between the teacher training, the in-class, and the convention elements of the project. The fifth, *The Support System*, explains the back up-system which makes the project possible. The sixth, *History - How we got here*, uses a historical approach to review the project and how it was established. The seventh, *Desired Outcomes*, identifies the results of the project.

A Systems Approach to a Systems Problem

The Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy project has been functioning at Wayne State University with undergraduate American Government students, graduate Political Science students (teaching assistants) and graduate College of Education students since 1986. These students are, by and large, the product of the school systems of Southeast Michigan. In 1992 our work with students from middle schools, high schools, adult education and other post-secondary institutions began, becoming formalized in 1994. On the basis of this experience we see the problems related to civic and social science education as part of a systems problem on two levels. The **first** is the gap between motivation and learning. The **second** is the dissociation in the teaching of these subjects between thought and action. At both of these levels the **participation** of the students in the learning experience is critical and one of the essential features of any systems approach.

One of the key features, in the 220 schools we have visited and worked in⁹, is the common belief among the students at all levels that their opinion does not count and the absence of experience with institutions and organization through which they can learn the skills of civic participation. This combined with the disrepute of the political system and the political actors, results in a system of negative motivational parameters related to learning.

The second level of problems, the dissociation in teaching between thought and action, is apparent from two sets of extensive observations. In the study of textbooks used in middle school, high school, adult education and post secondary education one rarely finds the teaching of civic participatory skills. The same is true when looking at most lesson plans and teacher training programs.

The gap between motivation and learning and the dissociation in teaching between thought and action make up the **systems-problem** which must be addressed if the desired educational outcomes are to occur. The introduction of the social studies and civic assessment models into the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) and the development of the Civic Literacy-Urban Agenda in the middle schools, high schools, and adult education programs makes a **systems-solution** for this **systems problem** possible.

For the past ten years the American Political Science Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the Center for Civic Education¹⁰ have made a major effort at having the preparation of the young citizen for participation in our democratic society a part of the educational assessment process. This has now succeeded in Michigan and other parts of the United States. The guidelines and assessments have,

⁹ See **Addenda II: 220 Southeast Michigan Schools – Participation in Youth Urban Agenda events**.

¹⁰ See web-site <www.urbanagenda.wayne.edu> under Link to Other Sites, American Political Science Association, <www.ncsl.org> for the National Conference of State Legislatures and <www.civiced.org> for Center for Civic Education.

as of 1998, become part of MEAP at the state, county and school district levels. These assessments support teaching which addresses both elements of the **systems-problems**: motivation-learning and thought-action.

The Critical Role of the Michigan Department of Education Curriculum

Key to the timeliness of this report is that a **window of opportunity** for implementation of the Youth Urban Agenda, as a key element in the school curriculum, now exists. This is due to the national effort to use assessment as the tool for student/school evaluation and the promotion of educational reform. This process is well underway in Michigan.

The Urban Agenda, turned into lesson plans, is an ideal method for preparing the students for these exams, as well as for their role in public life. Below are direct quotes from Michigan Department of Education Curriculum Framework dealing with the social studies content and what should be taught. Both the knowledge and skills to be acquired directly deal with the needs of inner-city, middle and high school students. This statement has been integrated into the MEAP tests and thus into the evaluation of teaching, student and school performance at the county and school district levels. Similar conditions exist in many other states.

“The social studies curriculum should be designed so that students meet 25 standards that are indicators of responsible citizenship. These standards, expressed as attributes we envision for our graduates, are the intended results of students' experience with the curriculum. Students make continuous progress toward meeting the standards at each level of schooling. All of the standards are pursued at every grade level of the curriculum from kindergarten to graduation. Although the standards refer to areas of knowledge and skill that no one ever masters completely in a total sense, benchmarks are established for each to designate clearly what students are expected to know and be able to do by the end of the primary grades, the upper elementary grades, middle school and high school.”

“Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences to prepare young people to become responsible citizens. Responsible citizens display social understanding and civic efficacy. Social understanding is knowledge of social aspects of the human condition, how they have evolved over time, the variations that occur in differing physical environments and cultural settings, and the emerging trends that appear likely to shape the future. Civic efficacy is the readiness and willingness to assume citizenship responsibilities and to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a pluralistic, democratic society in an interdependent world.”

A Responsible Citizen

“uses knowledge of the past to construct meaningful understanding of our diverse cultural heritage and to inform her civic judgments (Historical Perspective);

“uses knowledge of spatial patterns on earth to understand processes that shape human environment to make decisions about society (Geographic Perspective);

“uses knowledge of American government and politics to make decisions about governing his community (Civic Perspective);

“use knowledge of the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services to make personal, career and societal decisions about the use of scarce resources (Economic Perspective);

“uses methods of social science investigation to answer questions about society (Inquiry); constructs and expresses thoughtful positions on public issues (Public Discourse and Decision Making); and, acts constructively to further the public good (Citizen Involvement).”

The Purpose of Social Studies

“To develop social understanding and civic efficacy, the social studies curriculum builds four capacities in young people: disciplinary knowledge, thinking skills, commitment to democratic values, and citizen participation. Each capacity contributes uniquely to responsible citizenship.”

“Disciplinary knowledge is used by students to construct meaning through understanding of powerful ideas drawn primarily from the disciplines of history, geography, American government, and economics. The meaning students construct shapes their perspective for understanding society and informs their judgments as citizens.”

“Thinking skills necessary for effective involvement in public life are practiced and improved within the social studies curriculum. Students use the methods of social science, aided by appropriate technologies, to gather, interpret, and analyze information. Their ability to engage in civic discourse is improved by using the skills of oral and written expression. They also learn to evaluate alternative views when making decisions, both individually and collectively, about matters of public concern.”

“Respect for the underlying values of a democratic society is developed through effective social studies education. As a result, students comprehend the ideals of democracy, cherish them, and strive to live their lives in accordance with them. A reasoned commitment to democratic values motivates citizens to safeguard their rights, to fulfill their responsibilities as citizens, and to honor the dignity of all people.”

