For Dewey, the school was to serve as a place where children implicitly learn the connections between the knowledge and skills they are gaining in the classroom and the contributions they could make with that knowledge and those skills to the social and civic life of the community. The goal of schooling, he wrote, "must be such as to enable the child to translate his powers over into terms of their social equivalencies; to see what they mean in terms of what they are accomplishing in social life.[9] There are already a growing number of teachers, policymakers, researchers, parents, and students who recognize that largely unfulfilled promise of a kind of schooling that embraces a democratic way of life as one of its core principles.

I have one final comment about the parable of the streetlight. Although, of course, shining a spotlight in an area where one did not lose one's keys will not uncover the missing keys, the effects are actually worse than not finding what one is looking for. When one area is illuminated, anything outside the circle of light is simultaneously darkened. If you have ever walked in the woods at night with a flashlight, you will remember your blindness to anything beyond the light. If the man and woman in the story shifted their gaze from beneath the streetlight to where the keys actually lay, they would likely be blinded (at first) in the newfound darkness; it would seem darker than if they had not been staring in the light for so long. It is the same with our spotlight on mathematics and literacy testing, on standardization of the curriculum and of teachers' practices. The first step to drawing attention to what could be discovered with a broader walk in the woods might be to dim the light that now shines so relentlessly bright.

What would it take for schools to prepare students for democratic citizenship? What vision of "good" citizenship can students pursue? In the following chapter, I explore school-based efforts that go beyond test preparation and standardized teaching in math and literacy to seek answers to these questions. The activities and programs I describe endeavor to tie the school curriculum to community goals in order to nurture citizenship skills and habits. As you will see, however, research that investigates these programs' accomplishments and shortcomings yields surprising results.

CHAPTER 5

What Kind of Citizen?

> Let no one attempt with small gifts of charity to exempt themselves from the great duties imposed by justice.
>
> —Pope Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*

Ask people of any nation if they think children should learn how to be good citizens and most will say, "Of course!" Ask them if teaching children to get involved in their community is a good idea, and, again, most will assure you that it is. But when the questions go deeper, the easy consensus starts to fray. Beyond the clichés, when educators wrestle with the details of what will actually be taught about civic values, civic participation, peace and war, nationhood and citizenship, global communities and global economies, polite conversation gives way to heated exchanges.

Even amidst our current educational preoccupation with the narrow curriculum goals that I described in the preceding chapters, many teachers, principals, parents, academics, and policymakers continue to champion school activities and programs that go beyond the three R's because they believe that teaching children good citizenship skills is important. Beyond classes in civics and government, you may recognize character education programs like 8 Keys of Excellence, Character Counts!, or Character First! (I don't know why so many character education program names end in an exclamation point!). Or you may know of service-learning programs that seek to connect academic work to community-based experiences. All of these are instances of educators caring about more than just test scores in reading and math.

On the one hand, I find it heartening that people are still talking about the importance of citizenship, particularly the values associated with community and participation. On the other hand, just because lots of people are talking about good citizenship doesn't mean they're

on the same page about what, exactly, schools should do. I've attended meetings—some with education scholars, others with school practitioners, and others with parents—where the head-nodding agreement on the importance of teaching good citizenship makes it seem like this is so clearly a universal goal that it barely needs to be discussed at all.

But when the discussions get more detailed—what should we actually do to teach good citizenship?—people's innermost values and beliefs about children and the future of society are brought to the surface. Teachers, administrators, parents, and policymakers hold an assortment of different and sometimes contradictory beliefs. It should not be surprising, then, that school programs that seek to teach good citizenship represent a similarly broad variety of goals and practices. Some programs are based on the belief that good citizens show up to work on time, follow the rules, and pay taxes. Others hope to teach students to be nice to their neighbors and to act decently to the people around them. A few programs seek to teach students to help shape social policy on behalf of those in need. Proponents of these programs want students to become aware of the difficulties involved in changing the circumstances that lead to rivers or parks being dirty or to individuals and families being hungry. When educators, policymakers, politicians, and community activists pursue democratic citizenship, they do so in many different ways and toward many different ends.

