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Testimony
of

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Myron E. Yoder, M.Ed

March 13, 2009

Testifying As An Individual
Before a Hearing of the
Pennsylvania State Board of Education

Philadelphia, PA

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"A teacher who can arouse a feeling for one single good action...accomplishes more than he who fills our memory with rows on rows of natural objects, classified with name and form."

-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, German poet and dramatist

Good morning, my name is Myron E. Yoder, a product of the education system of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania including higher education. I am a 33 year educator and curriculum coordinator in the Allentown School District and an Adjunct Professor of Education teaching the occasional Social Studies Methods class at local colleges and/or universities. I was a 1995 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year Finalist and currently lead the SVPDP, School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program in Allentown which is a civics based program that just recently earned Judge Marjorie Rendell and PennCORD Compass Award. I am testifying to you as an individual and professional social studies educator.

Graduation Competency Assessments

I came from business origins. Before I became a teacher I worked ride repair at an amusement park, at the postal service, at a textile mill as an inspector, in a prison as a guard, counselor and an administrator, and as an assistant plant manager at a hospital laundry. As a teacher, I taught American Government, History, Economics and Criminal and Civil Justice.

I understand the demand from business for our schools. We have all heard it. The workers we need today must be skilled in working in teams and in their teams they must be social and be able to use cross-cultural skills. They must be able to think critically and be able to solve problems. They must be self-directed, creative, and innovative. They must be able to use information, media and technology. They must lead and be responsible.

The demand continues, usually with a field of dreams approach. It goes something like this: If we create a uniform diploma based on content tests in every subject area then they will achieve skills necessary for work if they only pass a few of them. In plain words, if we have every one

do an assembly line education based on uniform coursework, pacing and content generated tests, usually 60 questions, with a pseudo performance task based on a prompt and a written uniform response, then they will become great workers. Plus with content testing in Civics, World and US History they will magically learn Geography and crucial to today's work place, Economics. Do you really believe this? Do you really believe that the way out of an industrial assembly line education is to continue an assembly line education that is even more assembly line oriented? ~~That a few~~ questions on economics will lead to improved student learning in consumerism, macro and micro economics. While cost effective it does not meet the needs of our businesses, our colleges and our students.

To the business leaders here today, let me have you ponder the following thoughts.

Would you want students coming to you who have taken an American Government test that covers 60 questions in government and an open ended prompt to which they respond with a 5 paragraph persuasive, narrative or informational essay? Or, would you prefer that during their class they examine community problems and public policy issues, look at alternative solutions to the problem, propose a public policy solution to the problem and put together an action plan to implement their policy and influence policy makers. Then as a class they present their idea in smaller cooperative groups and attempt to get their policy passed. Who do you want and which meets the Learning for the 21st Century skills?

If you want the latter, and Graduation Competency Content Based Tests become the mainstay of Social Studies you will find schools will no longer be able to do this kind of activity with their students. Why? Because they have a paper and pencil test to pass that covers a broad spectrum and instructional time will be dedicated to cramming facts, dates and definitions into the brains of our students. Who cares about meaning and participation, the correct bubble will rule. Courses will become Trivial Pursuit games for graduation.

not active
project based learning →
I welcome assessment--don't get me wrong--but not this type of assessment in social studies. Social Studies is a core area where we should use skills in practical applications. We are a perfect place to bring the skills of reading, writing, math, science and the other related arts together and produce a participatory product that demonstrates learning and understanding. Social Studies is where students can work together in authentic performance based assessments that engage them in becoming participatory and responsible citizens. We are a place where students get to "DO" activities for learning and understanding. Give us a content generated test and this part of social studies becomes lost. So how should we be tested and how can we hold school districts accountable?

I would propose using a school districts strategic plan and require districts to have a final assessment component in all social studies courses where students must demonstrate active learning through a performance based, individual or group participatory showcase event that demonstrates learning and understanding. Then require districts to annually publish a schedule of showcase events for community and parents to observe the student performances.

There are plenty of national models to use in creating these performance based events. For example, the We the People Mock Congressional Hearings, Project Citizen Portfolios, Mock

Trials, National History Day, Stock Market Game, Business Plan Project, Let's Get Real and so on. It is also interesting in that many of these are supported by the PA Department of Education and even by the PA Board of Education through your support of PennCORD or other organizations. Further, many of these activities are also competitive and thus can foster the competition that business craves. Sounds like a graduation project, sure, but why only one project? Let the graduation project stand as a means for individual depth of research and let the rest of the projects become the norm of education and not the exception or rare event.

The promise of a new series of tests to respond to uniformity in graduation will actually lower the quality of our students at graduation for both college and work. What is the result if we go to a paper and pencil type test in Social Studies for Graduation Competencies? We will end up eliminating all the performance based activity we now do and want to do more of and leave it behind to focus in on a capsule sense of history based on bubbles and prompts. You will lose that which you are trying to gain in your actions under SAS, in your actions under professional development and your initiatives for active student learning. All that will be replaced with a frantic drive to get students to correctly identify a trivial answer on a test of significance for the time it was taken and not for understanding life or their world to come.

What do you remember from high school? Think about it. My guess if you remember anything it is because it was something you did and not a test you took. You remember your performance activities and how to do something. You remembered how to learn something even though you forget what it was you learned. You really remember your mistakes both academic and social.

I remember a series of science tests in college nonetheless. I remember passing the course with I believe a B, could have been an A and I don't even recall the name of the course or the science area. I knew the answers to all the bubbles and could regurgitate the prompts responses and to this day I have no idea what I learned and have no understanding what it was that I was taking. I was efficient in taking that test and I have no understanding of what I learned.

Education has become cruel to our children. The poorer you are as a person, or as a district, the crueler the result. This is where our students are currently going with the test mayhem underway. You are not leading us to build understanding; you are building a game show mentality. For 33 years I have heard how educators have "Dummied" down the curriculum and yet now in the past decade I have seen laws and regulations that boast a reform to education to make things more rigorous only to see that the real dummied down of the curriculum has come from the very laws and regulations that tout change for the better. I saw rigor give way to students huddled over their desk preparing for tests while active learning beats a retreat and perhaps extinction. All in the name of rigor. Perhaps what was meant by the type of testing being proposed is not rigor but rigor mortis.

Rigor at its extreme is perhaps the antithesis of creativity, innovation, critical thinking and problem solving -- all of which our businesses are asking for as part of our students' education. Finding a balance is the key to creating a system of education responsive to our students and their learning to become citizens, workers and life long learners. We are now at a threshold where we will kill the student performance activity further and actually work even further apart

from what business wants and what as educators we want for our students, the part of learning that is fun, meaningful, memorable and leads to understanding.

I ask that you not abuse our children further with more tests of the same form and design but that you add active participatory performance based assessments that are refreshing, meaningful and will do more for what our children need in education. Do not further take away the true meaning of education -- that of doing -- and replace it with facts upon facts. Please consider a means to hold districts accountable to their students by requirement of performance based assessments as a measure of Social Studies Course work and the opportunity for the businesses, community and parents to observe these performances regularly.

Allow me to continue to build that one good swift action of learning that provides understanding for our students. For the sake of our students and their future please do not implement these tests in the nature and design you propose. Keep Social Studies in the active realm of learning and do not turn us into a game show for factual trivia.

I remember the story of an event at the Lincoln Tunnel. I don't know if it is true. Even if it is not, we all have stories of a similar nature. The story goes like this. A truck approaches the tunnel and gets stuck. It turns out the truck is slightly taller than the entrance. It is stuck hard enough that it can't back out or move forward without further damage to the truck and more important, damage to the tunnel. Traffic is backing up and the fire, police and tunnel engineers are mulling over what to do. This goes on for some time, manuals are consulted, physics textbooks are consulted, and numbers and data are crunched for possible solutions. While all this is going on, a car about to enter one of the other tunnels rolls down its window and yells out. Just let the air out of the tires. With light bulbs going off in the brains of all in attendance, they do just that and back the truck out.

As many of those I worked on the line in businesses would say, "they are textbook smart and common sense stupid".

I ask for the continued opportunity to train creative, innovative, critical thinkers and problem solvers who can yell out a car window a solution to a complex problem.

If you wish, I have some student work samples of the type of assessment activities I am talking about and can share with you. This can be found in the addenda of the written testimony I submitted. I also have some audio examples however they are not part of the addenda and if interested I can play them for you.

Thank you for your time and attention, I will answer any questions you might have to the best of my ability.

Respectfully submitted,
Myron E. Yoder, M.Ed.

Addenda

Addenda 1 Assessment Comparison

Addenda 2 We the People Scoring Guide

Addenda 3 Modified We the People Scoring Guide, Yoder

Addenda 4 Modified We the People Scoring Guide, Hawaii

Addenda 5 Active Learning and the Cone Of Learning

Addenda 6 Samples of student work as part of assessment

Addenda 7 Tentative Schedule for School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program Activities for this year.

More will be added after PSSA.

Addenda 8 Under separate cover, the Climate Study on Ritter Elementary. With the proliferation of Content Tests being proposed for graduation this type of climate building and participatory active strategies will give way to test preparation.

Which form of assessment has greater value for student learning, understanding and preparing for skills needed in the 21st Century?

Assessment A	Assessment B
<p>From 100 question Final Exam for We the People Textbook. Select the best answer to the question. Use a #2 Pencil, darken fully. Questions below are focused on Unit .</p> <p>32. Critics of judicial review claim that it conflicts with principals of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> A original jurisdiction. <input type="radio"/> B the supremacy clause. <input type="radio"/> C executive supremacy. <input type="radio"/> D legislative supremacy. <p>54. Which of the following is an important characteristic of an adversary legal system?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> A Cross-examination of witnesses conducted by the judge. <input type="radio"/> B Two opposing sides present their cases to an impartial judge or jury. <input type="radio"/> C There are no jury trials. <input type="radio"/> D Cases are presented by parties themselves, without assistance of counsel. <p>64. The Supreme Court's power to declare the meaning of the U.S. Constitution is know as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> A judicial restraint. <input type="radio"/> B judicial activism. <input type="radio"/> C judicial review. <input type="radio"/> D judicial inquiry. 	<p>Upon completion of the United States Government course your Class will be divided into 6 groups. Each group will become the experts to one of the 6 units in the We the People textbook. Your group will develop a 4 minute prepared testimony for each of the three questions for your unit. One of the three questions will be asked by a panel of judges. After your prepared testimony, the judges will ask follow-up questions for 6 minutes. Your score will be based on the criteria found on one of the attached scoring guides. Below is just one of the three questions for Unit 3. There are three levels of questions, District, State, and National. This question is from the High School District Level.</p> <p>Unit 3, Question #3</p> <p>3. What are the major arguments for and against judicial review?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Alexander Hamilton claimed in Federalist No. 78 that "the interpretation of the laws is the proper and peculiar province of the courts". Do you agree or disagree? Why? ➤ What are the advantages and disadvantages of an appointed, life-tenured branch of government overturning laws passed by a democratically elected body of government?



We the People
THE CITIZEN AND THE CONSTITUTION

Directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Education for Democracy Act approved by the United States Congress

Congressional Hearing Group Score Sheet

For each criterion listed, score the group on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the best score. Use a separate form for each group.

1-2 = Poor 3-4 = Fair 5-6 = Average 7-8 = Above Average 9-10 = Excellent

	SCORE	NOTES
1. UNDERSTANDING: To what extent did participants demonstrate a clear understanding of the basic issues involved in the question?		
2. CONSTITUTIONAL APPLICATION: To what extent did participants appropriately apply knowledge of constitutional history and principles?		
3. REASONING: To what extent did participants support positions with sound reasoning?		
4. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE: To what extent did participants support positions with historical or contemporary evidence, examples, and/or illustrations?		
5. RESPONSIVENESS: To what extent did participants' answers address the question asked?		
6. PARTICIPATION: To what extent did <u>most</u> group members contribute to the group's presentation?		
GROUP TOTAL		

JUDGE: _____

TIEBREAKER*

--

*Please designate a score of any number between 0 and 100 that reflects this group's OVERALL performance. (This score will be used only in the event of a tie.) Please use the following scale:

- | | | | |
|---------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Outstanding | 90 to 100 points | Average | 50 to 69 points |
| Very Good | 80 to 89 points | Below Average | 30 to 49 points |
| Above Average | 70 to 79 points | Poor | 0 to 29 points |



Congressional Hearing Rubric

Addenda #3

- Check each appropriate box, each check box equals one point then add up checks for score.
- Each check represents the holistic sum total of the full group presentation except where noted.
- **To earn a check the statement must be a true statement and fully earned by the group as a whole.**
- On the reverse of the score sheet please make comments based on the unchecked boxes.
- Please review the Scoring Criteria Descriptions before you use this rubric.

Criteria	Prepared Statement	Follow Up-Questioning	Score
1. UNDERSTANDING: To what extent did participants demonstrate a clear understanding of the basic issues involved in the question?	<input type="checkbox"/> Identified the basic Issue(s) of the question(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Comprehension of the issue(s) is clear with clear individual dissents if applicable. <input type="checkbox"/> Concise response on the issue(s)— No confusion about the issues. <input type="checkbox"/> Depth is beyond a simple expected response <input type="checkbox"/> Each student who spoke demonstrated equal understanding	<input type="checkbox"/> Identified the basic Issue(s) of the question(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Comprehension of the issue(s) is clear with clear individual dissents if applicable <input type="checkbox"/> Concise response on the issue(s)— No confusion about the issues. <input type="checkbox"/> Depth is beyond a simple expected response <input type="checkbox"/> Each student who spoke demonstrated equal understanding	
2. CONSTITUTIONAL APPLICATION: To what extent did participants appropriately apply knowledge of constitutional history and principles?	<input type="checkbox"/> applied knowledge & appropriate Historical context <input type="checkbox"/> applied knowledge & accurate Historical context <input type="checkbox"/> applied knowledge & appropriate Constitutional principals and examples <input type="checkbox"/> applied knowledge & accurate Constitutional principals and examples <input type="checkbox"/> Each student who spoke demonstrated equal constitutional application and knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/> applied knowledge & appropriate Historical context <input type="checkbox"/> applied knowledge & accurate Historical context <input type="checkbox"/> applied knowledge & appropriate Constitutional principals and examples <input type="checkbox"/> applied knowledge & accurate Constitutional principals and examples <input type="checkbox"/> Each student who spoke demonstrated equal constitutional application and knowledge	
3. REASONING: To what extent did participants support positions with sound reasoning?	<input type="checkbox"/> Arguments were clear, logical and demonstrated critical thinking by the group <input type="checkbox"/> Opinions or beliefs were supported with appropriate reasons or explanations. <input type="checkbox"/> Conclusions were supported with relevant example(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Detailed explanation of example relevancy to their argument, opinion or belief. <input type="checkbox"/> Each student who spoke demonstrated equal reasoning	<input type="checkbox"/> Arguments were clear, logical and demonstrated critical thinking by the group <input type="checkbox"/> Opinions or beliefs were supported with appropriate reasons or explanations. <input type="checkbox"/> Conclusions were supported with relevant example(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Detailed explanation of example relevancy to their argument, opinion or belief. <input type="checkbox"/> Each student who spoke demonstrated equal reasoning	
4. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE: To what extent did participants support positions with historical or contemporary evidence, examples, and/or illustrations?	<input type="checkbox"/> Ample support for positions is offered <input type="checkbox"/> Ample support is appropriate and accurate for their positions. <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate use of evidence, examples and/or Illustrations as a means of support for their positions. <input type="checkbox"/> Accurate use of evidence, examples and/or illustrations as a means of support for their positions <input type="checkbox"/> Each student who spoke demonstrated use of appropriate and accurate supporting evidence	<input type="checkbox"/> Ample support for positions is offered <input type="checkbox"/> Ample support is appropriate and accurate for their positions. <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate use of evidence, examples and/or Illustrations as a means of support for their positions. <input type="checkbox"/> Accurate use of evidence, examples and/or illustrations as a means of support for their positions <input type="checkbox"/> Each student who spoke demonstrated use of appropriate and accurate supporting evidence	
5. RESPONSIVENESS: To what extent did participants' answers address the question asked?	<input type="checkbox"/> All questions and sub-questions are addressed in their statement <input type="checkbox"/> Statements are appropriate & accurately focused to the question asked. <input type="checkbox"/> Statements are not "off task" to the question asked. <input type="checkbox"/> Statements do not address items that have no relevancy to the question asked. <input type="checkbox"/> Each student who spoke is responsive to the question(s) asked	<input type="checkbox"/> All follow-up questions are addressed in their responses. <input type="checkbox"/> Responses are appropriate & accurately focused to the question asked. <input type="checkbox"/> Responses are not "off task" to the question asked. <input type="checkbox"/> Responses are not evasive <input type="checkbox"/> Each student who spoke is responsive at some time during follow-up questioning.	
6. PARTICIPATION: To what extent did most group members contribute to the group's presentation?	<input type="checkbox"/> All <i>Each Student</i> check box above is checked <input type="checkbox"/> More than one student presented the statement <input type="checkbox"/> Their statement accurately reflected the group position. Any dissents were allowed to present their position. <input type="checkbox"/> It is evident that the statement was prepared as a team. <input type="checkbox"/> Members were respectful of each other and presented a team posture.	<input type="checkbox"/> All <i>Each Student</i> check box above is checked <input type="checkbox"/> Students were engaging, excited and eager to participate in some form. <input type="checkbox"/> One or two students did not dominate the group, This was clearly a team effort. <input type="checkbox"/> A majority of students were eager to speak and members were respectful to each other in speaking. <input type="checkbox"/> The group demonstrated cohesiveness and engaged as many group members as possible.	
		Total Score	

NOTES:

1. Understanding

Addenda #3

2. Constitutional Application

3. Reasoning

4. Supporting Evidence

5. Responsiveness

6. Participation



We the People

THE CITIZEN AND THE CONSTITUTION

Addenda #4

Directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Education for Democracy Act approved by the United States Congress.