“Citizen participation experiences stimulate interest in public affairs and strengthen competencies for self-government. Students are encouraged to inform themselves about public affairs and to become active participants in civic life rather than passive bystanders. They are urged to uphold the rule of law in their personal and social lives and to challenge wrongdoing. Efforts to advance their views about local, national, and international policy through political action are supported by the curriculum. Through service learning, the social studies curriculum equips students to improve their communities and to realize the civic virtue of serving.”

“Social studies education for responsible citizenship is a compelling priority if we expect to sustain our constitutional democracy. Young people must be educated to understand the complexities of human society and to govern themselves competently. It is upon these pillars that responsible citizenship rests.”¹¹

As the teachers involved in the Youth Urban Agenda prepare their students for the relevant MEAP exams use of this window of opportunity becomes self-evident.

The Basic Elements – the skills to be learned

The civic literacy youth urban agenda approach is developed in detail in James D. Chesney and Otto Feinstein, *Building Civic Literacy and Citizen Power*, Prentice-Hall: 1997. The three charts below present the essentials of the process and the specific skills to be learned.

TABLE 1	<u>The Basic Elements of Civic Literacy</u>	
	<u>Literacy Component</u>	<u>Civic Component</u>
		CITIZEN STRUCTURE
	THOUGHT	
	ACTION	

Table 1 demonstrates how the components of civic literacy are combined. The civic component consists of citizens and structure. **Citizens** are the fundamental building blocks for a democratic political system. **Structures** is the way in which those citizens are organized. The political structure determines how conflicts will be resolved and who will get what, when, where and how.

The literacy component consists of thought and action. In the case of reading for example, the activity of looking at the page is combined with trying to understand a message. Similarly, in politics, thought and action are combined. A well conceived political campaign is useless without a candidate running for office.

Table 2 shows what the components of civic literacy are and how they fit together. The four elements are opinions, knowledge, deliberation, and participation, concepts directly related to the critical work of Plato.

TABLE 2	<u>The Sub-Elements of Civic Literacy</u>	
	<u>Literacy Component</u>	<u>Civic Component</u>
		CITIZEN STRUCTURE
	THOUGHT	<i>opinions</i> <i>knowledge</i>
	ACTION	<i>deliberation</i> <i>participation</i>

¹¹ <http://cdp.mde.state.mi.us/MCF/ContentStandards/SocialStudies/vision.html>, MDE, CDP, Friday, June 12, 1998.

Key to understanding democratic politics is active learning. Table 3 illustrates how thought and action combine, first to form civic literacy skills, and then to allow citizen empowerment. The table by linking thinking and action skills, identifies twenty skills of civic literacy. Learning these skills and then being able to describe them in detail makes the learner conscious of having mastered them and of the concept of strategy in civic literacy and community service. By this combination both the training for citizenship and the motivation for the study of civics, social studies and communications are developed.

TABLE 3 Civic Literacy and Citizen Empowerment Skills				
<u>Action Skills</u>	<u>Thinking Skills</u>			
	<u>Awareness</u>	<u>Analysis</u>	<u>Priorities</u>	<u>Advocacy</u>
Communications	discussion	evaluation	agenda setting	argumentation
Mobilizing	reaching-out	debating	tactics	call to action
Coalition building	dialogue	strategy	bargaining	selling the idea
Organizing	goal setting	activity plan	assigning tasks	executing
Institutionalizing	stakeholder meeting	capacity assessment	long-range plan	getting sponsors

The 120 page book (*Building Civic Literacy and Citizen Power*) consists of the following chapters, each of which has a theoretical and activity section: The Concept of Civic Literacy, Agenda Building and Acceptance, Community Coalitions and Coalition Building, Voter Registration and Identification, Voter Education, Voter Mobilization, Public Accountability, Citizen Skills. The chapters are followed by sections on References, Models of Urban Agenda Conventions, and a listing of State Election Officials.

Table 4¹² presents the organizational structure which has emerged from implementing the Youth Urban Agenda in relation to the role of the students, the teachers, the support personnel and the in-class, out-of-class, and convention activities which will be described in greater detail in the next section of the report. This model addresses the key issues of “sites of citizenship. and civic responsibility”¹³

TABLE 4 Organizational In-put Out-put System				
Indirect Influences	Student Motivation			
Direct Influences				
Inputs	Teacher motivation, training & support	In-class implementation	Convention implementation	Agenda engagement
Objectives		KNOWLEDGE PARTICIPATION SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT METROPOLITAN ENVIRONMENT		Continuing commitment & participation in the agenda project
Outcomes				Empowerment Political activity Political impact
Relation of outcomes to real-life performances Needs for more authentic forms of assessment				

¹² Prepared by Charles D. Smith as part of his evaluation study of the Youth Urban Agenda.

¹³ See Harry Boyte and Elizabeth Hollander, *The Wingspread Declaration: Renewing the Civic Mission of the American University*, presented to the 1st European Group Meeting of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg: 17 September 1999.

The Organizational **In-put – Out-put** model presented in Table 4 indicates the organizational development of the **Project Activities** listed in Table 5 below and the educational processes leading to the listed **Project Outcomes**. Students, teachers, facilitators, resource persons and project staff are all direct and active participants in this curricular process.

TABLE 5 Civic Literacy Activities and Outcomes	
<u>Project Activities</u>	<u>Project Outcomes</u>
<p><u>In-class Academic</u> Needs-Demands-Response Model Core Democratic Norms (4 readings) Multicultural Environment Politics and Technology Research Skills</p> <p><u>In-class Active</u> Class agenda formation Group research Resource speakers Conflict Resolution Organization</p> <p><u>Convention</u> Plenary: Rules Small group discussions-issue Small group discussions-agenda building Plenary: Agenda adoption</p> <p><u>Agenda Engagement</u> Candidate Job Interviews Convention Outreach Support Resolutions Voter Registration + Pledge Voter Education Community Service</p>	<p><u>Knowledge</u> Interpretive frame for political history Governmental and political structures Citizenship skills Norms and values Inquiry skills</p> <p><u>Participation</u> Talk about politics and issues Individual and group coalition Voting activity Outreach Volunteerism</p> <p><u>School Environment Building</u> School (class, ethnic, gender) line crossing Empathy to different experience/need Parent/adult/community incorporation in school Group inclusion</p> <p><u>Metropolitan Environment Building</u> Tolerance Systemic interrelation between place+people Expansion of understanding of needs Knowledge of public-private-voluntary inst. Knowledge and access to educational inst. Knowledge of electoral system</p>

The activities listed above are made operational by the **Three Element System** making up the systems response to the systems problem of civic education.