Students are no more in agreement on what good citizenship means than are adults. During focus-group interviews with students about what it means to be a good citizen, one offered, "Someone who's active and stands up for what they believe in. If they know that something's going on that is wrong, they go out and change it." But another student from a different school expressed the view that to be a good citizen, you need to "follow the rules, I guess . . . even though you want to break them sometimes," adding, after a small pause, ". . . like cattle."[1]

Rather than supporting the idea that schools should teach one kind of citizenship over another, you may believe that schools shouldn't be in the business of shaping beliefs and behaviors at all—that maybe the development of civil behavior or habits of civic participation should be left to parents, churches, or youth groups, and that teachers should stick to "the basics." But even if students studied only math and literacy all day long, citizenship lessons

> When educators, policymakers, politicians, and community activists pursue democratic citizenship, they do so in many different ways and toward many different ends.

would still be present. Students generally spend more hours in the company of teachers than parents, and schools are brimming with a "hidden curriculum" of behavior and norms of engagement.

We all were taught various lessons about citizenship in school, such as how to get along with others, how to fulfill our responsibilities in the classroom and the broader community, and how to avoid the kinds of nefarious activities that result in an unpleasant encounter with the school principal or vice principal. Schools are chock full of these kinds of *implicit* lessons about being a good citizen. Even without specific classes in citizenship, government, character, or life skills, how the classroom is organized, the architecture of the school, the daily schedule, as well as the procedures and rules all have embedded lessons about how one should best behave in order to be a good community member, classmate, student, and so on.

Although these implicit lessons in citizenship are important, I want to discuss some research on school programs that make *explicit* claims about teaching students how to be good citizens in democratic societies.

THREE KINDS OF CITIZENS

My longtime colleague Joe Kahne and I spent the better part of a decade studying a broad variety of programs that aimed to develop good citizenship skills among youth and young adults. Many of these programs were very explicit about the specific needs of citizens in democratic societies, and so we began to talk openly about the needs of *democratic* citizens. Over the years, we've written a number of articles about those studies, and parts of this chapter and the two following chapters are adapted from work we co-authored. Many of these articles are available online if you're interested in the detailed (and sometimes technical) research.[2] In study after study, we came to similar conclusions: The kinds of goals and practices commonly represented in school programs that hope to foster good democratic citizenship usually have more to do with voluntarism, charity, and obedience than with democracy. In other words, "good citizenship" to many educators means listening to authority figures, dressing neatly, being nice to neighbors, and helping out at a soup kitchen—not grappling with the kinds of social policy decisions that every citizen in a democratic society needs to learn how to do.

From our studies and with the help of teachers and program leaders, we identified three visions of "good" citizens that help capture the lay of the land when it comes to citizenship education: the Personally Responsible Citizen; the Participatory Citizen; and the Social-Justice Oriented Citizen.[3] These ideas about good citizenship are like three different answers to this question: *What kind of citizen do we need to support an effective democratic society?* In mapping the terrain that surrounds answers to this question, we found that these visions of citizenship were particularly helpful in making sense of the different programs we studied. As Table 5.1 illustrates, they can serve as a helpful guide to uncovering the variety of assumptions that fall under the idea of citizenship education.

Each vision of citizenship reflects a distinct set of goals. They are not cumulative. Programs that promote social justice–oriented citizens do not necessarily promote personal responsibility and participatory citizenship, although a given program might simultaneously further more than one of these sets of priorities. For instance, while a curriculum designed principally to promote personally responsible citizens will generally look quite different than one that focuses primarily on developing capacities and commitments for participatory citizenship, it is possible for a given curriculum to further both goals. Although such overlap may occur, drawing attention to the distinctions between these visions of citizenship is important. It highlights the value of examining the underlying goals and assumptions that drive different educational programs and that, ultimately, represent different visions of the "good" citizen.