SCORING GUIDE – WE THE PEOPLE SIMULATED CONGRESSIONAL HEARING

<p>1. UNDERSTANDING To what extent did participants demonstrate a clear understanding of the basic issues addressed by the questions?</p>	<p>9-10 in-depth understanding: key concepts/themes/issues/relationships identified, fully defined and extensively described (e.g., origin, development, people, significance, impact); acknowledgment of opposing viewpoints (if any)</p> <p>7-8 good understanding: key concepts, etc., identified, defined, and fully described, including significance</p> <p>5-6 average understanding: key concepts, etc., identified, partially defined, and described</p> <p>3-4 fair understanding: some concepts, etc., identified, inadequately defined, and described</p> <p>1-2 little understanding: few concepts, etc., identified, inadequately defined, or described</p>
<p>2. CONSTITUTIONAL APPLICATION To what extent did participants appropriately apply knowledge of constitutional history and principles?</p>	<p>9-10 full, accurate, and appropriate application of knowledge (e.g., historical and current application, examples, effects, results, problems, issues, future issues)</p> <p>7-8 accurate and appropriate with partial application</p> <p>5-6 mostly accurate and appropriate with minor errors and inappropriate application</p> <p>3-4 some accurate and appropriate with significant inappropriate application</p> <p>1-2 mostly inaccurate and inappropriate with little or no application</p>
<p>3. REASONING To what extent did participants support their positions with sound reasoning?</p>	<p>9-10 strong support of positions with sound reasoning: conclusions reached with consideration of opposing viewpoints, opinions with reasons, noting relationships, grasping principles, logical inferences</p> <p>7-8 support with sound reasoning for most positions</p> <p>5-6 support with sound reasoning for some positions</p> <p>3-4 support with opinions, beliefs, guesses</p> <p>1-2 no support</p>
<p>4. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE To what extent did participants support their positions with historical or contemporary evidence, examples, and/or illustrations?</p>	<p>9-10 accurate support of positions with extensive historical or contemporary evidence, examples, illustrations</p> <p>7-8 accurate, good, but partial support of positions</p> <p>5-6 accurate support of some positions; inaccurate support of others</p> <p>3-4 mostly inaccurate support of positions</p> <p>1-2 little/no support of positions</p>
<p>5. RESPONSIVENESS To what extent did participants' answers address the questions asked?</p>	<p>9-10 accurate and full response to all questions: main and subquestions, follow-up questions</p> <p>7-8 accurate and full response to main and subquestions; partial response to follow-up questions</p> <p>5-6 partial response to main and subquestions; partial response to follow-up questions</p> <p>3-4 partial response to main and subquestions; little or no response to follow-up questions</p> <p>1-2 partial response to main question only; little or no response to follow-up questions</p>
<p>6. PARTICIPATION To what extent did <u>most</u> group members contribute to the group's presentation?</p>	<p>9-10 participation by all/most on an equal basis</p> <p>7-8 participation by ¾ of group</p> <p>5-6 participation by ½ of group</p> <p>3-4 participation by ¼ of group</p> <p>1-2 no participation</p>

Adapted from a scoring guide developed by the Hawaii We the People program

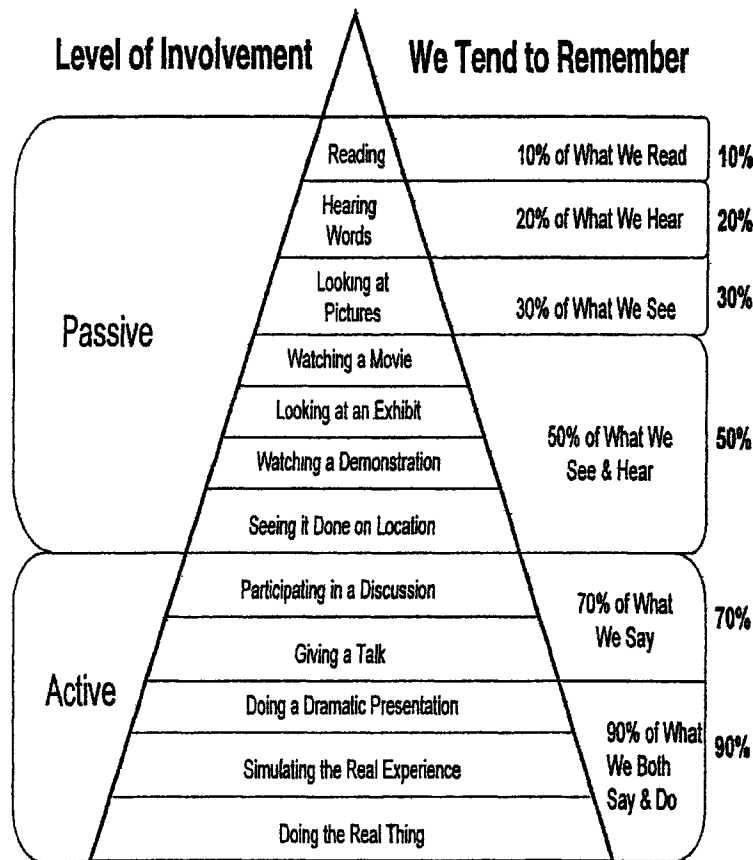
Active Learning

Addenda #5

Most of the time, in a typical classroom setting, students are involved only **passively** in learning, i.e., in listening to the instructor, looking at the occasional overhead or slide, reading (when required) the text book and taking content tests.. Research shows that such passive involvement generally leads to a limited retention of knowledge by students, as indicated in the 'cone of learning' shown below.

Where will the high stakes testing of Graduation Competency Course (Content) exit exams lead us in the Cone of Learning? Most likely to instruction in the passive realm since the generated tests will itself be passive learning.

Cone of Learning



Based on the work of Edgar Dale and Robert Felder

Myron Yoder, M.Ed.

Adapted from R.M. Felder and R. Brent *Effective Teaching Workshop*, North Carolina State University, 1997. and http://courses.science.fau.edu/~rjordan/active_learning.htm

Guide to samples of student work that follows:

- None of the students achieved a grade level above a “C” based on standardized or paper and pencil tests. “D”s and “F”s were common, their defense of the work presented would have placed their content knowledge about the subject area well above proficiency and in some cases beyond most students in my gifted, honors or AP classes.
- Most would **not or barely** have been considered proficient in reading, writing or math.

1. **“The Mighty Federalists”**

This student in my Vo-Tech class was doodling while we were working on the Federalist Papers. (Notice the binder on the side). I noticed this as I was walking past his desk and began to question him on the Federalists and Anti-Federalists as well as the Federalist Papers. I did so because he had just received a “D” on a multiple choice exam with an open ended prompt. He not only provided depth of content but his analysis was beyond anyone in the classroom who earned an “A” on the test. He would continue to take tests in this manner in my classroom. He was hired by an electric company and they gave him extremely high marks on his ability. He would later testify for me before city council on their policy of only allowing persons 21 and older to take the city electrician test. Ironically his testimony dealt with his ability to work with the electric company under 21 and lead groups of electricians but could not gain a license in Allentown because he could not take the test yet while his teacher could take the test, pass it and may not even be able to follow through with ability in electrical work.

2. **“Women in Combat Roles” and “Gays in the Military”**

This student earned “D”s and “F”s in the traditional testing format. He would probably score below proficient in reading and math. I saw him cartooning at a local amusement park and asked him to take the next series of tests by presenting a Political Cartoon to class in a mock congressional hearing format and to defend his work. His content and analysis was beyond students in my gifted, honors and AP classrooms. I later learned he was an avid newspaper reader because he wanted to take the issues of the day and put them into visual depictions. He wanted to go to college but his SATs did not gain his entry. I lost track of him after he left school. He was a valued employee at the park while he was there.

3. **“Iran-a-Muck”**

Same basic story as the one I mentioned above, a dual language student struggling with reading/writing/math. Traditional tests from me yielded consistent “F”s with an occasional “D” until we found this as a means to assess him. I entered the political cartoon into a national student cartooning contest, (I believe it was Time Magazine) and he won the national contest and received a scholarship. Sadly he couldn’t use it because he failed English in his senior year and did not graduate. He was a valued employee at the fabrication company he worked that summer and then I lost track of him.

Other Student Work not in this document.

I have countless examples of students who demonstrate proficiency beyond the best students I have that master paper and pencil tests and they do so by demonstrating it through active learning that is usually not tested. Sadly with high stakes testing, they will be lost even further. I cannot present what they did here because their work was oral so I will make mention of it as an example.

Student A

Vo-Tech and an extremely poor writer, D-F test taker, quiet. Found out I was taking a bus load of students to see Pierre Salinger and he asked me if he could go along. I asked him why, his reply, "He is my idol". I probed further. It turns out, he was a c-span addict and loved history and government (not unusual for people in the trades). He could name every member of the cabinet (something I doubt anyone one of us could do today) and could provide information on the most recent testimony before congress or the state house (and this was before the information overload on the net and PCN). He knew government inside and out and most of the people who are able to use power and authority for political gain or in service to our country. He understood the difference. He was way beyond my Gifted, Honors and AP Students. The deal was, he had to write an article on the event in the school newspaper (with much assistance from the advisor) and to present an oral history of the man in class complete with defense and analysis of what he did and how it impacts today. When he finished I, who am highly Socratic in my approach to classes, had no questions for him. He begged me to give him one and I mustered the depth of MY knowledge and began to engage him. The class then chimed in and it was a class to never forget. I would use a seminar approach with him. His writing improved greatly, some test score improvement but he constantly read too much into the questions but in the end he would most likely never reach proficient. He went to Ohio for Diesel Mechanic School and last I heard he was enjoying the work he did out there.

Student B

Failure all around academic, behavioral and attendance. I was preparing to fail him due to attendance and the policy of the district when I noticed when he was in and took the standard tests he scored "As" and "Bs". I asked him why? His answer, "I am bored with schools and tests" He was ready to flunk out and not graduate. I offered him a seat in my gifted/honors class that spring but with certain deals. 1. No absence. If he is absent he would need a doctor's excuse. If none, he would be dropped. 2. He must participate in the competitions I ask him to: We the People Mock Congressional Hearing, at least one oratorical and one written. Needless to say most faculty members were surprised when his name came up on my roster and he attended his first class that spring. He succeeded and actual took a third in the oratorical contest. When he graduated that spring the honors students gave him hugs on the stage as he walked by, he became one of them. He was accepted at the community college where he wanted to increase his grade to gain acceptance in a regular college and move into Psychology. He started college and I lost track of him.