The Three Element System

The history of the project at Wayne State University and its experience in reaching other school systems, in the context of the Michigan Social Studies Assessment and the Civic Literacy-Urban Agenda Approach, allows us to understand the three element system of the urban agenda as a **systems-response** to a **systems-problem**. The **systems problem** has two essential elements: **success in learning**-concepts, methods, information, behavior and critical thinking; and **in motivation**- self-esteem, knowledge of and respect for others, a vision of the systems and its options and related skills. Key to both is the active participation of the students and the teachers in the process.

The elements of the systems solution are the in-class activity on the urban agenda, knowledge of the multicultural environment, perception of norms and values in a technological-scientific world, and skills of conflict resolution. This implies prepared teachers, lesson plans, materials, evaluation procedures and a fairly efficient support organization. This system needs to operate at the class, school, school cluster, convention, national and international level. The three elements of the system are the Training of Teachers, Facilitators and Resource People, the In-Class Activity and Convention described below.

The Training of Teachers, Facilitators and Resource People

The first element of a systemic approach is the training of the participants: the teachers, facilitators and resource people. We are currently using four approaches. The first is the summer teacher training institute developed in collaboration with Wayne RESA which is basically addressed to teachers. The second is based on modules introduced into the Urban Education and into the Bi-Lingual Education classes in the College of Education. The third is a graduate/undergraduate course in Political Science that addresses the facilitators. The fourth are short, three-hour seminars for resource people. These are presented below.

The Summer Teacher Training Institute¹⁴ was held on June 23-25, 1998 with six 3 hour sessions from 9-12am and 1-4pm. Each of these three hours sessions consist of a 45 minute original presentation and questions; a 75 minute small group workshop; and a 60 minute report-back session. The six sessions dealt with the following:

Session 1: What is the Urban Agenda ? Process, Convention and Outcomes; Needs, Demands and Response;

Session 2: The Current Educational Environment, The State Curriculum Framework and the Lifelong Learning Concept; Using the Linkage

Session 3: Civic Literacy in A Multicultural Society, Dealing with the reality of diversity: American origins, US Constitution and the Present, Folkways, Geography and History

Session 4: Core Democratic Norms and Values in a Scientific Technological Society, how do you educate for rule by a real majority - The Four Cultures of Education, Education, examination of values & norms in a scientific technological society;

Session 5: Implementing the Urban Agenda - The Convention and the Process, the fall of 1998 experience – the importance of the event and of "follow-up" activities in class, in school, between schools, in the region, in the nation;

Session 6: Teacher and Student Skills for a Civic Society, small group discussions on skills, environments fall implementation; goals and a common strategy - Needs, Demands and Response mechanism; the Agenda.

The following **materials are distributed** to the participating teachers and their potential use explained: James D. Chesney and Otto Feinstein, *Building Civic Literacy and Citizen Power*, PrenticeHall: 1997; David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, Oxford University Press: 1989; Walter Leirman, *Four Cultures of Education*, Andrah Pradesh: 1993; Michigan Ethnic Directory (1998); Course Pack¹⁵ and evaluation instruments; and 4 one hour video collections.

The Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy module was introduced into the existing syllabus of four College of Education courses, two at the undergraduate and two at the graduate level, many of the students being actual or substitute teachers. The approach consists of four activities within the existing syllabus. The **first** element is a presentation of the urban agenda project by means of three lectures and videos dealing with the way the urban agenda works in the classroom and at the convention, including the making of the agenda, the Michigan Assessment, the issue of education in a multicultural society, and the role of norms and values in a technological scientific society. The basic reading materials are also distributed. The **second** activity is the assignment of the students either in pairs or as single facilitators into participating classrooms at the middle school, high school and adult education levels. The students evaluate and then discuss the experience. The **third activity** is their assignment as a facilitator at the Convention. This starts with a lecture on techniques of facilitation and evaluation of the results and participation on the day before the convention in its preparation and at the Convention. The **fourth** is the writing of an evaluation paper dealing with the impact on the students, the teachers and the facilitator. These are read by the professor and then discussed in class. About 200 education students became involved in this aspect every two semesters.

The Political Science undergraduate/graduate courses¹⁶ devote an entire semester to the study of the course readings and videos. It involves a major paper on one of the basic issues discussed. This is presented to the class as a whole and assists in the training to be a facilitator or resource person. The students visit

¹⁴ See Addenda III: Summer 1998 Teacher Training Institute Participation and Materials

¹⁵ With 21 basic urban agenda readings; with the Michigan Curriculum Framework; 3 readings related to Core Democratic Norms and Values; and 14 items for Implementation Strategies and Teaching Guides.

¹⁶ See Addenda IV: Youth Urban Agenda Political Science 101 - syllabi and readings.

participating schools at least two times and also function as facilitators at the convention. About 60 political science students became involved in this aspect every two semesters.

Each year the project organizes three hour seminars for the three types of resource people: elected officials on the local, county, state and federal levels; community leaders, and experts on issues which become agenda items. They are introduced to the project by means of a video and comments by faculty, teachers, administrators, students and already participating resource people. The role of resource people in the class room, listening to the students and then responding to their questions is presented as a demonstration. They are then asked how many times a semester they are able to visit classes and for a photo and paragraph to be included into the resource person brochure.¹⁷

The In-class Activity

The in-class activity is where the actual learning related to the Urban Agenda and the Michigan Curricular Framework takes place before, during and after the Convention. In preparing for the Convention the students develop a 10 point urban agenda in the context of the multicultural environment and recognition of the need for values and norms in a scientific and technological society. The individual teachers, based on their own style of teaching and what they have learned in our training institute construct their own lesson plans and the amount of time they wish to devote to this approach. While the project involves the development of civic literacy skills in the areas of thought and of action, it can be applied not only to the social studies, but the humanities and a wide range of other subject matters.