The Personally Responsible Citizen

The personally responsible citizen acts responsibly in his or her community by picking up litter, giving blood, recycling, and staying out of debt. Personally responsible citizens pay taxes, obey laws, and help those in need during crises such as snowstorms or floods. They might contribute to charitable causes such as a food or clothing drive and volunteer to help those less fortunate, whether in a soup kitchen or a senior center. Both those in the character education movement and many of those who advocate community service would emphasize this vision of good citizenship. Programs that seek to develop personally responsible citizens hope to build character and personal responsibility by emphasizing honesty, integrity, self-discipline, and hard work.[4] The Character Counts! Coalition, for example, advocates teaching

Table 5.1. Kinds of Citizens

	Personally Responsible Citizen	Participatory Citizen	Social Justice–Oriented Citizen
Description	Acts responsibly in the community	Active member of community organizations and/or improvement efforts	Critically assesses social, political, and economic structures
	Works and pays taxes Picks up litter, recycles, and gives blood	Organizes community efforts to care for those in need, promote economic development, or clean up environment	Explores strategies for change that address root causes of problems
	Helps those in need, lends a hand during times of crisis	Knows how government agencies work	Knows about social movements and how to effect systemic change
	Obeys laws	Knows strategies for accomplishing collective tasks	Seeks out and addresses areas of injustice
Sample action	Contributes food to a food drive	Helps to organize a food drive	Explores why people are hungry and acts to solve root causes
Core assumptions	To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must have good character; they must be honest, responsible, and law-abiding members of the community	To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must actively participate and take leadership positions within established systems and community structures	To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must question and change established systems and structures when they reproduce patterns of injustice over time

Source: Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2004). What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. *American Educational Research Journal, 41*(2), 237–269.

students to "treat others with respect . . . deal peacefully with anger . . . be considerate of the feelings of others . . . follow the Golden Rule . . . use good manners" and so on. They want students not to "threaten, hit, or hurt anyone [or use] bad language."[5] Other programs that seek

to develop personally responsible citizens hope to nurture compassion by engaging students in volunteer activities. As illustrated in the mission of the Points of Light Foundation, these programs hope to "help solve serious social problems" by "engag[ing] more people more effectively in volunteer service."[6]

The Participatory Citizen

Participatory citizens actively participate in the civic affairs and the social life of the community at local, state, and national levels. Advocates of this vision emphasize preparing students to engage in collective, community-based efforts. Educational programs designed to support the development of participatory citizens focus on teaching students about how government and other institutions (such as community-based organizations and churches) work and about the importance of planning and participating in organized efforts to care for those in need, for example, or in efforts to guide school policies. Skills associated with these collective endeavors–such as how to run a meeting–are also seen as important since collective community work helps to build relationships, common understandings, and trust.[7] While the personally responsible citizen would contribute cans of food for the poor, the participatory citizen might organize the food drive.

The Social Justice–Oriented Citizen

A third image of a good citizen, and perhaps the perspective that is least commonly pursued, is of individuals who know how to critically assess multiple perspectives. They are able to examine social, political, and economic structures and explore strategies for change that address root causes of problems. We called this kind of citizen the Social Justice–Oriented Citizen because the programs fostering such citizenship emphasize the need for citizens to be able to think about issues of fairness, equality of opportunity, and democratic engagement. The justice-oriented citizen shares with the participatory citizen an emphasis on collective work related to the life and issues of the community. But justice-oriented programs give priority to enabling students to be thoughtfully informed about a variety of complex social issues, think independently, and look for ways to improve society. These programs are less likely to emphasize the need for charity and volunteerism as ends in themselves, and more likely to teach about

ways to effect systemic change. If *Participatory Citizens* organize the food drive and *Personally Responsible Citizens* donate food, the *Social Justice–Oriented Citizens*—some might also call them critical thinkers—ask why people are hungry, then act on what they discover.

If *Participatory Citizens* organize the food drive and *Personally Responsible Citizens* donate food, the *Social Justice–Oriented Citizens*—some might also call them critical thinkers—ask why people are hungry, then act on what they discover.