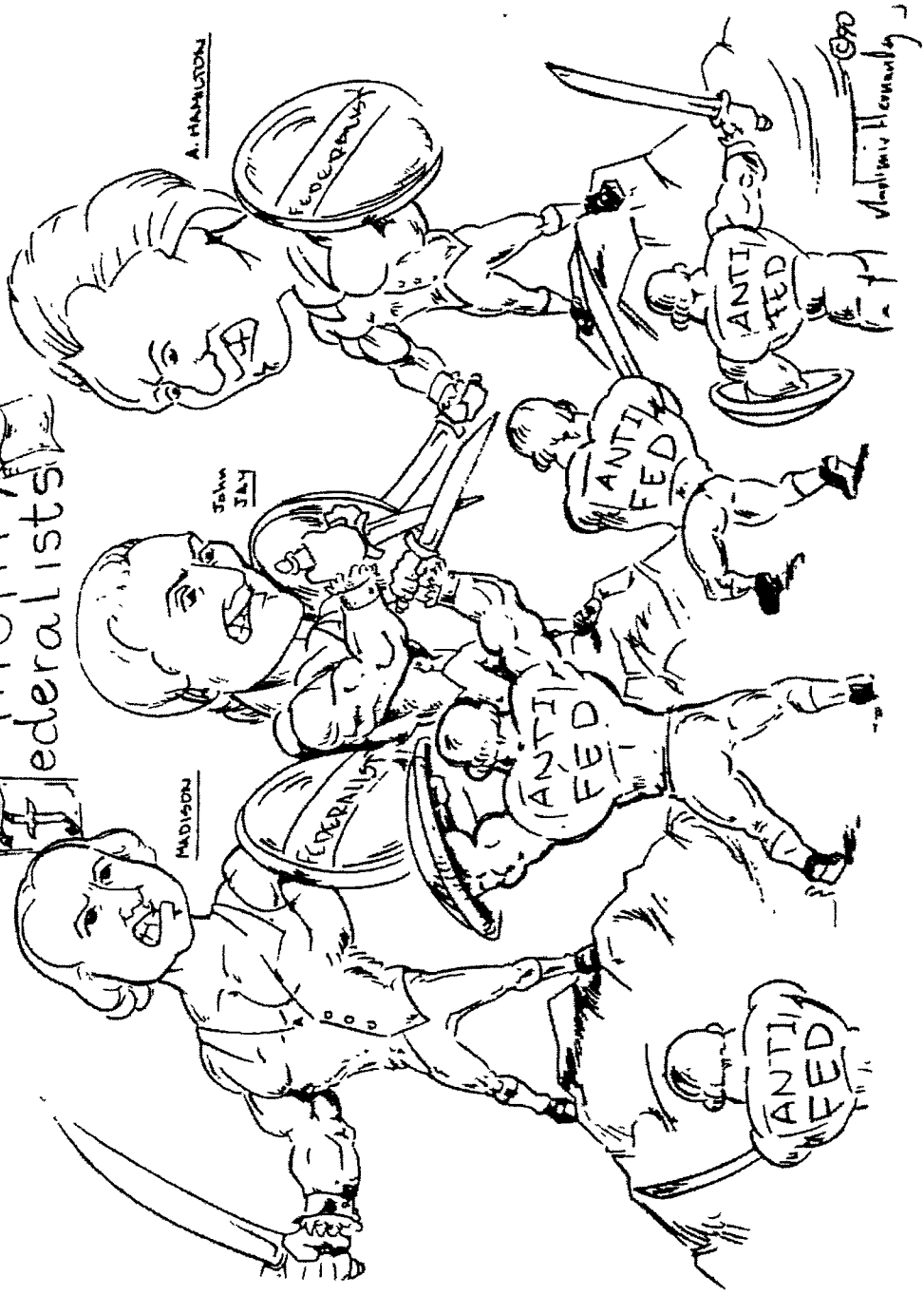
Oral Traditions

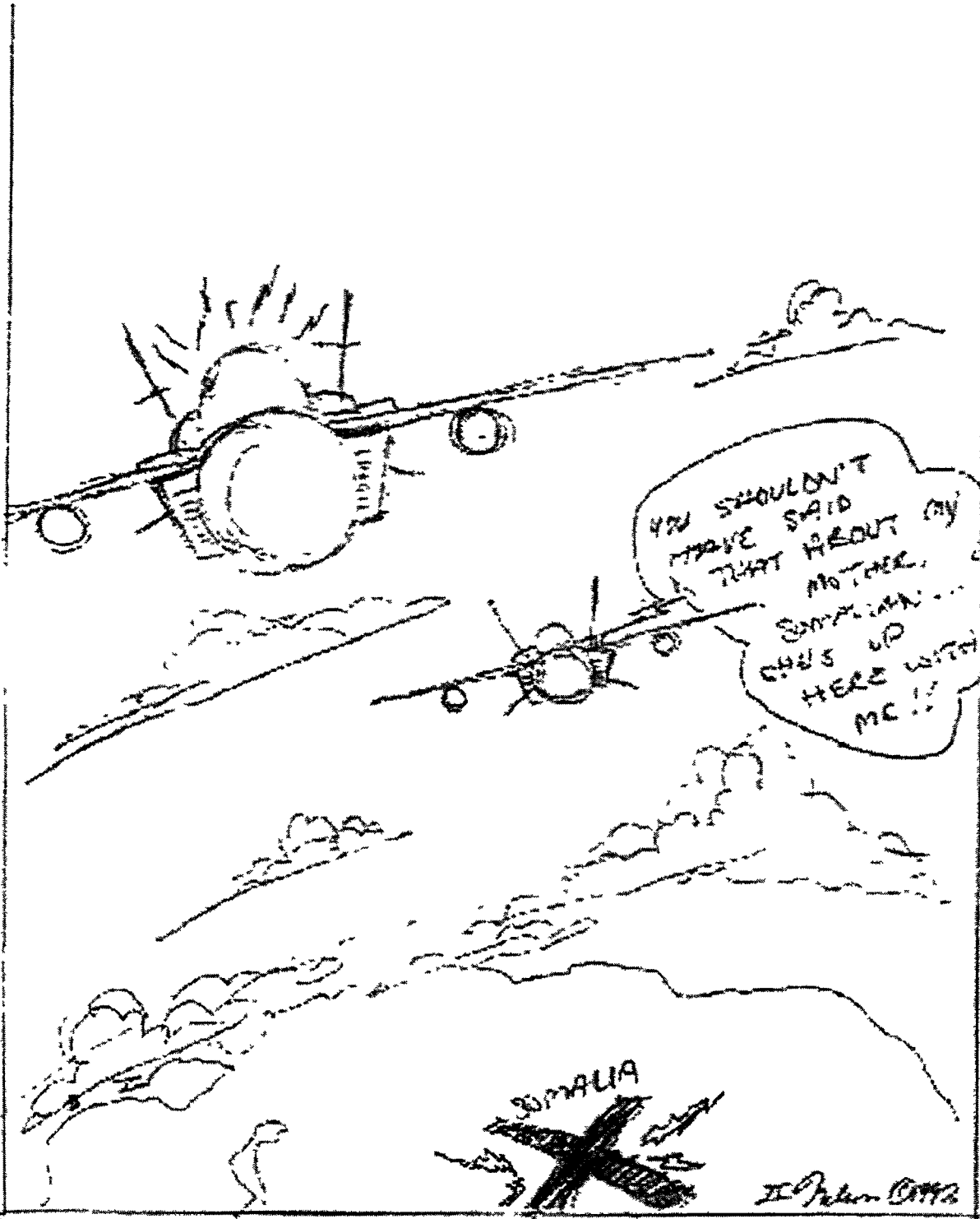
I have many Audio activities and samples that did the same things as some of the student work I mentioned above. From creating radio ads, to setting concepts to music to putting together a TV news show on an event in History. I have PowerPoint Presentations used by students presenting solutions to real world industrial problems in the Let's Get Real competition before PP&L, Hershey Foods and other corporations. The sad thing is, as the paper/pencil high stakes test move in, these active learning strategies move out and what business would like from us gets lost even further.

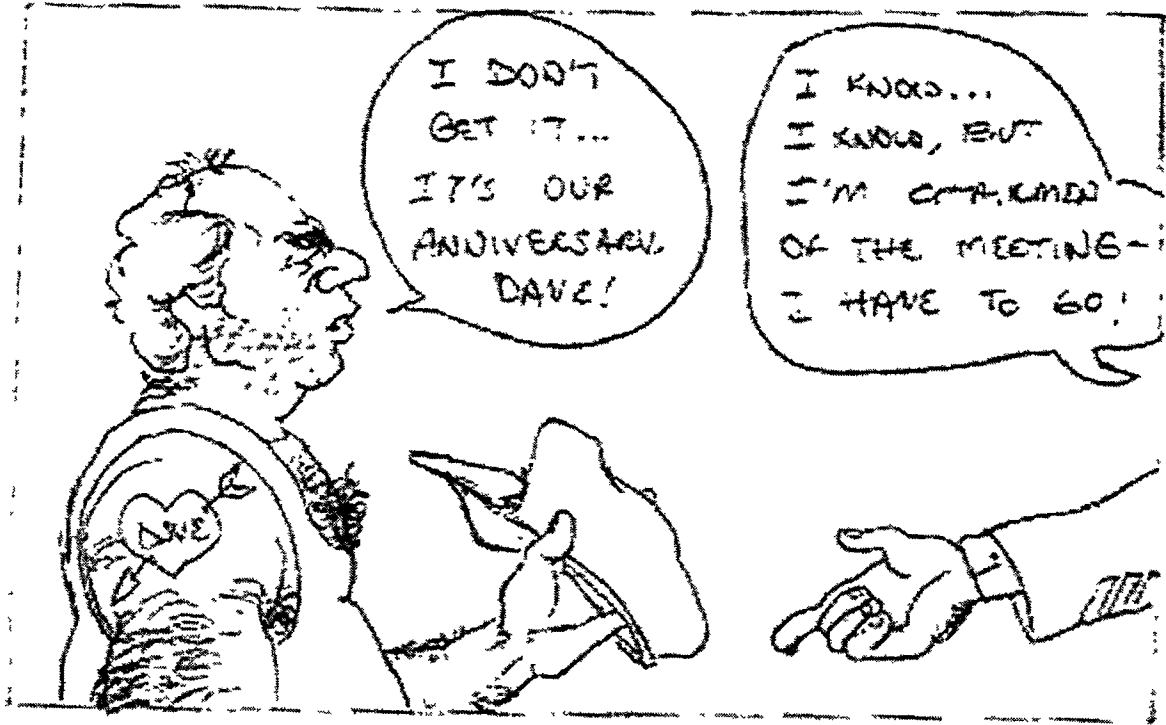
Student C

Student C failed 2nd grade because he was not ready. Grades were ok, but not golden. He was never a good test taker, High C, Low B student; so active in after school activities that at graduation he had twice the number of activity points than his closest competitor. I doubt he would have been proficient in writing in that he struggled tremendously. He commented. "One teacher would give me an F because I wrote with too much flowery language, the next year the teacher wanted bulleted writing and the following to be highly creative. I don't get it, what do you want in writing?" Grammar and spelling were usually his fatal flaw. Based on standardized tests the counselors would not enroll him in college focused classes and pushed him to vo-tech. By complaining, he had his parents come in and the counselor yielded. He would take Typing which the counselor didn't understand when he responded, "I will need it for college". He told his counselor in his senior year that he would excel in College because he was ready; class rank was somewhere in the middle. Why? Because High School bored him with endless mundane tests, assessments and values placed on ability based on "quantitative data". He would vow as he took courses to become a teacher to never teach as he was taught. I know this person because he is me. The problem I now face is if you add this battery of tests as you propose, I will not become the teacher I want to be and want to train others to be, but will be forced to become the teacher I loathe. Please do not do this to me and the students I will teach and have an impact on.

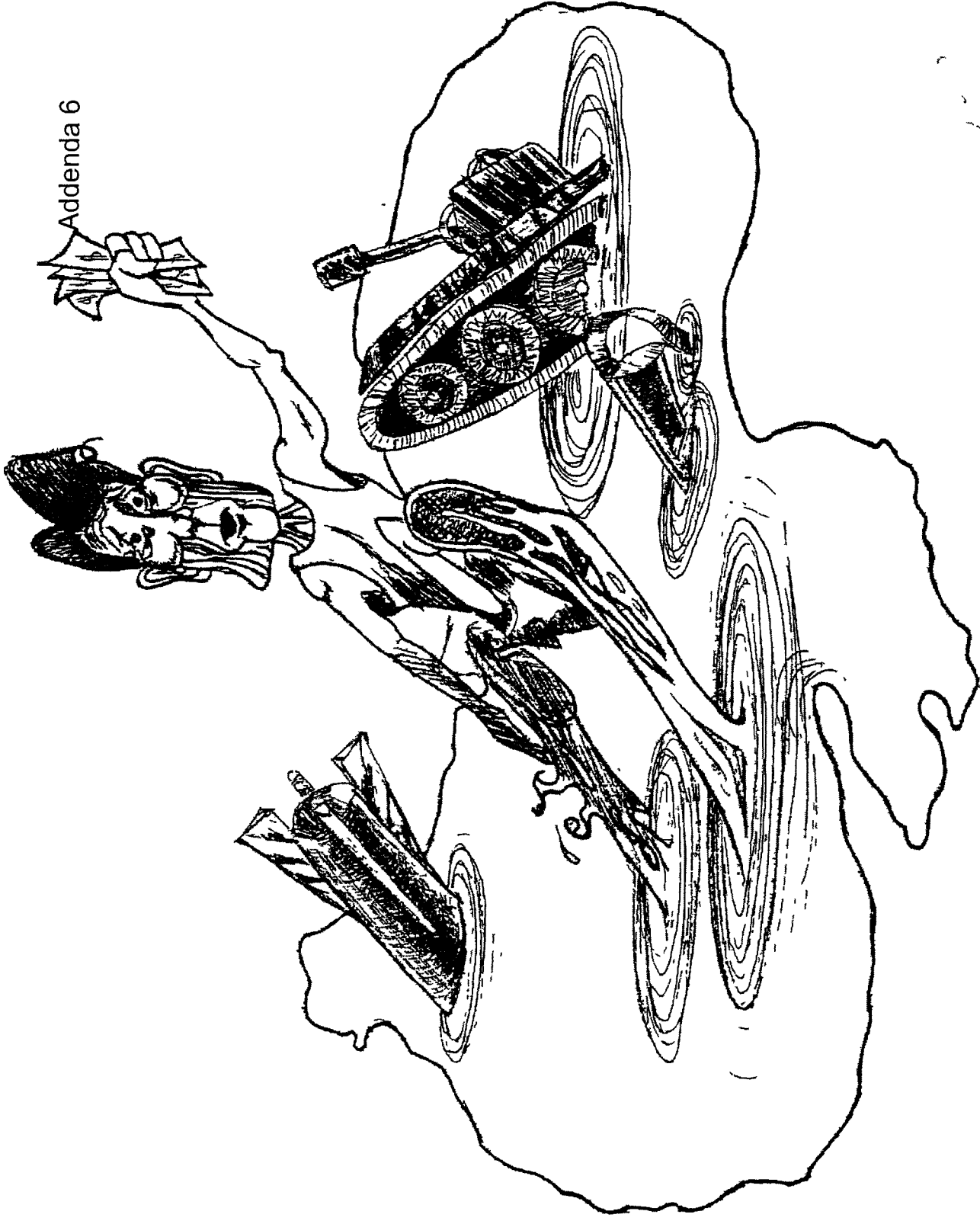
MIGHTY Federalists







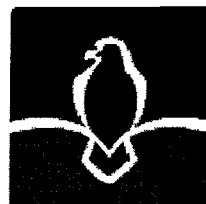
Addenda 6



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Social Studies



**School
Violence
Prevention
Demonstration
Program**

Center for Civic Education

Please note: *This is a sample of Showcase activities that will take place to demonstrate student learning. This is but a start for our end of the year, more activities will be listed once we pass the testing cycle for PSSA. You are invited to attend these events and observe the activities. While mostly elementary in nature and focused on SVPDP this could easily be expanded to include all grade levels and content areas in the future. Should content focused tests for Graduation become the means of assessment these showcase activities will end, in particular in the high schools.*

Tentative Schedule of Culminating Activities in the District

As of

March 10, 2009

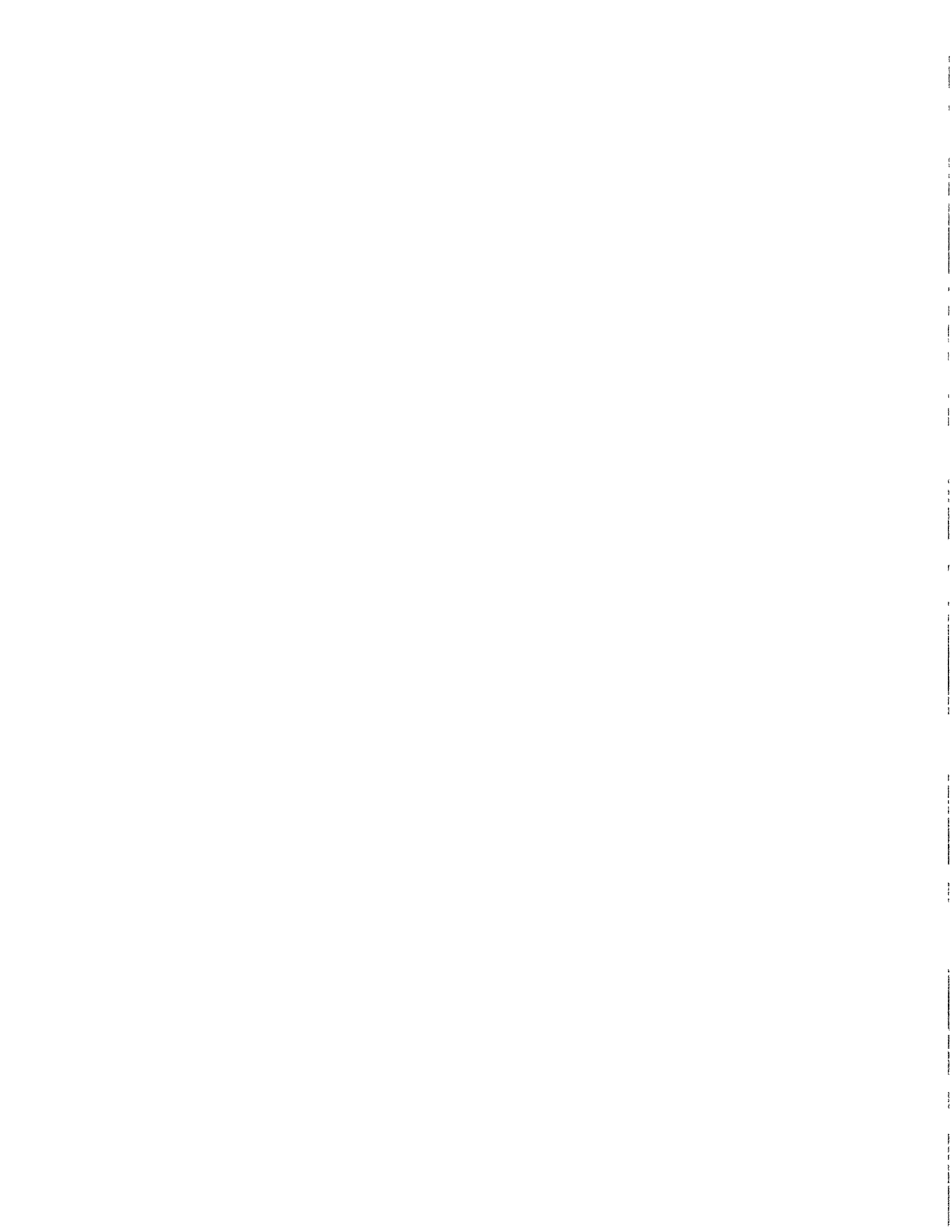
Please check the accuracy of your scheduled event listed below. Should there be any changes please notify Myron as soon as possible. If you are not listed on the schedule you will need to inform us of your date and time for the culminating activities.