The Urban Agenda has been implemented in hundreds of classes, in most cases the teacher invites one or two of our facilitators into the class one to three times in order to facilitate the discussion and demonstrate to the students the outside interest in the project. The classes also have access to our resource person roster of elected officials, issue experts and community leaders and the video materials produced by the project. Part of the discussion involves a decision on strategy, which issues should be part of the classes and agenda and how should it be presented at the Convention. The class delegates to the pre-Convention draft agenda meeting bring feed-back from the other schools into these discussion. When the cluster model (relation between 4-6 schools) is used class representatives may visit classes in different schools. Deciding which issues need to be strongly supported at the Convention raises the question of which issues are important in which social settings and how the achieve a consensus among them. Once the issues are identified some form of research is instituted by the teachers on what is the nature of the issue and where it needs to be dealt with and then, what are the solutions being offered and what form of support do they require to be implemented. The Needs-Demands-Response Model is effectively taught in this context. At least one class session is held after the Convention to analyze what occurred and what needs to be done next. From these discussions and from questionnaires related to them, we find that students would be willing to spend both time and other resources after school on the project.¹⁸

The Convention

The Convention is the most visible element of the project both in the eyes of the participants and of the media. Its function is to provide the environment and procedure for shaping a Youth Urban Agenda. The basic structure of the Convention consists of four one hour sessions.

Session 1: is a one hour plenary session with students and teachers seated by class and school. The meeting starts with a welcome from the sponsors and a presentation, discussion and vote on the convention rules, which were presented and discussed in the schools before the convention. It is a lesson in democratic procedures and rules. Once this is done an Agenda resolution which emerged from meetings of class representatives is put-forward and seconded. Representatives of classes or schools give a short presentation of their agendas. Local guests state their support for the project and the session adjourns.

Session 2: are a series of one hour small discussion sessions on separate issues proposed for the agenda. They vary in size from 10-30 students and have a chair person and a secretary and if desired by the organizing students one or more resource persons knowledgeable about the issue. Student participants come from different classes and schools. At times we do not have issue meetings but have students meet on the agenda as a whole. The sessions with students from different schools are considered major strong points of the convention by both students and teachers. At the convention of 3,200 there were 160 such working

¹⁷ See Addenda V: Resource Persons and Related Forms.

¹⁸ See Addenda VI: Evaluation Report on Willingness to Continue Participation

groups, thus 160+ facilitators. Students from the discussion groups can be “lobbyists” for their agenda issues at the following two sessions.

Session 3: are also a series of one hour small discussions, but instead of being on an issue they are a meeting of the specific class from a specific school to decide how to vote on the agenda. The “lobbyists” can try to build issue coalitions at this time. At conventions where food is served this is also the best occasion for eating the food.

Session 4: is the final one hour plenary. The agenda items are moved and seconded, and placed in an order by the chair. Issues that have been on most class or school agendas are then discussed first (with limited time per speaker). The more controversial issues are discussed and voted on second. An issue which does not get a majority vote is still listed in the agenda report of the convention, thus giving recognition to minority opinions. Once the items have been voted on individually, the entire agenda is put up for a vote. Once this vote is taken, the students announce projects that they have undertaken, asking for more participants or group support. This opens the idea that voting is not the only form of action. When voter registration drives have been conducted, the registration forms are presented to County or City Clerks during the Convention. When this has been done, elected officials present their support to the students for the Convention and state their commitment to present it at the relevant elected bodies. We have also video taped and often carried the Convention live on a cable television system that reach multiple cable companies in the region. On a number of occasions we have used satellite to reach other cities and countries.

The convention process, its time limitations, the need to be able to negotiate agreements on controversial agenda items and to gain maximum support on the consensus issues is a learning experience based on reality, which is essential to understanding the democratic process. but which most social studies and civic students in the U.S. do not experience. Large numbers of issues are presented and then focused into a limited agenda which carries political weight. Given the training of the teachers and the time devoted in class the main problems for the convention are arrangements such as busses, food, substitute teachers for those attending the convention and large enough facilities for the convention. These have varied from 300 to 3,200 in size. Since 1986 we have held 32 such conventions, including “cluster conventions” bringing together smaller groups of students from 4 - 8 schools at the same educational levels.¹⁹

The Support System

The functioning of the three element system (Convention, In-Class and Training) has necessitated a support system, which is in the process of being constructed. The system is described below:

Web-site and Communications

Our web site <www.urbanagenda.wayne.edu> provides basic and up-dated information on the activities and strategy of the project, including access to other related web-sites. Our e-mail address is <O.Feinstein@wayne.edu> and we have extensive mailing lists and telephone trees since many teachers and students do not have access to computers. In the next few months we will develop chat rooms and computer based instruction for project implementation and research on agenda issues.²⁰

Resource People

We are in the process of publishing a roster (with photographs and a short resume) of 118 elected officials, issue experts and community leaders which will be distributed to participating teachers. It will also be sent to potential resource people, asking for their participation. The resource people are asked to visit the schools and the group meetings at the Conventions. It also serves as a means of informing the community of the project. We have had working relations with significant numbers of potential resource people through the American Assembly Interwoven Destinies (urban policy) project, The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments Adult Education Committee, the Michigan Ethnic Heritage Studies Center, the Communication Information System for the Unemployed, the New Detroit Inc Urban Interns Project, the Michigan Campus Compact, WSU’s College of Urban, Labor and Metropolitan Affairs and many educational and governmental bodies. These relations assure potential resource people of the seriousness of

¹⁹ See Addenda VII: Youth Urban Agenda Conventions and 1999 Cluster Convention

²⁰ See Addenda VIII: Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Web-site and its use.

the project. As the list of resource people increases a small staff will have to be secured for their effective placement into the schools.