AN INTERLUDE FOR REFLECTION

I hope at this point in the book the description of the three kinds of citizens offers a way to look at programs with which you might be familiar. Consider these activities:

- If you work in a service-learning program or a character-education program, teach a civics class, or facilitate community-service activities, try discussing the kinds of goals represented by the three visions of the "good" citizen" with your colleagues. Do you or your colleagues emphasize one or more of these kinds of goals?
- If you are a school administrator or a policymaker, think about whether school or districtwide policies enable or constrain particular visions of citizenship or favor some goals over others.
- If you are a prospective teacher or a student, reflect on some of your own educational experiences. Were you or are you being taught to be the kind of citizen that is personally responsible, participates, and/or thinks critically about root causes of problems and their solutions?
- If you are a parent or an interested community member and you imagine your ideal society, what kinds of citizens would populate its towns and cities?

THE MANY FACES OF "GOOD" CITIZENSHIP

Philosophers, historians, and political scientists have long debated which conceptions of citizenship would best advance democracy.[8] In

large part, this diversity of perspectives occurs because the stakes are so high. Having an opinion on what makes a "good citizen" is really another way of conveying one's idea about what makes a good society. If we gathered 10 people right now and sat down over dinner to discuss what schools should teach about being a good citizen, we would find points of agreement, certainly, but also many points of contention. Even if we confined our conversation to ideas about good *democratic* citizens, we would have quite a lot of variation. For some of our imaginary guests at our imaginary party, a commitment to democracy might be synonymous with a promise to protect freedoms, while for others democracy might be primarily about equality or equality of opportunity. To some, civil society is the key, while to others, free markets are the great hope for a democratic society. To some, good citizens in a democracy volunteer, while to others they take active parts in political processes by voting, protesting, and working on political campaigns.

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These disputes are not new. In the 1920s and 1930s, ideas about democratic education rooted in commitments to improving society through collective action achieved a wide hearing among educators. Known as "social reconstructionists," these reformers emphasized teaching students to be active participants in a democratic civic community, able to envision, articulate, and act on conceptions of a better world.

Harold Rugg, for example, focused on critical analysis of major social issues and institutions. He wanted students to examine "Problems of the 'market' and its historical development," "How the press developed its influence at various times in our growth," and "The history of labor problems; movements for the increase of cooperation between capital and labor; problems of wages, hours, living conditions."[9] Rugg developed a series of textbooks and learning materials that sold more than 1 million copies during the 1930s. The goal of this series, and of the social reconstructionists more generally, was to engage students in the analysis of major institutions and social issues so that social problems, causes, and ways to respond could be identified. The Rugg series of textbooks sold well until the start of World War II when nationalist sentiments made critiques of American society unpopular. Rugg's texts became a lightning rod for the rising anticommunist

power in politics.[10] Some of today's programs that embrace the kind of social-justice vision of citizenship I described above would have likely been welcomed by Rugg and his colleagues.[11]

Other progressive-era curriculum theorists and educational reformers were attracted to experience-based approaches that emphasized projects tied to social needs. Like Rugg and his colleagues, they wanted schools to teach a kind of social justice–oriented citizenship that included critical analysis. But they emphasized the role of participation in actual experiences. "As the purposeful act is thus the typical unit of the worthy life in a democratic society," wrote William Kilpatrick in 1918, "so also should it be made the typical unit of school procedure."[12] These educators believed that experiential activities could awaken students' political and social conscience. They wanted to create "miniature communities" through which students learned the value of working together in order to identify and respond to problems that they confronted.[13] They believed in a blend of both participatory and social justice–oriented citizenship.

This focus on communal undertakings tied to social needs led many progressive-era educators to promote what they called the "core curriculum."[14] The "core" was designed to place multidisciplinary analysis and action regarding social problems and themes from social life at the heart of students' school experience. Students in some schools that adopted the core curriculum spent between 2 and 3 hours a day in core classes initiating projects where they examined and responded to major issues facing both individuals and their community. For instance, they studied and initiated programs of environmental improvement; did work with the elderly, orphans, and infants; and examined safety issues in the home and community.[15]

Of course, personally responsible citizenship is not a new idea either. Bill Bennett, former secretary of education under Ronald Reagan, once wrote that "a democracy depends on schools that help to foster a kind of character which respects the law and . . . respects the value of the individual."[16] History is also full of examples of school programs that sought to teach children individual reliance, character, and respect for the law. These programs tend to be more interested in preserving social traditions than in changing them. In the next chapter I will examine personally responsible citizenship programs more closely.