Date	Time	School	Activity
9/11/08	9-11 AM	Cleveland	Grades 3-5 had a ceremony where they unveiled a paper skyscraper from the roof of the school with 50 windows, one for each state. They then had a ceremony in honor of a counselor who lost her father that day. Landis, Noll, Dotter
10/21/08	6:30-10:00 PM	ASD	ASD Compass Award Recipient Dinner at Governors Residence (Award is for the SVPDP Civic Ed Program in ASD).
12/4/08	2:45 PM	Muhlenberg College Seegers Union	Jefferson After School Project Citizen program presentation. Siegrist
12/11/08	8-11 AM	Dieruff High School	Mock Congressional Hearing for PA District 15 in preparation for regional competition. Ronalds
1/16/09	2-3 PM	Dieruff High School	Mock Congressional Hearing, Regional Competition, Ronalds
2/6/09	1:30-2:30	Sheridan Elementary School	Grade 5 Mock Congressional Hearings, in classrooms, Shahda, Friebohn
April TBA	TBA	Roosevelt Elementary	Grade 5 Kowalchuk Class Project Citizen Portfolio showcase, Classroom, Kowalchuk
5/8/09	Displayed in Auditorium	Mosser Elementary	Grade 2 classes will display reporting posters by May 8 in the auditorium during the Grade 1 Foundations of Democracy program. Posters will be based on Foundations of Democracy. Auditorium, Raub, Weiss, Kuntz

Date	Time	School	Activity
5/15/09 OR 5/22/09	Tentative 11:00-12:00	Roosevelt	Grade 3 will recite poems, song or play demonstrating what they learned from each book in Foundations of Democracy. New Library, Jarjous, Adams, Heisler.
5/19/09	Kam 8:15 Gr 2 9:45 Gr 3 11:30 Gr 1 1:30 Kpm 2:00 ESOL/Gr 5 6-7 PM	Roosevelt Elementary	School Activities for SVPDP all day in the new library. Grades will perform in 20-30 min time slots. See times for when grades will perform. School Wide, New Library, ESOL and Grade 5 in rooms 211, 212
5/20/09	10:00-10:30	Cleveland Elementary	Grade 3 students will create a class book on the Foundations of Democracy and read to the class. Classroom, Monaco
5/21/09	2:00-2:30	Sheridan Elementary	Grade 1 classes will work with partners to create a poster on one of the Foundations of Democracy concepts, Classrooms, Pinkerton, Perinotto, Teti, Scott, Spang, Kern
5/22/09	1:50-2:30	Cleveland Elementary	Grade 2 will complete a multimedia presentation involving responsibility, justice and authority. Room 102, Kirchner, Wagner-Smith, Lopez
5/22/09	1:15-1:55	Mosser Elementary	Grade 1 will perform skits, read poems and sing songs showcasing their learning of Foundations of Democracy. Auditorium, Ritter, Connellan, Pickar, Hefflefinger, Souillard, Stuber, Barnes, Egolf.
5/26/09	9:00-9:30	Jackson Elementary	Grade 2 class will present the Foundations of Democracy of Responsibility in Speaking Parts and Song, Gym, Trego
5/28/09	1:15-2:30	Muhlenberg Elementary	Grade 3 classes will present posters, songs, poems and skits based on Foundations of Democracy, In the Auditorium, Dex, Farley, Hertz, King
May TBA	TBA	Roosevelt Elementary	Grade 5 Kowalchuk Class Mock Congressional Hearing, Classroom, Kowalchuk
End of May	Posted in Grade 1 Hallway	Jefferson Elementary	Grade 1 will create class quilts made of index cards that display students knowledge of Foundations of Democracy. Grade 1 Hallway, Holsonback, Young, Hoch, Snyder, Buda, Fenstermaker
June 09	Posted in Hallway	McKinley Elementary	Grade 1 Michelle Miller Class will display posters in hallway demonstrating student understanding of Foundations Of Democracy. Pictures will be incorporated into a slide show presentation, Hallway, Miller

Date	Time	School	Activity
6/3/09	All Day	Elementary Schools In the Allentown School District	Allentown School District Civic Celebration Day Lunch will be provided to all Elementary Students and Professional Staff for their work this year in the SVPDP program and recognize their efforts in Civic Learning.
6/3/09	AM K 8:15-10:40 PM K 11:55-2:30	Midway Manor ECC	K classes will operate on a rotation schedule and participate in events that deal with each of the concepts in Foundations of Democracy. Various Rooms, Begel, Fiorito, Stauffer, Gruver J, Harkins, Wolfgang, Osorto, Puchyr, Martin, Kerbein.
6/3/09	TBA	Lincoln ECC	K classes will participate in a community service activity by reading Zookeeper Learns About Responsibility and then predict the kinds of responsibilities the Zookeeper must do to keep penguins. They will then learn about the Lehigh County Zoo and recognize community responsibility in keeping the zoo. Students will then conduct a Pennies for Penguins Drive to raise funds for the zoo. On June 3 the Zoo staff will share their penguin responsibility with the students and compare to the chart they created. A check from Pennies for penguins will be given to the zoo at that time. Auditorium, Yeager, Gamble, Gregory-Dore, Carnero, Nutting, McDermott, Keller, Jarrah, Toumeh, Egan, Bonnie, Wenner, Heggan, Delgado, Freed, Rodriguez, Gonzalez, Puchyr, Shutter, Miller, Kerbein, Michalerya, McCallum, LaSanta
6/3/09	1:50-2:30	McKinley Elementary	Grade 1 will break into groups to write, create a poster and perform a skit on why their concept in Foundations of Democracy is important. Classroom, Reitenauer, Bittmann.
6/4/09	Rm 103 & 113 8:40-9:40 Rm 110 & 10 9:45-10:45	Washington Elementary	Grade 5 Mock Congressional Hearings, Room 103, 113, 110, 10 Gym. Bittner, Sherbun, Hannis, Peters, Horvath.
6/5/09	930-1030 1045-1145	Sheridan Elementary	Grade 4 will present skits on Responsibility, Authority, privacy and justice to students and parents at two assemblies. Cunningham, Monaco, Young, Isaksson, Sparow, Hydro
TBA	TBA	William Allen High School (Lehigh Parkway)	9th grade class developed 60 second videos on responsibility as part of a PennCORD contest. Rachelle Andress
TBA	TBA	Washington Elementary	Grade 5 Project Citizen Class Portfolio on Animal Abuse/Stray Animals, Hannis

Date	Time	School	Activity
TBA	TBA	Ritter Elementary	Grade K and 3, Third/K buddies will complete a research project about animals. PowerPoints presentations will be developed to share with parents on animal research and tied to Zookeeper in Foundations of Democracy. Auditorium, Nemes, Jacobus, Williams
TBA	TBA	Dodd Elementary	Grade 3 TBA, Room 131, Lint
TBA	TBA	Jackson Elementary	Grade ¾ TBA , Rowlands, Laub, Harris



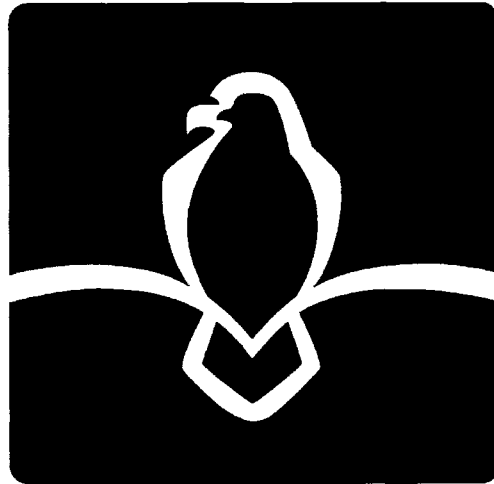
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Addenda #8

From the testimony of Myron E. Yoder., M.Ed.

This Climate Study on Ritter Elementary demonstrates the value of Active Learning for academic growth as well as positive school climate. While Elementary in focus we are moving these elements into the secondary level with similar results. With content focused graduation assessments in social studies these active learning strategies will disappear.

#2696



SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM



Center for Civic Education

5145 Douglas Fir Road • Calabasas, CA 91302-1440 • 818-591-9321 • www.civiced.org

**Funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Education for
Democracy Act approved by the U.S. Congress**

School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program

School Climate Study (2006-7)

Ritter Elementary School

Allentown, Pennsylvania

March 11, 2008

**Submitted to
Center for Civic Education
School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program
Maria Gallo, Director**

**by
Jayme A. Sokolow, Ph.D.
President
The Development Source, Inc.
4312 Garrett Park Road
Silver Spring, MD 20906**

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Executive Summary

This is school climate study of the Center for Civic Education's **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** at Ritter Elementary School in Allentown, Pennsylvania for the academic year 2006-7. Ritter, like most of Allentown's schools, is a majority-minority school. Hispanic, African American, Middle Eastern, and immigrant students outnumber white students, and most students come from working class or poor families. There are significant academic achievement gaps between economically disadvantaged and non-economically disadvantaged students. But regardless of their backgrounds, all students are learning to be active citizens through the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**, especially those in high implementation classrooms.

Ritter understands that one of its major purposes is to develop the next generation of American citizens. The school operates on the assumption that students are more likely to succeed in life if they are civically engaged. Through Ritter's **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**, students are learning that they need to master knowledge, skills, and develop certain kinds of attitudes to address public problems and be active citizens. They also are learning that public institutions are likely to work better when citizens participate in public life. These are important and valuable lessons, and Ritter understands they are best learned when young.

Throughout the Allentown School District and at Ritter Elementary School, there is a positive correlation between higher levels of classroom implementation of the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** and higher achievement levels on Pennsylvania standardized tests. This is a significant conclusion. The program helps elementary school students master comprehension, reading, and analysis skills. The more involved students are in the program at all grade levels, the better they master these skills as measured on standardized tests.

As part of the school climate study, Dr. Sokolow conducted three focus groups with parents, two focus groups with Ritter students, and two focus groups with Ritter teachers. Their comments are summarized below.

Teachers:

- The program has helped them teach social studies more effectively.
- The program has had a positive impact on their knowledge of American history and government.
- The program has helped students understand the concept of authority and take their work seriously.
- They believed that the program "makes our school stronger" by fostering a common purpose.

Students:

When asked what they had learned, students were very specific. According to them, these are the most important concepts they have learned in the program:

- You have to share and respect.
- No bullying is important. You should not kick, hit, or punch.

- Justice is important because it is about fairness and kindness.
- Privacy means that you do not invade others' privacy.
- Responsibility means you get your priorities straight.
- Responsibility means follow through with what you promise to do, like a contract.
- Responsibility means there are consequences and benefits to being responsible.
- Privacy is when you keep things to yourself.
- Government is designed to keep order and make rules.
- Authority is needed, especially your mother and father.

When asked about the impact of the program, students said that they have learned to “share your stuff,” “say thank you and you say you’re welcome,” and respect the privacy of others. One student said that if “I get mad at my friends, I control my anger more because of social studies.” Students believed that the program had helped them develop better relations with their teachers, family, and friends through greater self-control and respect.

Parents:

Parents were happy that the program had encouraged their children to respect their teachers and make positive comments about them. The program has taught their children to help resolve arguments and conflicts without fighting immediately. They were pleased that their children were proud of Ritter and acted responsibly on school property. Few of the parents are aware that the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** is a special program. Most of them equate it with the standard social curriculum.

Ritter School Climate

School staff and students take ownership of Ritter’s school appearance. There is no litter in school or on school grounds. Graffiti is rare because students feel some sense of ownership of the school, and if graffiti appears on the outside of the building, it is cleaned up quickly.

At Ritter Elementary School, faculty relations are very good, and the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** has played an important role in fostering collegial behavior. The program has promoted good interpersonal relations among teachers and helped create a professional community with shared norms and practices.

The **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** has provided a solid and usable framework for students. From kindergarten upward, all students share a common vocabulary and a common understanding of authority, privacy, responsibility, and justice. As a result, students treat each other respectfully because everyone has the same expectations about what constitutes proper behavior.

Students feel a sense of community and the idea of school is defined as a warm, affectionate regard for everyone in the building. The various racial and ethnic groups at Ritter blend and interrelate. They all act as if they are full members of the school community. Students understand what it means to be a responsible person and a good citizen, and they know that their understanding is shared by teachers and administrators.

Ritter Elementary School is unusual in that principal Ms. Melissa Marcks taught in the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** and served as a trainer before becoming principal. As a result, she has a superb understanding of the program and is deeply committed to it. This is a key element in the success of the program at Ritter.

The **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** is an effective citizenship program at Ritter because the curriculum has these characteristics:

- Realistic content and a balanced, nonpartisan treatment of issues, controversies, and problems.
- A combination of important dates, facts, people, and events along with ideas, values, and principles of democracy.
- The use of community resources to enrich classroom instruction and learning and connect students to the world outside their classrooms.
- Engaging teaching strategies that focus on (1) class discussions; (2) effective questioning strategies; (3) small-group learning; (4) role-playing and debating; and (5) two culminating activities – the mock Congressional hearing and the public policy portfolio.

In the program, teachers eschewed lecturing and discussed subject matter with their students. Classroom lessons actively involved students. Several teachers were quite adept at encouraging students to react to other students' responses, and all of them called on non-volunteers as well as volunteers.

At Ritter, students are being educated to believe that civic and political participation can improve their neighborhoods, city, and nation. And just as importantly, they are learning the knowledge and skills to be effectively engaged.

The **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**, funded through a grant from the US Department of Education, began in 1999 with middle school students in seven large urban school districts. Since then, it has expanded to encompass elementary and high school students in urban, rural, suburban, and Native American school districts in Hawaii, Alaska, and the continental United States. School districts volunteer to participate in the program. They receive textbooks, teacher guides, supplementary materials, training, and ongoing assistance from the Center along with modest financial support. This program is compatible with No Child Left Behind Act.

This is a prevention program, not an intervention program. The **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** focuses on academic study and cooperative learning activities that promote increased knowledge and skills and the disposition to become engaged citizens. A major premise of this program is that academic success will promote greater civic responsibility by providing students with the knowledge, tools, attitudes, and confidence they need to participate in a democratic society. Throughout the year, there are formal professional development activities for teachers involved in the program to improve their ability to use the curriculum effectively. And students in the program must complete two simulations: a mock Congressional hearing and a portfolio about a public policy problem.

1. Introduction and Overview

This is a school climate study of the Center for Civic Education's **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** at Ritter Elementary School in Allentown, Pennsylvania. The Center, located in Calabasas, California, is a nonprofit education corporation that has developed civic education programs since 1964. The mission of the Center is to promote informed, responsible participation in civic life by citizens committed to the values and principles of American democracy. Today, the Center directs a broad array of curricular, teacher-training, professional development, school curricula, and community-based programs. The Center's programs have reached more than 28 million students and over 90,000 teachers in the United States.