Use of the Media

The media are being used in three ways: first to provide materials for use in the classes, secondly to put on cable systems for general information and for instruction of new teacher participants and thirdly to inform the public of the project. We have produced four 15 minute videos explaining the project from a middle school, high school, adult education, and post-secondary perspective. We have produced numerous Candidate Job Interviews, where students question candidates for office about the urban agenda. We have video-taped and broadcast many of the Urban Agenda Conventions, often with national and international satellite links. With UNESCO we produced a one hour video for the Vth World Convention on Adult Education on the ***Rebirth of a City: Detroit from Production to Communication/information Society*** with a statement by President Clinton. The Southeast Michigan Television Education Consortium with 15 post-secondary institutional members was one of the initial supporters of the project. We are currently producing six 15 minute video programs for our six part teacher training institute. Since many of the school districts have both production and video training facilities and cable outlets, we have started discussions with a few on how to integrate the Urban Agenda into their work.²¹

Outreach: Michigan, National and International

Our international outreach is organized in cooperation with the International Institute for the Education of Adults which also has access to teacher training institutions. They will devote a major session of the London annual meeting on July 3-7, 2000 to the development of collaborative projects on Civic Literacy and the Urban Agenda. On the national level we offered two short courses at the American Political Science Association in Atlanta on September 1, 1999. We are working with the National Association of County Commissioners and have commitments for the discussion of collaboration with county educational systems and other civic education groups. In Michigan we have worked with the Michigan Campus Compact (community service education), the Michigan Association for Adult and Continuing Education, Project Go Vote (with the Michigan State University Urban Extension Service) and Wayne RESA. We also have developed linkages with the University of Toronto and the University of Windsor involving student and teacher exchanges in relation to urban and ethnic issues.²² Students and teachers from the River Rouge School District organized a three week visit to schools in South Africa. Teachers from the Madison Heights School District will be teaching in Novosibirsk and visiting five schools in Romania in April 2000 in relation to an ongoing student/teacher computer exchange. At the same time students and teachers from the Academy of the Americas in the Detroit School District will be visiting schools in Honduras. Exchanges at the adult education and post-secondary levels with Slovenia, Toronto-Windsor and Hungary will occur in the Spring of 2000.

Organization-Administration

The current organizational structure consists of four instructional working groups (middle school, high school, adult education and post secondary), and seven support working groups (training institute, evaluation/research, web-site communications, media, resource people and outreach). These working groups are made up of volunteers. The size of the paid support staff varies greatly depending on the irregular funding of the project. We currently have two part-time staff members and two student interns.²³

Evaluation-Research

Extensive research-evaluation has been done in relation to the various aspects of the project. They are part of the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Archives²⁴. The impact of the project and of its specific activities on civic participation and community service on the part of the students is one major aspect of this evaluation-research. While we have been able to relate our evaluation and research to the literature and present it in journals and professional meetings, our very limited funding has not allowed us to follow the impacts on students, teachers, schools and communities over time, which is one of the two ultimate tests of the project. The second of these tests is the evaluation of the project on the motivation and learning of

²¹ See Addenda IX: Media Products and Use of Media

²² See Addenda X: International Links and Projects of the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy program.

²³ See Addenda XI: Organizational Chart of the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Project.

²⁴ See Addenda XII: Holdings of the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Archives.

civics, social studies, communications, and analytic skills. While we have done short-term studies, it is the ability to do long-term evaluations which is also necessary. One means of developing this kind of work is through our students who are doing masters and doctoral research. We have been limited in this approach by the fact that the work that has been done by the students has not had the financial support and been dependent on the students working at other full-time occupations while they completed their degrees.

The addenda section of this report presents a number of these findings and the publications used in our training institutions have made them available to participating teachers and educational institutions. One of the support units for the project is a group of experienced evaluation and research experts who meet on a regular basis, design some of the current research which is done and are developing a long-term research approach. Our web-site and chat-room will make this information and the research models easily available. The computer technology also makes possible the development of an urban issues and lesson plan site for the use of students and teachers in developing their urban agendas. Work on this aspect has also been started.

History - How we got here

The first stage in the development of the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Project was done at Wayne State University in its basic introduction to American Government course. Such courses exist in nearly all community colleges, colleges and universities in the United States.²⁵ The urban agenda or other forms of civic education thus have an existing instructional base. The second stage in the development of the project was a direct focus on working with middle schools, high schools, adult education programs and other post-secondary institutions. This stage first developed out of student contacts with their former high school teachers and their younger relatives. From this beginning it moved into entire school districts and teacher education institutions. In the community colleges and urban universities of the United States similar conditions exist, making the national dissemination of the project a realistic objective.

The First Stage - Political Science 101 (1986-1998)

The first stage of the Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Project was focused on undergraduate students, at Wayne State University (32,000 students), taking the required Introduction to American Government course²⁶, Political Science 101. About 3,000 students take this four credit hour course every year at this urban university with two hundred to four hundred students in each large lecture class. Over 90% of these students are not political science majors nor minors. In urban universities like Wayne State University, the students taking these courses come from or have direct contacts with nearly all ethnic, racial, social class groups and geographic regions in the urban area. Three to five teaching assistants are assigned to the senior professor teaching each of these courses, providing a key civic literacy experience to future political scientists. By decision of the Political Science Department the same textbook is used in all Political Science 101 courses.

Our approach to civic literacy in relation to these courses was to add two major elements to the course both at the level of readings/lectures and the learning of relevant skills. The **first** addition was the learning of civic literacy skills necessary for being an effective citizen. We called this the civic literacy element which involved the construction of an urban agenda, its dissemination in Southeast Michigan and establishing recognition for the agenda in elected decision making bodies by voter registration, voter education, candidate job interviews and community service activities dealing with agenda items. The **second** addition was the development of theoretical and analytic skills necessary for civic literacy²⁷. We called this the theory section. The traditional American Government text book and the related lectures and assignments made up the **third** portion of the course and is the standard approach of nearly all such courses in the United States. It deals with the origins and operations of the Constitution. The functioning of the three

²⁵ American Political Science Association, **Annual Report – 1999**.

²⁶ Nearly every post secondary institution in the United States (public or private, college, university or community colleges) offers such courses either as a requirement or a strongly recommended elective. There, thus, already exists a budget and trained faculty, working with a key sector of American society committed to the teaching of civic literacy across the United States.