The major goal of the Center is to help students (1) increase their understanding of the institutions of American democracy; (2) develop the skills necessary to actively participate in civic life as effective and responsible citizens; and (3) use democratic procedures to make decisions and manage conflict and disagreement. Internationally, the Center is directing civic education programs in more than 70 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America. The Center has received many awards along with national and international recognition for its nonpartisan civic education programs.

The **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**, funded through a grant from the US Department of Education, began in 1999 with middle school students in seven large urban school districts. Since then, it has expanded to encompass elementary and high school students in urban, rural, suburban, and Native American school districts in Hawaii, Alaska, and the continental United States. School districts volunteer to participate in the program. They receive textbooks, teacher guides, supplementary materials, training, and ongoing assistance from the Center along with modest financial support.

This is a prevention program, not an intervention program. Many school violence intervention programs around the country focus on strategies such as teen courts, tutoring, or peer mediation. The **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**, in contrast, focuses on academic study and cooperative learning activities that promote increased knowledge and skills and the disposition to become engaged citizens. A major premise of this program is that academic success will promote greater civic responsibility by providing students with the knowledge, tools, attitudes, and confidence they need to participate in a democratic society.

2. Description of Program

School violence is a challenge to American democracy, for schools must prevent violence while helping educate young people to understand their heritage and their rights and responsibilities as citizens. School systems have developed a wide variety of strategies to counter school violence, ranging from involving the whole school in violence prevention to peer mediation to literacy tutoring projects. The Center's **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** is unusual in that it addresses the problem of school violence through (1) the systematic study of American civics in elementary, middle, and high school; and (2) the development of school-based projects that promote responsible citizenship in the students' schools and communities.

The **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** has four core principles of civic education instruction. First, it encourages interactive and cooperative learning by students through small group work, simulations, role-playing, public presentations, and Congressional hearings and moot courts. Second, the treatment of political and constitutional issues is both realistic and fair. The curriculum balances respect for our political and legal systems with a nonpartisan and constructive analysis of its application, achievements, and flaws. Third, the curriculum uses the community as a classroom resource to add knowledge, credibility, and reality to the study of democracy in America. And fourth, the program depends on strong support by school principals and other administrators.

The **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** actively involves students in the learning process in ways that reflect respect for them as citizens and serious learners. The curriculum tries to promote reflection, deliberation, and the acquisition of essential knowledge about our history and political system as a prelude to responsible citizenship. This is what differentiates the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** from many other violence prevention programs in the country. It focuses on giving students the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they will need to act responsibly both inside and outside of school.

The **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** uses three curricula as participatory citizenship core study materials. *Foundations of Democracy: Authority, Privacy, Responsibility, and Justice* analyzes four fundamental concepts of politics and government. There are elementary, middle, and high school level textbooks. The Authority unit examines the nature of authority and its scope and limitations. Privacy discusses the benefits and costs of privacy in a free society. Responsibility helps students understand the importance of personal responsibility. Finally, Justice analyzes the nature of justice and three common versions of it – distributive, corrective, and procedural. This is a K-12 curriculum.

We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution is available at three skill different levels. It focuses on essential concepts and fundamental values of the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Its five elementary school units cover the following topics: (1) philosophical and historical foundations of the American political system; (2) the framers and the Constitution; (3) the impact of the Constitution on American institutions and practices; (4) the Bill of Rights; and (5) the role of citizens in American democracy. There is a sixth unit for middle and high school students about rights.

We the People: Project Citizen promotes informed and responsible participation in civic affairs. Through a grade-appropriate sequential process, it actively engages students in learning how to identify, analyze, monitor, and influence public policy. Its six steps are: (1) identify public policy problems in your community; (2) select a problem for class study; (3) gather information about the problem; (4) develop a class portfolio – explain the problem, examine alternative policies, propose a public policy, and develop an action plan; (5) present your portfolio; and (6) reflect on your learning experience.

The portfolio displays the class's work and proposes a solution and implementation plan. Depending on the nature of the problem, the class may present its findings to a school board, city council, or other government bodies.

There are two additional elements to the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**. Throughout the year, there are formal professional development activities for teachers involved in the program to improve their ability to use the curriculum effectively. And students in the program must complete two simulations: a mock Congressional hearing and a portfolio about a public policy problem.

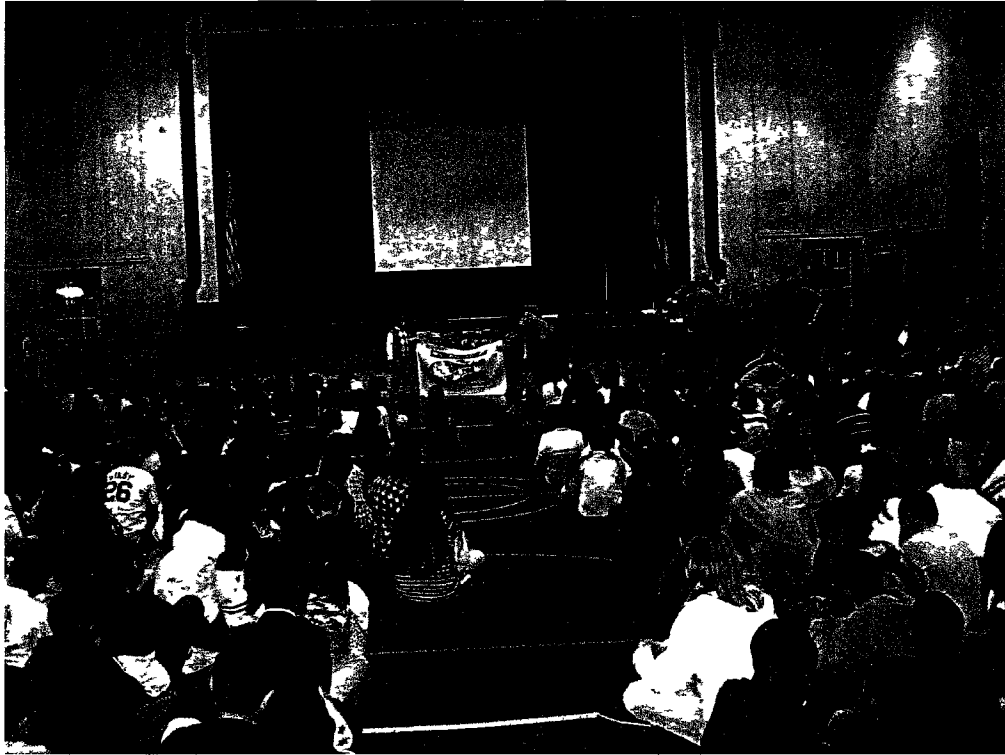
One of the most unusual features of the Center's **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** is the inclusion of native sites in Hawaii, Alaska, and the continental United States. In Alaska and the continental United States, some of these native or tribal school districts are located on reservations and thus are part of tribal governments. Because of their unique histories and cultures, program curricular materials may be modified so that they can be integrated into the curriculum.

The Allentown School District has been involved in the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** since the 2001-2 academic year.

3. Methodology of the School Climate Study

Since 1999, the Center for Civic Education has been directing a **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** funded by the US Department of Education in urban, suburban, rural, and Native school districts throughout the country, including Alaska and Hawaii. This program has been evaluated through pre- and post-content and attitudinal tests, reports, and occasional site visits. In 2006, the Center for Civic Education reached an agreement with the Allentown School District in Allentown, Pennsylvania to do a school climate study at Ritter Elementary School.

Ritter was chosen because it had a very good reputation at the Center for the implementation of its **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**. Federal Judge Marjorie O. Rendell, the First Lady of Pennsylvania and a tireless advocate of civic education, has visited Ritter twice to honor this school for its civic education program. In addition, students from Ritter made a powerful and inspiring presentation at the Third Annual Congressional Conference on Civic Education, which was co-sponsored by the Center. Myron Yoder, Allentown School District's social studies supervisor and the co-coordinator of the site program, invited the Center to use Ritter Elementary School as the site for a climate study. Finally, the research of Ms. Diane Holben, the Director of Evaluation and Accountability for the Allentown School District, encouraged the Center for Civic Education to undertake a climate study of Ritter Elementary School.



Federal Judge Marjorie O. Rendell, the First Lady of Pennsylvania and a strong advocate of civic education, visited Ritter Elementary School twice to honor the school for its civic education program.

Dr. Sokolow began his climate study by reviewing some of the voluminous literature on this subject, especially in the area of civic education. Based on this literature review and on conversations with Ms. Maria Gallo, the Director of the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**, Dr. Sokolow visited Ritter Elementary School from December through June of 2006-7. He also visited three other Allentown elementary schools to observe the program: Lehigh Park, Jackson, and Cleveland.

Over a seven-month period, Dr. Sokolow:

- Observed over 45 classes in four elementary schools with a focus on Ritter Elementary School.
- Observed one mock Congressional hearing; an orientation to the program for elementary guidance counselors; a program enrichment activity at the Lehigh Valley Historical Society; and several culminating activities.
- Met face-to-face with Allentown's superintendent, assistant superintendent, other school administrators, and the director of evaluation and accountability.
- Met face-to-face with four principals and over 50 teachers.
- Talked with many students in different grades about the program.
- Taught three elementary school classes about the program and students' projects.
- Reviewed and analyzed data on the academic performance of Allentown public school elementary school students.

- Directed focus groups about the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** with parents, students, and teachers.

Administrators, teachers, and students were extremely cooperative and gracious throughout the research period, and they were eager to facilitate this study.

4. Allentown School District and Ritter Elementary School

Ritter Elementary School is located at 740 North Plymouth Street in Allentown, Pennsylvania, the third largest city in Pennsylvania with a population of 106,632 according to the 2000 census. It is the county seat of Lehigh County, located about 60 miles northwest of Philadelphia.

In the mid-eighteenth century, Allentown was populated primarily by Pennsylvania Dutch farmers and craftsmen. By 1810, it was in the heart of the greatest grain-producing region in the new nation. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Lehigh Valley had become the most industrialized region of the country due to the development of the local iron industry. By the early twentieth century, Allentown's iron industry had been augmented by silk mills and a diverse economy that produced everything from furniture to cigars.

Since World War II, Allentown has undergone yet another transition. Faced with the decline of manufacturing and the rise of a service economy, Allentown is struggling to attract businesses and keep its middle class. The city now contains large numbers of working-class and poor Hispanics and immigrants and faces an uncertain economic future as many former residents and local businesses have relocated elsewhere in the Lehigh Valley.

The Allentown School District is the fourth largest of the 501 school districts in Pennsylvania. It educates approximately 18,000 students in 23 educational facilities. Seventy percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunches. Sixteen percent of students are in ESOL programs (English Speakers of Other Languages). Per pupil expenditures are among the lowest in the state due to a declining tax base.

Allentown has a growing student body that comes from Philadelphia and New York City, particularly the Bronx. There are also large numbers of new students from Puerto Rico and Central and South America. In addition, there is a large Middle Eastern population and Eastern European and Russian students are increasing in number. Currently, the Allentown School District is a majority/minority district, meaning that minority students outnumber the majority students as defined by the US government. The Allentown School District has students from 41 countries speaking 21 languages.

The Allentown School District confronts serious challenges on a daily basis. There has been an influx of poor and special education students into the schools. Allentown's dwindling middle class continues to leave the city. In addition, there has been no local revenue growth while there have been significant increases in medical insurance and other school expenses. Finally, funding for the Empowerment Plan is not guaranteed. Like many older manufacturing cities, Allentown faces an uncertain future.

Ritter Elementary School had approximately 560 students from kindergarten through fifth grade in 2006-7. It is surrounded by a modest but well-kept neighborhood. The school is a two-story brick, rectangular building that was constructed in 1910. Classrooms hug the outside of the building in a classic U-shape. The center of the school contains a gym/assembly hall with a stage. Adjacent to it is the cafeteria. In back of the school are several portable classrooms and a large grassy playground with a baseball field and basketball courts.



Ritter Elementary School as sketched by an Allentown resident.

At Ritter, 45.5 percent of all students receive free and reduced lunches and 37.3 percent of its students are classified as low-income. The student/teacher ratio is 18:1. Last year, it had a 95.8 percent attendance rate, which exceeds the District's average attendance rate. Ritter is a majority-minority school. The major racial/ethnic groups are Hispanic (43 percent) and African-American (14 percent).

The No Child Left Behind Act requires that all students reach proficiency in reading and mathematics. For a school to make Adequate Yearly Progress, it must meet certain standards for school attendance, test proficiency, and the percent of students taking certain tests. The Allentown School District has been classified in the corrective action category of No Child Left Behind, but Ritter Elementary School met the standards of Adequate Yearly Progress in 2006-7.

In 1999, Pennsylvania adopted academic standards for reading, writing, speaking and listening, and mathematics that identify what a student should know and be able to do at various grade levels as measured by the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). School students are divided into four groups: below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced. The state baseline for proficient and above is 45 percent for reading and 35 percent for mathematics. The tables below show Ritter Elementary School's assessment results in 2002. These are the most recent statistics from the State of Pennsylvania posted on the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Web site.

They compare test scores from Ritter Elementary School with test scores from Allentown and the state of Pennsylvania for grade 5.

Table 1: Ritter Elementary School in Comparison to Allentown and Pennsylvania: Mathematics, Grade 5

Category	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Ritter	18%	23%	35%	24%
Allentown	40%	23%	20%	18%
Pennsylvania	25%	22%	27%	26%

Table 2: Ritter Elementary School in Comparison to Allentown and Pennsylvania: Reading, Grade 5

Category	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Ritter	15%	29%	37%	20%
Allentown	36%	26%	27%	11%
Pennsylvania	20%	23%	39%	18%

Table 3: Ritter Elementary School Grade 5 Test Breakdown by Race and Socioeconomic Status* (N=82)

Category	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
White	9.5%	23.8%	35.7%	31%
Latino-Hispanic	31.8%	31.8%	27.3%	9.1%
Economically Disadvantaged				
Yes	18.8%	37.5%	35.4%	8.3%
No	8.8%	17.6%	38.2%	35.3%

* No scores were reported for Blacks or Asians because the number of students was less than 10.

At Ritter Elementary School, there are significant differences in statewide test scores depending on students' ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Whites did considerably better than Hispanics, and over 70 percent of non-economically disadvantaged students scored at proficient or advanced in comparison to more than half of economically disadvantaged students who scored at basic or below basic levels.

In 2006-7, 61.2 percent of Ritter's students scored at the proficient level in reading on the PSSA test, third highest among all Allentown elementary schools. In mathematics, 74.8 percent of Ritter students scored at the proficient level on the PSSA test, fourth highest among all Allentown elementary schools. Ritter met Adequate Yearly Progress targets in mathematics five years in a row and exceeded the targets both in mathematics and reading. The tables below show Ritter's scores in mathematics and reading on the advanced level from 2003 through 2007.

Table 4: PSSA Advanced Target Scores and Levels at Ritter, 2003-7

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Mathematics					
Target Score	35	35	45	45	45
Actual Score	67.5	77	74.6	74.6	74.8
Reading					
Target Score	45	45	54	54	54
Actual Score	62.8	61.8	57.2	59.8	61.2

In Allentown, 10 elementary schools met the standards of Adequate Yearly Progress in 2006-7. Ritter Elementary School was among this group.

5. Test Results

In 2006, the Allentown School District examined the impact of the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** on student literacy as measured by the PSSA. The study, which was undertaken by Ms. Diane Holben, the Director of Evaluation and Accountability for the Allentown School District, posed two questions:

- Are there significant differences in PSSA test scores in literacy based on the following levels of program implementation for grades 3, 4, and 5?
 - **None:** program was not used in the classroom.
 - **Low:** program was used, but neither of the culminating projects was completed.
 - **Moderate** (grade 5 only): program was used and one culminating project was completed.
 - **High:** program was used, and students completed the mock Congressional hearing and the public policy portfolio.
- Are there significant differences in the scores on the reading subskills of Comprehension and Reading Skills (Anchor A) and the Interpretation and Analysis of Fiction and Non-Fiction Texts (Anchor B) for grades 3, 4, and 5 based on the level of program implementation?

Table 5 shows the following numbers of students in grades 3, 4, and 5 involved in this evaluation during the academic year 2005-6. All of the following tables are based on data gathered by the Allentown School District.

Table 5: Number of Students by Grade and Level of Implementation, Allentown 2005-6

Grade	None	Low	Moderate	High
3	43	888	--	354
4	8	544	--	548
5	--	394	683	114

Table 6 shows the comparison of PSSA Reading Anchor A raw scores by level of implementation throughout Allentown.

Table 6: PSSA Anchor A Raw Scores, Allentown, 2005-6

Grade	None	Low	Moderate	High
3	17	22 25	--	24 40
4	12	18 90	--	20 65
5	--	21 64	23 05	26 24

Table 7 shows the comparison of PSSA Reading Anchor B raw scores by level of implementation throughout Allentown.

Table 7: PSSA Anchor B Raw Scores, Allentown 2005-6

Grade	None	Low	Moderate	High
3	4 49	6 32	--	6 91
4	6 50	7 98	--	8 47
5	--	7 57	8 02	8 97

Table 8 shows the comparison of PSSA Reading scaled scores by level of implementation throughout Allentown.

Table 8: PSSA Reading Scaled Scores, 2005-6

Grade	None	Low	Moderate	High
3	1046	1204	--	1271
4	1024	1208	--	1253
5	--	1174	1220	1313

The results are very clear. In all three grades, there was a significant difference among implementation groups. The low implementation group had higher scores than students who were not in the program. In grade 5, the moderate implementation group had a higher score than the low implementation group. And in all three grades, the high implementation group scored significantly higher than the other three groups.

The differences in raw scores are educationally significant because each point in the raw score adds an average of about 15 scaled score points to the refined scores. In all three grades, the mean score for the high implementation group exceeded the score considered by the state of Pennsylvania to be “proficient” in reading.

Even though the test results are very clear, there may not be a direct cause and effect relationship between student scores and levels of implementation. While there is a correlation between higher average test scores and higher levels of implementation, correlation does not prove causality. It is possible that the most highly effective teachers choose to implement the program more fully than their colleagues. On the other hand, it also is possible that the program helps teachers of varied abilities to better teach the kinds of skills that are tested on the PSSA test. The data strongly indicates that higher test scores are the result of higher levels of implementation.

Dr. Sokolow asked Ms. Diane Holben to do a similar analysis for students at Ritter Elementary School. Students were divided into the same implementation categories – none, low, moderate,

and high – from kindergarten through fifth grade. Her analysis correlated grades and implementation levels with two measures. The DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) is a set of standardized, individually administered measures of early literacy development that are used to assess pre-reading and early reading skills from kindergarten through fifth grade. The other test measure was the PSSA reading test for grades three, four, and five.

Table 9 shows the DIBELS measure by level of implementation at Ritter Elementary School.

Table 9: DIBELS Analysis at Ritter Elementary School, 2005-6

Grade	DIBELS Measure	None	Low	Moderate	High
K	Letter Naming Fluency	9.78	--	--	13.66
1	Oral Reading Fluency	37.29	36.84	--	--
2	Oral Reading Fluency	75.41	86.47	--	--
3	Oral Reading Fluency	78.64	78.13	--	105.19
4	Oral Reading Fluency	83.20	--	--	110.18
5	Oral Reading Fluency	--	109.06	--	127.56

Table 10 shows PSSA reading scaled scores by level of implementation at Ritter Elementary School.

Table 10: PSSA Reading Scaled Scores at Ritter Elementary School, 2005-6

Grade	None	Low	Moderate	High
3	1046.37	1193.50	--	1318.92
4	1023.88	--	--	1299.21
5	--	1249.32	--	1329.52

The results are very clear. At Ritter Elementary School, there is a direct correlation between the highest test scores and the high implementation classrooms. On the DIBELS analysis, the high implementation groups scored significantly higher than those students not in the program, and in grade five where all students were involved in the program, the high implementation group scored significantly higher than the low implementation group. There are two exceptions to this generalization. The low implementation programs in grades 1 and 3 scored slightly lower than those students who had not participated in the program.

On the PSSA reading scaled scores, in grade three the low implementation group scored higher than those students not in the program, and the high implementation group scored significantly higher than the low group. In grade four, there was only a high implementation group, and it scored higher than those students not in the program. In grade 5, there were no students outside the program, but the high implementation group did significantly better than the only other group tested, the low implementation group.

A limitation of this study at Ritter was that the majority of teachers were in the high implementation group, and that correlation does not prove causality. Nonetheless, differences in test scores are very dramatic. Based on District and Ritter comparisons, there is a positive correlation between higher levels of implementation of the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** and higher achievement levels on Pennsylvania standardized tests. This result suggests that higher test scores are the result of higher levels of implementation.

This is significant. Throughout Allentown, it appears that the program helps elementary school students master comprehension, reading, and analysis skills. The more involved students are in the program at all grade levels, the better they master these skills as measured on standardized tests. This generalization certainly applies to the high implementation group at Ritter Elementary School.

6. Surveys and Focus Groups

As part of the school climate study, Dr. Sokolow conducted three focus groups with parents, two focus groups with Ritter students, and two focus groups with Ritter teachers. There were 31 parents involved in the focus groups. All of them had volunteered to participate during the school day. There were 24 students ranging from kindergarten through fifth grade involved in the focus groups. All of them had been chosen by their teachers to participate. Twenty-two teachers participated in one teacher focus group, which was conducted over an hour-and-a-half in the teachers lounge as they ate lunch. Their comments are summarized below. Another eight teachers from around Allentown participated in another focus group held in Pasadena, California, during a 2007 **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** conference.

6.1 Teacher Survey and Questionnaire

In early June of 2007, a survey and questionnaire developed by Dr. Sokolow was e-mailed to all 30 Ritter teachers by the principal. Teachers received \$30 for completing and returning the survey. Despite this financial incentive, Dr. Sokolow received only seven surveys covering the following grades: kindergarten, first, third, fourth, and fifth. The results are discussed below.

Teachers in the early grades (kindergarten through third grade) liked the program because it was consistent, used a common vocabulary and common concepts from grade to grade, and included good teachers' materials. One teacher also praised the support of Mr. Yoder.

Fourth and fifth grade teachers also liked the spiraling curriculum that started in kindergarten. They considered the program especially effective because every classroom in the school participated. They especially praised the mock Congressional hearing and the public policy portfolio with its emphasis on citizenship. One teacher liked the incorporation of the community into students' learning and the connections the program makes from students' individual experiences to the world around them.

Although all the teachers liked the program very much, they also had suggestions about improving it. A common complaint was that the *We the People* book did not give students enough history, geography, and map skills prior to the study of the Constitution. They recommended either that the book be revised or that teachers insert a unit on early American history into the program prior to discussing the origins of the Constitution.

Others suggested that additional primary sources would be useful and that a scaled-down version of the public policy portfolio would be welcomed by students in the early grades. Finally, several teachers thought that some lessons were repetitive.

Most teachers thought they had enough time to complete the curriculum over an academic year. However, they also pointed out that the social studies curriculum contains other units that must be covered on local, state, and international topics.

All teachers agreed that the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** had benefited their students by introducing them to important terms and ideas, by helping them think about and solve problems, and by helping them understand that they have an important role to play in their classrooms, school, and society. Several teachers also believed that the program had helped students understand authority better and take greater responsibility for their own actions. One teacher pointed out that a valuable lesson students learned is that “life is not always fair.” In general, teachers thought that one of the greatest benefits of the program involved helping students understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

Teachers also praised the program for its impact on them. One teacher wrote that the program “has taught me how to effectively manage my students and guide them toward a goal.” Another teacher wrote that the program had helped “me to teach the concepts that are important in the life of a small child.” Several teachers believed that the program had broadened their understanding of democracy and the role of citizenship in our society.

Teachers had similar views about the impact of the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** on Ritter Elementary School. As one teacher wrote, students “have become empowered as ambassadors of good citizenship in their relationships between fellow students and staff.” Another teacher wrote that our “school has a wonderful feel to it and the program is definitely part of that. The children learn to respect authority and be responsible or suffer the consequences.” They also pointed out that the program related nicely to Allentown School District’s no bullying policy and curriculum.

“There is a sense of community from all staff and students. Students are aware that everyone is on the same page.” According to those surveyed, the program had made Ritter students more aware of themselves as part of a larger community and led to very favorable media attention. All this has made Ritter a prouder and more cohesive elementary school.

The survey included a checklist of 39 statements that were divided into four categories: (1) faculty relations; (2) leadership/decisions; (3) learning assessment; and (4) attitudes and culture. Teachers were asked to respond to these statements by checking one of four boxes that ranged from strongly disagree, disagree, agree, to strongly agree.

On faculty relationships, teachers generally thought that faculty listened to each other and collaborated. They also believed that morale was high among teachers and that they saw themselves as professionals.

Most teachers also believed that the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** had a sense of mission that was shared by teachers. Leadership was collegial, caring, and open toward teachers and supported them in the classroom. Several teachers, however, believed that Ritter’s leadership did not fully understand the time constraints teachers were under to cover all the material in social studies.

Teachers had a very positive view of learning and assessment, and believed that the program promoted student achievement and the acquisition of civics-related knowledge. Expectations were high for all students, and teachers and students were committed to academic excellence. Several teachers, however, thought that parents needed to be better informed about their children's progress in social studies on a more regular basis.

Teachers also praised the attitudes and culture that the program fostered. From their perspective, everyone was working toward common goals in social studies.

6.2 Teacher Focus Groups

Teachers overwhelmingly reported that the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** had helped them teach social studies more effectively. They praised the common vocabulary that is used from grade to grade and how the curriculum builds on previous knowledge and class work. Teachers thought that students enjoyed the topics, although several of them thought that privacy and justice were difficult for very young students to understand. They also praised the structure of the curriculum and the focus on the Constitution.

Several teachers, however, believed that there should be more history and geography in the curriculum. In the upper elementary grades, students needed to learn about early American history before they could study the Constitution. Prior knowledge was assumed in the program, but it does not exist among their students.

Teachers also thought that the program had a positive impact on their own knowledge of American history and government. They liked learning more about the Constitution. Several teachers conceded that the curriculum made them realize that they needed more training. As one teacher said, "I better understand the technicalities of the terms. I am better informed of the working and legal definitions."

According to the teachers, the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** had encouraged them to collaborate more frequently because they all are teaching the same program. As one teacher said, "the dialogue is open." Collaboration was especially strong on the public policy portfolio. Teachers also pointed out that having the entire school involved with the program fostered the accumulation of knowledge and experience and frequent discussions about the curriculum.

Teachers believed that the program has had a positive impact on their relationship with students. When students understood concepts such as authority, respect, and responsibility, they understand teachers' roles better. When students helped develop class rules, they better understand what teachers expect of them. Ritter's behavior plan works better because students and teachers share the same expectations throughout the building.

Teachers praised the principal's leadership in the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**. She provided strong support throughout the school year, which encouraged teachers to participate and stay enthused.

Teachers thought that the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** had helped their students a great deal. The program had promoted a sense of community. Children understood their roles as students well. They understood the concept of authority and take their work seriously. Students felt empowered by the program and were able to use words such as privacy and responsibility in the classroom and on the playground. The program helps “make them feel responsible.” As a result, many of the students “seem to think before they act.”

The **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** also had a beneficial impact on students’ families. According to teachers, parents are beginning to use the same terminology from the program as their children. Students share their plans for the public policy portfolio with their families, and parents report that as a result their children are more aware of how to identify and solve problems in Allentown. Teachers reported that students are cleaning up the neighborhood, which makes their parents proud of them.

Finally, teachers believed that the program “makes our school stronger.” It had reinforced the no bullying and discipline policies at Ritter. It had helped students understand that “they can make a difference in their community.” It had increased student curiosity and student interest in academics, especially in the public policy portfolio. Students had embraced a common vocabulary and the “scaffolding of learning works well within the framework.”

Teachers were proud that Ritter and Allentown have been recognized for its **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**. The program had boosted their confidence and encouraged them to communicate and collaborate with other teachers in the District.

In the focus group conducted in Pasadena, California, during a 2007 **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** conference, teachers had very similar responses. They praised the program highly and thought it had strengthened their schools and helped make them better teachers.

6.3 Student Focus Groups

When asked what they had learned, students were very specific. According to them, these are the most important concepts they have learned in the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**:

- You have to share and respect.
- No bullying is important. You should not kick, hit, or punch.
- Justice is important because it is about fairness and kindness.
- Privacy means that you do not invade others’ privacy.
- Responsibility means you get your priorities straight.
- Responsibility means follow through with what you promise to do, like a contract.
- Responsibility means there are consequences and benefits to being responsible.
- Privacy is when you keep things to yourself.
- Government is designed to keep order and make rules.
- Authority is needed, especially your mother and father.

When asked about the impact of the program, students said that they have learned to “share your stuff,” “say thank you and you say you’re welcome,” and respect the privacy of others. One

student said that if “I get mad at my friends, I control my anger more because of social studies.” Students believed that the program had helped them develop better relations with their friends through greater-self-control and respect.

They made similar comments about their brothers and sisters. Many students said the program had helped them get along better with their brothers and sisters. As one student colorfully put it, “Anger shouldn’t be taken out on our family. We can squeeze a toy instead of our brother or sister.” Some students said that they felt more responsible toward their younger siblings as a result of the program and to “make sure that they don’t do anything wrong. That’s our responsibility.”

Students had similar comments about their parents. As a result of the program, they understand their parents’ roles and responsibilities better. As one student said, “don’t give your parents attitude when its time to stop playing with your friends because you get into trouble.”

Students also believed that the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** had helped them mature. One student said that “I’m a better person because of social studies.” Another student said that she understands responsibility better and that there are rewards for doing good things and “consequences for doing bad things.” Several students volunteered that they help more with dishes, the laundry, and other household tasks because they understand the concept of responsibility better. Finally, several students thought that studying the concept of privacy had helped them to respect their siblings more.

These students believed that Ritter had benefited from the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** too. As one student said, “responsibility and rules help Ritter to work. It would be nuts without rules.” Another student thought that “rules help Ritter to be organized. Everyone follows them and helps.” Students overwhelmingly thought that the program had helped them to behave more responsibly and to recognize the authority of the principal and teachers.

6.4 Parent Focus Groups

Several parents noticed very positive changes in their children that they attribute to the program. As one parent said, “children are working as a team. They are trying to resolve conflicts together, instead of one leader running the show.” The parent of a second grader said that the program had made his son conscious of school rules. Yet another parent said that their children are “working out conflicts, trying to talk things out, rather than getting physical.”

Although several parents said that their children did not talk about social studies, seven parents thought that social studies had made their children more knowledgeable about American history and government. One mother said that her son had become interested in children’s literature that dealt with civil rights and slavery. He talks to his parents and friends about history. This woman said it was a “joy” to see her son become engaged in social studies. One mother even admitted that she was learning about history from her six-year-old son.

Parents were happy that the program had encouraged their children to respect their teachers. All parents agreed that their children liked their teachers and showed respect toward them. One

parent said that her daughter loved her teacher and thought that she was the “best in the world.” Another parent recounted that her daughter gave her teacher a big hug when she left at the end of the day. These parents believed that the program had helped build stronger relations between their children and teachers.

Parents talked a great deal about the impact of the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** on their children’s relations with peers. According to most of them, the program had taught their children to help resolve arguments and conflicts without fighting immediately. “They are learning to respect the rights of others,” said one parent. “Children have been quoting the rules of the school.”

Parents also were pleased that older students were setting a good example for the younger ones. For this reason, they wanted to see the program implemented in the middle and high schools. Several parents said that the program had helped make their children more accepting and tolerant of others, which they considered a very positive development.

Parents thought that the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** had made Ritter a better school. One parent admitted that she was “petrified” to send her children to an Allentown school because the District had such a bad reputation, but her “eyes were opened at Ritter.” She thought that the “seed is planted at Ritter to carry through the rest of schooling.” Other parents agreed. Ritter is a safe and respectful school where their children are learning.