²⁷ We used the **NDR** (Needs + Demands = Response) model for explaining both the political process and the initiation of policy making. The Urban Agenda and civic literacy become relevant to fully understanding the process and the role of the citizen. The readings for this section of the course are listed in the addenda.

sectors of government - the legislative, the administrative and the judiciary, the federal (national and state) system of American government and how this system deals with issues and develops policy. The student grades related to all three of the course portions varying from 75% to 50% for the text book based part of the course (a written exam) to 25% to 50% for the other two portions (written exams and other methods of knowledge/skill evaluation). The traditional course consisted of three lectures by the professor and one discussion section with the teaching assistants per week.

The urban agenda process and convention was initially explained at a large lecture session aided by the showing of a short video on how the process and convention worked. It was also explained in the syllabus distributed at the start of the semester. The civic literacy - urban agenda building process started in the discussion sections where groups of five were instructed to come up with a 5-10 point agenda based on each student's personal view on the importance of the issues and the groups strategy on how many issues and which issues they wanted to raise in a process of getting political results. Once this agenda was established in the small group, each group presented it to the relevant section (15-30 students) and then a common 5-10 point agenda would emerge. Students would then do four types of research: first, define the issue (the need) and why it needs to be addressed; second, analyze who else shares this need and how they can be reached; third, search out the solutions and governmental actions(policies) which would respond adequately to this need; fourth, develop a strategy for an agenda and potential allies for getting it addressed. Once this work is done in the sections, delegates from the sections are elected to develop a common agenda. This is then discussed in their sections and then at an Urban Agenda Convention²⁸ to which students from other classes and schools, family and friends and potential coalition partners are invited.

To develop credibility and support for the effort, the students engaged in the civic action part of the project. This consisted of individual and small group voter registration projects, which in one semester resulted in 15,000 newly registered voter. The registration of 5-10 new voters on a personal basis and large numbers, by means of voter registration drives at the University and in the community, functioned well within the student expectations for the course. Using cable television the students also developed a candidate job interview format where officials seeking office would be interviewed by students on their views of the urban agenda. Petitions on the agenda were delivered by students to elected bodies and elected officials. The students also organized public information campaigns on behalf of both their agenda and their participation in the political process. Community service projects, such as tutoring grade school, middle school and high school students; organizing a community urban agenda; providing volunteer time for community organization and agencies; were also organized by smaller groups of students. Surveys on some key issues and needs were part of this approach. In 1993 the Michigan Campus Compact awarded the project the Community Service-Learning Award and introduced the program to post-secondary institutions involved in community service education. These two sets of civic literacy activities brought students into contact with other sectors of the society and with other educational institutions²⁹, many of whom attended the Urban Agenda Conventions and/or watched our cable television productions.

The Second Stage - middle schools, high schools & adult education (1994 – present)

The second stage began on 15 January 1994 when 600 Wayne State University students, involved in the urban agenda gathered to commemorate the 50th birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. and the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The task which the students assigned to themselves was to agree to an activity appropriate to the occasion. At the end of the four hour meeting, the proposal which emerged was taking the Urban Agenda into Southeast Michigan middle schools, high schools, adult education programs and post-secondary institutions. The aim was to make the students civically conscious by means of the urban agenda, diversity conscious by understanding the multicultural reality of the environment in which the urban agenda would have to be dealt with, morally conscious by looking at the role of norms and values in a technological and scientific world, and skilled in resolving conflicts in non-violent ways at the personal, community and societal levels. The high point of this stage was on the 27th of October 1998 when 3,200 Southeast Michigan students and teachers convened in Cobo Hall for the Youth Urban Agenda Convention.

The 15th of January 1994 resulted in a community support committee chaired by the Honorable George Cushingberry Jr. (Wayne County Commissioner) involving non-Wayne State University people supportive

²⁸ See Addendum XIII: Agenda Convention Schedules.

²⁹ Locally, nationally and internationally at other post-secondary institutions and with their former high school and middle school teachers, as well as relatives and friends in elected positions or institutions/community organizations.

of bringing the project to other educational institutions. **Project Go Vote** was the result. It involved educational leaders, the county and city clerk, elected city council members and county commissioners, teachers, community and religious leaders, teachers and students. Richard Wooten of the Michigan State Detroit Extension Service played a major role in its organization.³⁰ We used local cable outlets for the Candidate Job Interview component of the Urban Agenda, interviewing primary candidates for both the U.S. Senate and the U.S. Presidency.

The dissemination of the model into the other educational structures in Southeast Michigan and its support by the Wayne County government suggested new steps towards the project's institutionalization. Negotiations with Wayne RESA (Regional Educational Service Agency) serving some 500,000 youth in both Wayne and other counties were started. In 1998 the Summer Institute for *Teaching Civic Literacy for Urban and Suburban Youth/Adults* (July 21-23, 1998) was organized by collaboration between Wayne RESA, Wayne County Government and Wayne State University. Teachers and facilitators were prepared for implementing the program in their classes and in organizing the October 27th, 1998 Cobo Hall Convention. With the successful completion of the Institute further collaborative arrangements were developed with Professor Rodolfo Martinez, Bi-Lingual Education at Wayne State University by which 200 education students were trained as facilitators and with the Detroit Public Schools helping with the organizational effort. On May 4th, 1999 we were asked to present the project at the National Town Meeting for a Sustainable America (organized by the White House)³¹ and on September 1st, 1999 at the meeting of the American Political Science Association³². On June 23-25 we held the Second Summer (1999) Training Institute for middle school, high school, adult education, and post-secondary institutions.

The October 1998 Cobo Convention

On October 27, 1998 three thousand two hundred (3,200) middle school, high school, adult education and post secondary students from 60 schools in Detroit, Wayne, Oakland and Macomb Counties met in convention at Cobo Hall to develop a Southeast Michigan Youth Urban Agenda.³³

The first hour plenary was opened by the Superintendent of Wayne RESA, Michael Flanagan, and the Superintendent of the Detroit Public Schools, Ed Green. The rules for the convention were presented and adopted. The students then proceeded to 160 small group workshops lead by College of Education and Political Science student volunteers. Each workshop had students from five different schools from across Southeast Michigan: middle schools with middle schools, high schools with high schools, and adult education with adult education. The students exchanged the urban agendas developed in their own classes in order to develop a common Southeast Michigan youth agenda. After one and a half-hours of discussion they returned to the plenary.