These parents wanted more information sent home about what is being taught in social studies. In fact, most of them wanted additional time devoted to social studies in their children’s classrooms.

They were pleased that their children were proud of Ritter and acted responsibly on school property. Several parents singled out principal Melissa Marcks for her leadership at Ritter.

Few of the parents were aware that the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** is a special program. Most of them equated it with the standard social curriculum.

7. Ritter School Climate

7.1 Introduction

As Peter Levine has argued in **The Future of Democracy: Developing the Next Generation of American Citizens** (2006), there are two basic models for understanding the civic education of young people. One is what he calls the “psychological deficits” model. This model assumes, in his words, that “there are problems with young people’s civic skills, knowledge, confidence and values,” and thus schools need to help improve young people’s civic abilities and attitudes. Levine calls the second model “institutional reform,” which is based on the premise that there are flaws in our institutions that make the acquisition of civic attitudes and engagement difficult.

The **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** is based on a combination of both these models. On the one hand, the program assumes that elementary school is the place to begin teaching young people the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and the value of civic

engagement. On the other hand, the program is based on the assumption that elementary social studies needs to be enriched if students are to become engaged citizens.

Any description of a school's climate is necessarily subjective, even if it is based on quantitative evidence, and so now I will begin to use the first person singular when it is appropriate. This study will examine the impact of the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** at Ritter Elementary School by examining seven key elements of its school climate:

1. Physical appearance.
2. Faculty relations.
3. Student relations.
4. Leadership.
5. Attitudes.
6. The classroom.
7. Active citizenship.

7.2 Physical Appearance

School staff and students take ownership of Ritter's school appearance. There is no litter in school or on school grounds. Graffiti is rare because students feel some sense of ownership of the school, and if graffiti appears, it is cleaned up quickly. At Ritter, students have discussed the problem of litter from kindergarten onwards as part of the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** and as part of their fifth grade public policy portfolio projects. As a result, students equate keeping Ritter neat with being good citizens.

Student and faculty bathrooms are clean and well maintained. Staff and students have respect for the school custodians and other maintenance staff who periodically come to Ritter to deliver supplies or make repairs.

Classrooms and grounds are clean and well-maintained. The classrooms are visible and inviting.

The hallways are very colorful with class hall displays identified by grade. There is one unique display that typifies the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**. At the beginning of the year, several classrooms wrote their own constitutions, signed them, and placed them on their classroom walls. These constitutions enumerated the rights and responsibilities of students and teachers with an emphasis on what students and teachers should expect from each other.

7.3 Faculty Relations

One important element of school climate involves faculty relations. According to decades of educational research, in effective schools teachers have good interpersonal relations with their peers and create a professional community with shared norms and practices.

At Ritter Elementary School, faculty relations are very good, and the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** has played an important role in fostering collegial behavior. Although teachers are in their classrooms most of the day, they are not isolated from their peers. They chat in the hallways and eat lunch together in the teachers' cafeteria. They

also meet periodically to discuss curricula and plan lessons. As a result, there are informal and formal opportunities for faculty to collaborate.

In my visits to classrooms and the teachers' cafeteria, I never heard any students denigrated. When teachers mentioned particular students, they were discussed respectfully and constructively. Teachers also were constructive when speaking about each other or administrators. They used plenty of humor to describe school, as teachers often do, but usually at their own expense.

At any school, the teachers' lounge is an important site to observe faculty relations because (1) the lounge is a defined and separate space that is considered the territory of teachers; and (2) teachers interacting in the lounge create their own social organization. There is no teachers' lounge at Ritter, but there is a teachers' cafeteria that is crowded and lively 90 minutes a day during overlapping lunch periods. It is located behind the students' cafeteria and has a separate entrance, which affords a modicum of privacy.

At Ritter, the teachers' cafeteria is a pleasant place. Teachers treat this space as a good place to relax, eat, grouse about the lunch they hurriedly prepared, and talk with colleagues. The principal drops in to eat lunch, but her presence does not seem to inhibit teachers from talking, joking, and enjoying themselves.

The teachers' cafeteria is not a place where professional power struggles are played out. There is no sense of competitiveness and secrecy, and no one acts as a leader at the tables. There are no regular seating arrangements, which usually are associated with a hierarchical structure among teachers.

According to numerous studies of school climate, high-achievement schools have lively and supportive teachers' lounges that encourage social interaction for professional collaboration. This description fits the Ritter teachers' cafeteria well.

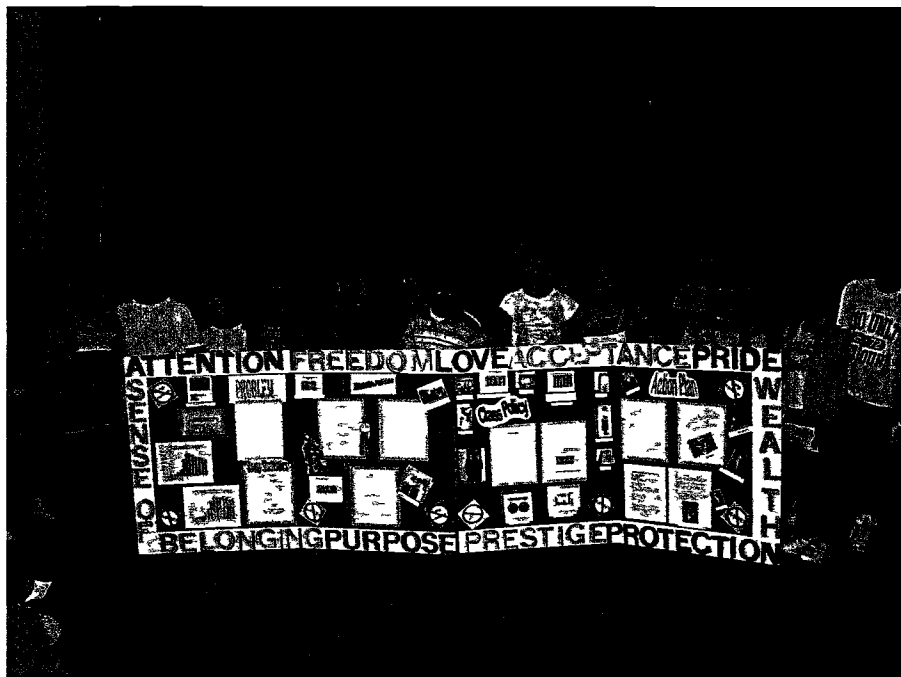
In this sense, the program helps contribute to improved faculty relations by enabling teachers to function as an informal professional learning community for 90 minutes each day. Although conversations are brief and unstructured, teachers consider them helpful and encouraging. In the absence of frequent group planning periods, the teachers' cafeteria serves as the place where faculty learns what their colleagues are doing in the program. Through the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**, Ritter teachers have formed an informal but effective professional learning community.

The program also is used by student teachers and substitute teachers. They spoke highly of the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** and seemed adept at using the curriculum in their own teaching.

7.4 Student Relations

The concepts of authority, privacy, responsibility, and justice are taught throughout the school year on every grade level, often through stories that are required reading. One reason why these concepts permeate Ritter is because Ms. Melissa Bell, a retired Allentown high school English teacher and the co-coordinator of the program site with Myron Yoder, has integrated that curriculum of the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** with the required classroom readings at each grade level. As a result, teachers can seamlessly integrate social studies and English in ways that strengthen both subjects.

The **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** has provided a solid and usable framework for students. As a result, students treat each other respectfully because everyone has the same expectations about what constitutes proper behavior.



The School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program promotes better relations among students.

Students feel safe from violence and find Ritter's orderly environment and rules reasonable and comforting. Throughout the school, students are encouraged to put into practice what they have learned about authority, privacy, responsibility, and justice. As a result, they take responsibility for their own behavior, which means treating their fellow students with respect. The emphasis of the program on reciprocal rights and responsibilities helps students to understand the golden rule.

The principal and teachers strongly believed that discipline problems seriously declined once Ritter began implementing its **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**. According to several teachers, a subtle but important example of the program's impact on student interaction can be seen on the school playground. Before the program began, students frequently visited the school nurse as a result of rough play. However, visits to the school nurse

have declined since the program began. Students now play more cooperatively and less violently with each other on the playground, which teachers attribute to the program's emphasis on responsibility.

Students seem happy to be at Ritter and do not act insecure or afraid of their fellow students. There is plenty of horseplay before school and on the playgrounds, particularly by boys, but no fighting.

The Allentown School District has an explicit no bullying policy, complete with lessons plans for guidance counselors and teachers. As several teachers pointed out to me, the no-bullying curriculum fits nicely into the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** with its emphasis on the peaceful resolution of disputes. During my seven months at Ritter, I did not witness any fighting among students or hear about any school fights.

7.5 Leadership

Ritter Elementary School is unusual in that principal Ms. Melissa Marcks taught in the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** and served as a trainer before becoming principal. As a result, she has a superb understanding of the program and is deeply committed to it. This is a key element in the success of the program at Ritter.

Quietly but effectively on a day-to day basis, Ms. Marcks conveys the importance of the program to teachers and support staff. Because of her background, she has credibility and a high level of trust and respect from teachers.

Ms. Marcks attributes much of Ritter's positive school climate to the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**. She believes that disciplinary problems in the school have declined 90 percent since the program began, which enables students and teachers to focus on learning. She also thinks that the program has encouraged Ritter teachers to lecture less and to have more and better discussions in their classrooms.

The steady work of Myron Yoder, Allentown School District's social studies coordinator and the co-coordinator of the program, also contributes to Ritter's success. Mr. Yoder, a former Allentown high school social studies teacher, is a strong and knowledgeable advocate for the program. He is constantly providing teachers with updates, information, curricular materials, and after-school enrichment activities to keep them informed and engaged. On the Allentown School District's internal Web site, he has even created a separate directory for teachers to access program curricular materials for their classrooms.

Much of the literature on educational effectiveness focuses on the critical importance of school leadership. Ms. Marcks is an example of how one principal can use her own experience in the program as a springboard to improve the school climate.

7.6 Attitudes

At Ritter Elementary School, students are proud of their school and feel like they are part of a community. This pride and sense of belonging partly come from the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**. This is an excellent example of the program's non-academic impact on the school's climate.

From kindergarten through fifth grade, students share a common vocabulary and set of concepts. They understand what it means to be a responsible person and a good citizen, and they know that their understanding is shared by teachers and administrators. As a result, everyone at Ritter feels as though they are working toward collective goals.

Students feel that teachers are listening to them, that they are represented, and that they have a voice in the school. They feel welcome and comfortable in talking to adults. Students speak about Ritter in proud, positive terms, and perhaps most importantly, they have a sense of belonging to something larger than themselves.

There is a very caring atmosphere at Ritter. Students feel loved and respected, and they seem to enjoy being in school. According to the surveys and focus groups, this partly stems from the lessons learned in the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**.

7.7 The Classroom

Over the past decade, there have been numerous studies done of civic education and elementary education. On the positive side, the 2006 National Assessment of Educational Progress showed that students in the fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades made gains in their knowledge of US and world history since the test was last administered in 2001. Seventy percent of fourth graders, 65 percent of eighth graders, and 47 percent of twelfth graders scored at or above the basic level of knowledge in history.

On the civics portion of the test, however, there was no significant increase in civic knowledge for eighth or twelfth graders since 1998. In these grades, the test focused on skills such as interpreting documents, analyzing arguments, and demonstrating the dispositions and responsibilities of citizenship.

On the elementary level, the educational news is more negative. In a 2007 issue of the journal *Science*, Robert C. Pianta and his colleagues reported on their observations of 2,500 elementary school classrooms in 400 school districts throughout the United States. According to this report, three out of four classrooms were "dull, bleak" places where little thinking was occurring.

Fifth graders spent 91 percent of their time either listening to the teacher or completing low-level worksheets. The authors of the study concluded that a typical student in these classrooms had a 1 in 14 chance of being in a stimulating learning environment, which are not very good odds. In another study, researchers found that coloring occupies more class time in some elementary schools than reading and mathematics combined.

This report and many others have concluded that good instruction has more impact on learning and on achievement than any other factor. Effective teaching may be rare, but it is critical to academic success.

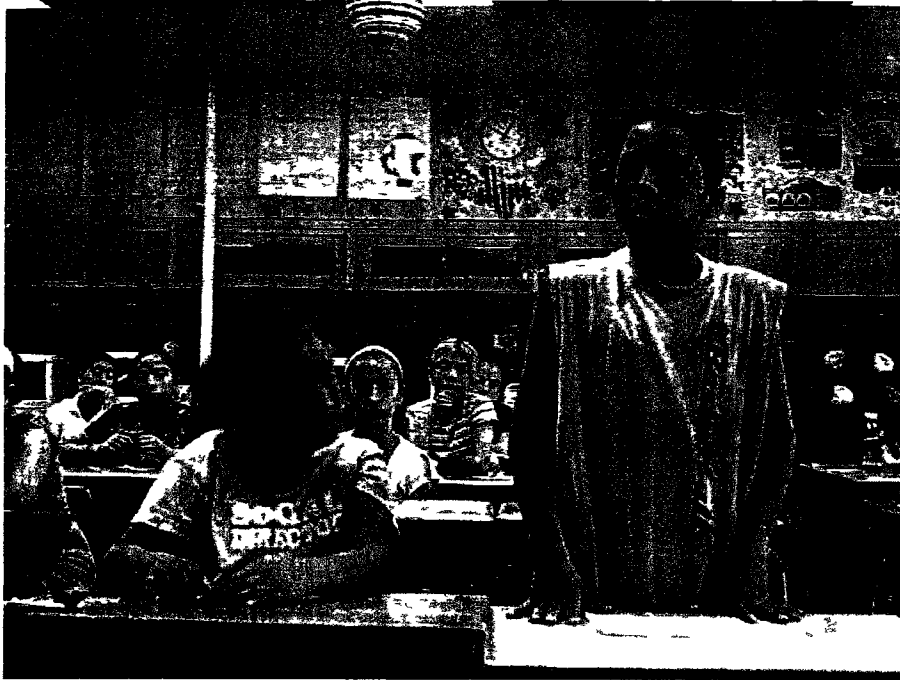
The **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** is an effective citizenship program at Ritter because the curriculum has these characteristics:

- Realistic content and a balanced, nonpartisan treatment of issues, controversies, and problems.
- A combination of important dates, facts, people, and events along with ideas, values, and principles of democracy.
- The use of community resources to enrich classroom instruction and learning and connect students to the world outside their classrooms.
- Engaging teaching strategies that focus on (1) class discussions; (2) effective questioning strategies; (3) small-group learning; (4) role-playing and debating; and (5) two culminating activities – the mock Congressional hearing and the public policy portfolio.

The **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** addresses the shortcomings described in recent school reports by enabling students to study important content in ways that increases their knowledge, skills, and importantly, their civic dispositions.

On my first day at Ritter, I arrived late in the morning because I had been meeting with school officials in downtown Allentown. When I approached the front door, a student standing next to me outside the building opened the front door after we were buzzed in and beckoned me to enter the building first.

My first impressions of Ritter did not change over a seventh-month period. I found the students, friendly, polite, and eager to learn; the teachers welcoming and nurturing; and the administration supportive. The school was an orderly and learning-focused environment where everyone was engaged in a common enterprise.



The School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program encourages thoughtful class discussions about American government and history.

Most classroom lessons either come directly from the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** curriculum or use the program to teach reading and literature. Below are two examples from grade 1 and 2 lessons on responsibility.

Table 11: Grade 1: Lesson on Responsibility (30 minutes)

Lesson Elements	Teacher/Student Activities
Review	Teacher leads discussion of yesterday's story about "The Zookeeper" around this question: who is responsible for opening the cage?
Reading	Teacher finishes the story.
Discussion	Teacher asks questions about responsibility and authority.
Class Activity	Teacher hands out pictures of the main characters to students who are placed in different parts of the room. Students had to choose which character was the most responsible and deserved an award by going over to the picture of that character. Before choosing a character, students had to close their eyes and think who made the zoo a wonderful place.