The second plenary, the last session of the Convention, began with comments from international guests, who had come to Detroit to develop collaborative projects with the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy effort: from South Africa and Siberia-Russia for the middle schools, from Slovenia with the high schools, and for adult education with various Universities and Colleges of Education from the International Institute. When these were finished, the process for presenting items for the agenda, discussing them and including them, began. Student representatives from the discussion groups presented their agendas to the entire plenary. Discussion followed and a resolution was presented calling for a Youth Urban Agenda for Southeast Michigan and a meeting in Spring 1999 (the following semester) to establish the specific agenda. Juan Martinez from the Detroit Board of Education, Ricardo Solomon chair of the Wayne County Commission, Willow Hagans representing the Wayne County CEO and George Cushingberry Jr from the National Association of County Commissioners congratulated the students. They committed themselves to having the agenda presented to various elected officials when it was completed. The meeting was adjourned. The students picked up their lunches and took their busses back home.

³⁰ Project Go Vote brought together previous organizational contacts with access to middle schools, high school, adult education and post-secondary institutions including, the To Educate the People Consortium, the Michigan Ethnic Heritage Studies Center, the Communication /Information system for the Unemployed, the Southeast Michigan Education TV Consortium, the American Assembly, the SEMCOG Adult Education Committee, the College Cable Channel and others. For more detail see **Addenda XIV: Project Go Vote.**

³¹ See **Addendum XV: Youth Urban Agenda Project at National Town Meeting for a Sustainable America (4 May 1999).**

³² See **Addenda XVI: American Political Science Association Meetings and Youth Urban Agenda Short Course**

³³ The number of participants was limited by the modest budget available for bus transportation and lunch. Given the number of teachers who had been trained in the Urban Agenda we estimate that we could have accommodated 20,000 students at that time.

Resources

At the present time we have written agreements with 30 middle schools and high schools³⁴ regarding their participation in the October 2000 events and the process leading to it. We are in operational contact with 15 adult education institutions and 15 post-secondary locations in Southeast Michigan. Teachers from these schools have gone through the training procedures. We have 118 resource persons, 30 project organizers and 50 project facilitators who have agreed to visit the active classes in these schools during the February-October 2000 period. We have a functional web-site www.urbaagenda.wayne.edu which on February 1, 2000 will have both a distance learning course for teachers and chat-room-bulletin board capacities. By March 1 we will have an information site on urban agenda issues, their nature and their proposed solutions. We have a wide range of written materials and videos which have been distributed to 75 local educational institutions and their libraries. In February we will recruit teachers from 60 additional educational institutions into our training program and sign agreements with their institutions. We have an operational back-up system, described above including an evaluation/research aspect. These resources in the context of our history allow us to implement our most important resource, the concept and operational model of the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Project.

Desired Outcomes

The **desired outcomes** of the Civic Literacy-Youth Urban Agenda Project at the present time are to fully operationalize the available resources and the structure described above, in order to demonstrate a successful response to the seven specific issues listed below:

1. encouraging young people to complete K-12 schooling and entering post-secondary education;
2. meeting-surpassing testing requirements - like the MEAP including social studies and civic education;
3. the skills for critical thinking and articulation;
4. development of self-esteem, commitment to the community and the ability to relate to others from different ethnic, racial, class groups;
5. the ability to participate in the decision making process in non-violent ways, the skills for participatory citizenship and community service;
6. the control of violence and knowledge of peaceful conflict resolution;
7. responsibility - individual and collective.

The national and international linkages we are developing allow both the dissemination of the project and the development of educational experiences for the students and teachers in Southeast Michigan to overcome the impact of “nobody cares what I think”.

Part III: Analysis – Recommendations

The evolution of the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Project and the most recent inclusion of civic literacy as an important part of the Michigan Education Assessment Program offer a unique opportunity for dealing with key education related needs of middle school, high school, adult education and post secondary students. While it is focused on one of two basic functions of our education system, the education of young citizens, it deals with both general educational and social needs - critical thinking and the ability to communicate with others.

The Urban Agenda activity is based on the asking of five questions, the effective ability to respond to which is at the core of this educational program:

where do I wish to be in five years
where do I wish my community to be in five years
what kind of education do I need to get there
what key issues (urban agenda) need to be addressed
what am I willing to do

³⁴ See Addenda XVII: School-Youth Urban Agenda Agreement (for October 2000).

Impact on Inner-city Middle, High school and Adult education Students

A major result of the project, felt directly by the students, is their ability to communicate with students from other ethnic-racial groups, social class, geographic location and educational expectations. They learn to identify their own needs and to express them to other students and to the political and community institutions. They learn to listen to other peoples needs and think about the possibility of collaboration in developing a common agenda, a common set of demands. Inherent in the construction of a common agenda and an effective strategy for obtaining a positive response is the process of critical thinking, which is key to the learning of all educational subjects.

Rabbi Hillel, one of the great Talmudic writers, who lived about 50 years before Jesus Christ, explained that human beings must address three basic questions:

“If I am not for myself - who will be ?”

This requires knowledge of one self and of the environment within which one is living. It is the basis of self-esteem and linkage with one’s own community. The small group and in-class activities of the urban agenda, directly address this need. If appropriately addressed, it creates a YES environment in the school and in the community.

“If I am but for myself - what am I ?”

This requires the knowledge that others exist and that they are part of our identity and of the universe in which we function and in which we are responded to. Communication, research, listening, empathizing are the relevant skills and addressed by cross school small group, cluster, and convention activities. It creates an operational knowledge of the larger environment and of various solutions to key needs.

“If not now - when ?”

This introduced the third element of a systemic approach the need for action and the awareness of timing. Presenting the agenda to elected officials, to community/institution leaders, to issue experts, to potential coalition partners and to the media is part of the process. As is work with family and neighbors, voter registration, voter education, candidate job interviews. These actions also provide a real feed back to the project participant.

This ancient insight is still true today and applicable to one’s own and to society’s ability to survive and to advance. It is inherent to the Urban Agenda approach.

the realities of the project

This report demonstrates the realities and potential of the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Project: the Convention, the In-Class activities, the preparation and delivery of curricula, the training of teachers, students, educational administrators and resource personnel. The preparation of educational institutions, of elected bodies and voters, and of communities across class, ethnic, racial, and geographic boundaries. The collaboration between the local and the international. These activities of the project and their evaluation demonstrate that the project deals directly with:

- the skills necessary to effectively participate in civil society
- the acquisition of knowledge in the social studies and of learning skills in general
- the impact on motivation and broader life and learning options
- relational and behavioral learning
- use of the heart and brain

By functioning on the individual, small group, class, school, inter-school, urban and international levels the program begins to answer the question central to democracy - do I matter.

Recommendations

Out of the experience presented in this report emerge three basic recommendations:

- expansion of the project into 120 Southeast Michigan schools by fall 2000;
- disseminate nationally (30 cities) with international links (10 cities) by fall 2000;
- evaluation/research on long term effects of the project on students and teachers.

Expansion of the project into 120 Southeast Michigan schools by fall 2000

During the summer of 1999 the project held training institutes for the implementation of the project with teachers from sixty (60) Southeast Michigan schools. Our goal is to have two to ten teachers from each school agreeing to implement the project in their classes in the start of 2000 and organizing cluster conventions. The model will vary according to the educational level where teachers may have the students for an entire year, a half-year, or even shorter terms

In the summer of 2000 we will again institute a training institute for an additional sixty (60) Southeast Michigan schools with the support of teachers currently involved and involved on the basis of the 1998 and 1999 institutes. Given this strategy and workshops in participating schools during the school year, we estimate the participation of 20,000 students in the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Convention and process in October 2000. The conventions will be connected by television and computer and linked to the national and international events. This would provide a significant reality-based response to the main civic literacy question asked by students at all levels of the educational system, "But, nobody cares what I think".

Disseminate nationally (30 cities) with international links (30 cities) by fall 2000

On September 1st, 1999 in Atlanta at the American Political Science Association meetings the project conducted two "short courses" : *Civic Literacy - WHY ?* and *Civic Literacy - HOW ?* . We contacted all the professional sections of the APSA, political science departments at urban universities and community colleges and other civic literacy/community service projects in the United States. We are recommending a double approach: a commitment of these institutions and organizations to participate in a civic literacy week in September or October of 2000 and/or the use of the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy model for the same time. As we receive responses from these educators we will use already agreed to contacts in bringing County educational agencies and County government into this process. We estimate that we will have a minimum 15 such contacts by March 2000 and 30 by May. Political scientists are interested in such phenomena for two reasons: first their concern for the civic literacy of our society and secondly their concern regarding the interest of young students in the field of political science.

In the early summer of 2000 we will offer an Institute for Post-Secondary Institutions - County Educational Agencies - County Elected Officials on implementation of the program in other urban areas. Earlier in the year we will make such presentations at the regional Political Science and national county education institutions and county commission meetings. We have made the initial contacts to make this possible. Out of these activities we will have Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy activities in twenty additional cities/counties for a total 30 by October 2000.

In April 2000 we will be meeting in Dubrovnik and Budapest with the key organizers of five international education networks represented in the International Institute for Practice, Policy and Research for the Education of Adults to confirm the international arrangements described in the report above. In December 1999 our organizer of the international linkages visited with these colleagues in Leiden, Leuven, Brussels, Leeds and London to prepare for these meetings which will assure the international participation in the project and in the October 2000 television satellite and computer convention. In July an international follow-up meeting will be held at the University of London where the research approach will be presented to international scholars and the details of October 2000 reviewed. Thirty international sites for October 2000 have been identified and will be linked to October 2000.

The activities in Southeast Michigan, in the 30 U.S. urban areas and the 30 international cities will be connected by means of satellite television in October 2000 as part of the global awareness which modern

civic literacy requires. We are familiar with the use of this technology and its use by multiple national and international sites. Efforts for student to student and school to school contacts with urban areas, within the U.S. and internationally by means of computer and where possible by student/teacher exchanges will be encouraged by the project.

Evaluation/research on long term effects of the project on students and teachers

The rigor and extent of our evaluation and research efforts are not only critical for our own successful operation of the project but also for its adoption by other institutions and in other regions. As indicated above and in the reports in the addenda we are committed to evaluation/research on the project as a whole and on specific aspects of the project. We will continue with these efforts. What is missing at this stage is a study of the long-term educational and civic participation aspects of the project both in Southeast Michigan and, as they develop in the national and international collaborative projects. We know from other studies that civic participation and use of education changes by the age and social condition of the participants. We know that institutions for civic participation and education differ greatly from region to region and over time. We know that social, economic, cultural and political conditions within which such interests and behavior occur also change. The success of this educational approach must be measured over the short run, but its real effects are in the long-run behavior of individuals and institutions. This would require the funding of a long term research project.

ADDENDUM

The following items are included in the Addendum to this report. They include most of the evaluation research studies we have completed and specific references regarding numbers of institutions, nature of meetings etc.

Addenda I:	COBO 1998 Schools and Convention Program.
Addenda II:	220 Southeast Michigan Schools – Participation in Youth Urban Agenda events.
Addenda III:	Summer 1998 Teacher Training Institute Participation and Materials
Addenda IV:	Youth Urban Agenda Political Science 101 syllabi and readings.
Addenda V:	Resource Persons and Related Forms.
Addenda VI:	Evaluation Report on Willingness to Continue Participation
Addenda VII:	Youth Urban Agenda Conventions and 1999 Cluster Convention
Addenda VIII:	Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Web-site and its use.
Addenda IX:	Media Products and Use of Media
Addenda X:	International Links and Projects of the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy program.
Addenda XI:	Organizational Chart of the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Project.
Addenda XII:	Holdings of the Youth Urban Agenda-Civic Literacy Archives
Addenda XIII:	Agenda Convention Schedules
Addenda XIV:	Project Go Vote
Addenda XV:	Youth Urban Agenda Project at National Town Meeting for a Sustainable America (4 May 1999).
Addenda XVI:	American Political Science Association Meetings and Youth Urban Agenda Short Course (Aug 1999).
Addenda XVII:	1999 Summer Training Institute
Addenda XVIII:	School-Youth Urban Agenda Agreement (for October 2000)