Table 12: Grade 2: Lesson on Responsibility (40 minutes)

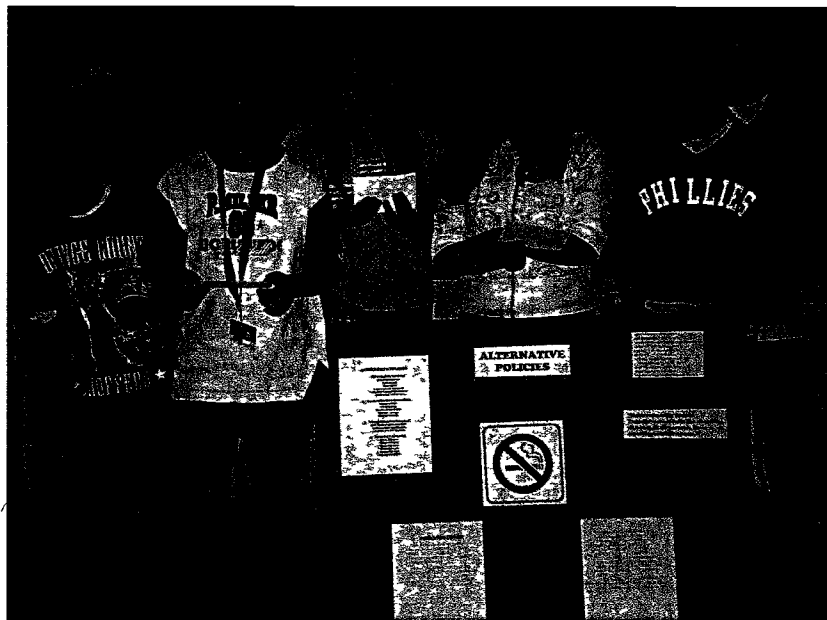
Lesson Elements	Teacher/Student Activities
Nice Book	Teacher discusses the "Nice Book," where teachers and students write special things in a book about classroom activities, such as a student helping another student on the computer. Teacher reads several recent examples.
Review	Teacher and students review definitions of responsibility, benefits, and costs.
Book Reading	Teacher reads "Horton Hatches an Egg" by Dr. Seuss.
Board Work	Teacher creates a three-column chart on "responsibility" with columns for home, school, and community, and students give examples.
Discussion	Students discuss costs and benefits of the characters in the Dr. Seuss story.
Workbook	Students list two costs and benefits from the story about Horton.

In both classes, students were orderly, focused, and eager to participate. They seemed to enjoy the lesson judging by their smiles and responses.

In the upper grades, the program becomes more oriented around government, history, and the Constitution. For example, in one fifth grade class on the three branches of government, first there was a review of the three branches of government, then students made a mobile coat hanger of the three branches, which would hang in their classroom, and then students did group work with their books.

In another fifth grade class, students had chosen smoking as their public policy portfolio. The class began with a discussion of smoking, clean air, and the steps involved in developing a public policy portfolio. Then the class divided into groups. One member from each group researched bibliographical sources on the class computers. While they were researching, the groups had to come up with a list of five questions to ask a local Pennsylvania State Representative who would be visiting their classroom the next day.

Afterwards, groups organized their portfolio information and worked on letters to state political figures asking them to support pending legislation that would limit smoking in public places and many private establishments. The class ended with silent reading on the subject of smoking and clean air.



A fifth grade class's public policy portfolio on smoking, which won third prize in the city's public policy portfolio contest.

That next day, I met the state representative. He told me that students were polite and well-behaved, and that they had asked him some of the best questions he had heard from young people.

At Ritter, class discussions in the program elicited varying kinds of responses. On April 26, 2006, I recorded the following kinds of student responses in four different classrooms:

Table 13: Class Discussions in Four Social Studies Classes

Class	One Word	Several Words	Extended
Second Grade: Learning about Privacy Time: 50 minutes Students discussed the concepts of privacy, authority, and responsibility and then applied it and explained their choices.	9	7	21
Third Grade: Learning about Privacy Time: 50 minutes Students discussed the role of privacy in e-mails, telephone conversations, thoughts and feelings, beliefs, behavior, space, friendships, and organizations.	12	18	11
Kindergarten: Lesson on Friendship Time: 15 minutes Teacher read "The Very Lonely Firefly" and students did board work on adjectives for how friends should act toward each other (nice, loving, friendly, sharing, etc.).	2	--	5
Kindergarten: Lesson on Privacy Time: 15 minutes Teacher read "Jessica Fish" and students discussed privacy with pictures and then drew a picture showing privacy.	3	4	1
Total:	25	29	38

At Ritter, some teachers were extremely effective at eliciting sustained student responses while other teachers usually asked questions that required a one-word answer. The **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** encourages teachers to view question and response sequences as an important feature of the curriculum. According to the teacher guide for the primary grades, teachers should plan six types of questions: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

In all the classes I visited over a seven-month period, teachers eschewed lecturing. Every classroom lesson actively involved students. Several teachers were very adept at encouraging students to react to other students' responses, and all of them called on non-volunteers as well as volunteers. Not all teachers, however, focused on eliciting extended responses that involved application, analysis, and evaluation.

In several classrooms, students used special journal program booklets that had been created at Ritter and are now used throughout the Allentown elementary schools. However, I observed few formal writing activities in connection with the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**. This may be a result of teachers following *Learning About the Foundations of Democracy: Teacher's Guide for Primary Grades* (2000). This comprehensive guide focuses primarily on pedagogical methodologies unrelated to writing, such as conducting class discussions, using effective questioning strategies, and encouraging small group learning. The

27 lesson plans recommend a wide variety of creative and stimulating classroom activities, but writing is slighted as a way of learning.

If I had to identify the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** at its best in the classroom, I would pick a discussion I had with a fifth grade class on June 5, 2006. Earlier that day, this class had learned that their public policy portfolio on “Earth No Emergency Exit” (global warming) had received first place in the State of Pennsylvania Project Citizen Finals. I spoke to the class about their project for 30 minutes.



Ritter students become actively engaged through their public policy portfolio projects.

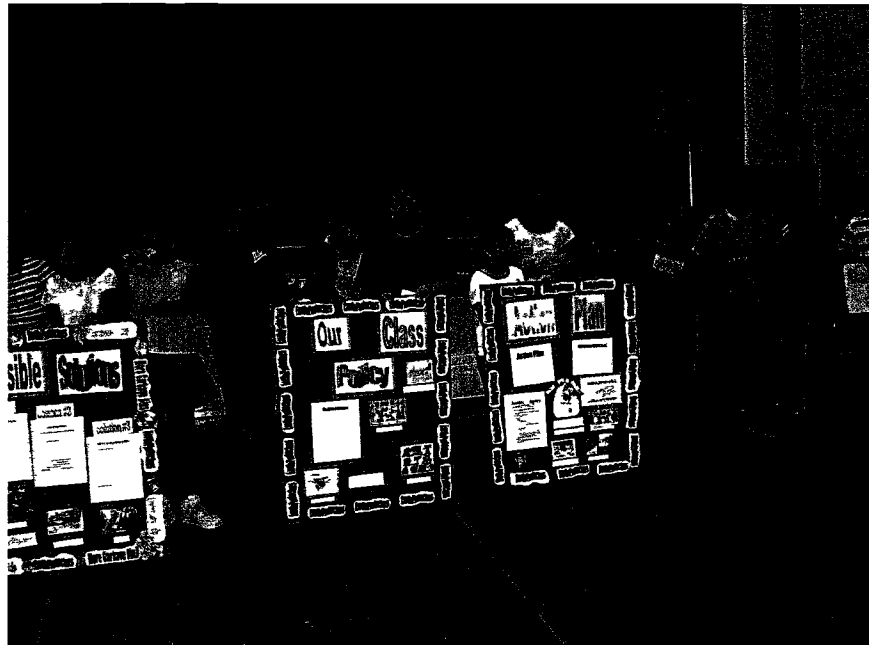
First, I had them describe how they had chosen the topic of global warming and what they had done to prepare their portfolio. Then I asked them how their project had changed not just their attitudes, but their everyday behavior. Many students articulately described the changes they are making in their lives to make the earth a cleaner and healthier place. It was very moving, and exemplified the power of the public policy portfolio to help students become more informed and engaged citizens.

7.8 Active Citizenship

Numerous tests and studies have demonstrated that there is a large civic achievement gap between poor, some minority groups, and immigrant youths in comparison to middle-class, white, and native-born youths. As early as the fourth grade, African-American, Hispanic, and poor students perform significantly worse on the civics portion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress than white, Asian, and middle class students. These trends continue into adulthood and manifest themselves in different levels of civic engagement, from voting to lower levels of participation in voluntary organizations.

As Annette Lareau has shown in **Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life** (2003), poor and working-class families often have to deal with dysfunctional public institutions or a lack of resources and opportunities. But they have low expectations of these institutions and often have difficulty navigating or changing them. Part of this problem is educational.

On National Assessment of Educational Progress tests, minorities and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds score lower than white and middle-class students, and they also report differences in the quality of instruction in their social studies classrooms. They were least likely to be engaged in dynamic and interactive classroom learning activities, such as mock trials, mock Congressional hearings, letter writing, and visits from community leaders. As a result, they are less likely to master the skills needed to become active citizens.



At Ritter, all students in the program learn how to become engaged citizens.

Ritter, like most of Allentown's schools, is a majority-minority school. Hispanic and African American student outnumber white students, and many students come from working-class or poor families. There also are significant academic achievement gaps between economically deprived and non-economically deprived students. At Ritter, however, all students in the program are learning to be active citizens, especially those in high implementation classrooms.

All students study the same curriculum, use the same concepts, and learn the same skills. In the high implementation classrooms, all students participate in a mock Congressional hearing and a public policy portfolio project. Regardless of their backgrounds, grades, and skills, from kindergarten through fifth grade they are engaged in dynamic and interactive learning activities that build their knowledge, skills, and civic dispositions in American history and government.

At Ritter, students are being educated to believe that civic and political participation can improve their neighborhoods, city, and nation. And just as importantly, they are learning the knowledge and skills to be effectively engaged.

8. The Power of Place-based Education

In **The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life** (1998), historians Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelan examine the results of an in-depth national survey on Americans' uses of history. They found that many ordinary people are engaged in the past because it provides them with meaning and purpose. The survey also uncovered adult's deep alienation from the social studies they had been taught in school. Many of those surveyed liked their social studies teachers but found the study of history and civics boring and irrelevant. To them, it was little more than a jumble of disconnected facts and dates that seemed remote from their own lives.

In contrast, **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** is a place-based program, and that may explain much of its value to students and teachers. Place-based educators, who are prominent in outdoor or environmental education, believe that education should prepare people to sustain the integrity of the places they inhabit. These are the characteristics of place-based education:

- It emerges from the particular attributes of a place, such as the environment, history, government, and politics.
- It is inherently experiential.
- It is reflective of an educational philosophy broader than "learn to earn."
- It connects place with self and community.

The **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** may function like successful environmental programs by focusing learning directly within the local community of the student, which helps connect young people as citizens to their schools, neighborhoods, communities, and country.

When students at Ritter study privacy, authority, justice, and responsibility, they are not examining dry, distant abstractions. They are studying concepts and situations that are immediate and relevant to their lives. As a result, the program helps them better understand who they are and what they can accomplish as citizens, now and in the future.

In the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**, everything is filtered through the individual student, who is taught that he or she is a member of a civic community and has a potentially important role to play in sustaining a democracy. The program may be successful at Ritter because it increases students' sense of stewardship toward the school and adds to their sense of attachment toward their community.

9. Conclusion

Ritter Elementary School exemplifies what is best in the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**. In a quiet but determined fashion, Ritter administrators and teachers have made the program permeate the entire building. The academic and non-academic climate of Ritter is very palpable. Students understand the concepts of authority, privacy, responsibility, and justice from kindergarten through fifth grade. From the classroom to the hallways and from the playground to the cafeteria, students at Ritter believe that it is important to act in a civic fashion.

Teachers and administrators treat students with respect. Students treat teachers and administrators with respect. Everyone understands the rules and believes they are fair. There is order and purpose throughout the school. And the school understands that one of its major purposes is to develop the next generation of American citizens. Ritter operates on the assumption that students are more likely to succeed in life if they are civically engaged.

The **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** is helping improve Ritter in another significant way. According to statewide and district test results, there is a positive correlation between high implementation classrooms and high state scores in reading and writing. The more involved students are in the program at all grade levels from kindergarten through fifth grade, the better they master these skills as measured on state standardized tests. For this reason alone, Ritter should strongly encourage all elementary school teachers to use the full curriculum and to complete the two culminating projects, the mock Congressional hearing and the public policy portfolio.

Through Ritter's **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**, students are learning that they need to master knowledge, skills, and develop certain kinds of attitudes to address public problems and be active, engaged citizens. They also are learning that public institutions are likely to work better when citizens participate in public life. These are important and valuable lessons, and Ritter understands they are best learned when young.

At the other three elementary schools I visited in Allentown, I observed the program working in similarly effective ways. Principals, teachers, and students were as enthusiastic about the **School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program** as they were at Ritter and believed it had helped make their schools stronger and more successful.

Perhaps the value of the program can be summed up by an activity that took place in one of Ritter's fourth grade classes. During the unit on justice, students were outraged to learn of the "civil unrest and Jim Crow laws that once permeated parts of the country," in the words of their teacher.

Together, they wrote a letter to Ruby Bridges to congratulate her on the heroic, groundbreaking steps she took to desegregate the New Orleans public schools as a nine-year-old in 1960. By studying about Ruby Bridges and writing a letter to her, students are learning that even elementary school students have important roles to play as citizens.

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Appendix A: Teacher Survey

**Ritter Teacher School Climate Survey:
School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program**

Survey

Name _____

Grade Taught _____

Number of Years Teaching _____

Number of Years Teaching in the SVPDP _____

Please answer the following questions in writing.

1. List up to four aspects of the SVPDP that you like.

2. List up to four aspects of the SVPDP that you would change.

3. Do you have enough time to complete the entire curriculum? Why or why not?

4. Describe briefly whether or not the SVPDP has benefited your students.

5. Describe briefly whether or not the SVPDP has benefited you.

6. Describe briefly whether or not the SVPDP has benefited the parents of your students.

7. Describe briefly whether or not the SVPDP has benefited Ritter Elementary School.

8. Do you have an anecdote to illustrate any of the above benefits? If so, briefly tell your anecdote.

Please rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements as they apply to the SVPDP by placing an "x" in the appropriate box.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Faculty Relations				
1. Faculty commonly collaborate on matters of teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Faculty approach problems as a team/collective.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Faculty are typically constructive when speaking of each other or administrators.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Faculty have a high level of respect for each other.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Leadership roles are most likely performed by faculty with other faculty expressing their appreciation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Faculty has the time and interest to communicate with each other and do not feel isolated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Morale is high among teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Teachers are confident and knowledgeable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Professional development is useful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leadership/Decisions				
1. The program has a sense of mission that is shared by teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Decisions about the program are grounded in the mission.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The vast majority of teachers feel valued and listened to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. A sense of shared values is purposely cultivated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Leadership is collegial, caring, and open toward teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Leadership is oriented toward both tasks and achievements.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Leadership is in tune with teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Leadership listens to parents and the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Leadership obtains classroom materials and supplies needed by teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Learning/Assessment

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Assessment targets are clear and attainable for teachers. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Instruction and assessment promote student achievement. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Instruction is dynamic, learning-centered, and challenging. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Students learn to work cooperatively and as a team. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Students are given systematic opportunities to reflect on their learning progress. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Students learn civics-related knowledge that builds on and enhances academic skills. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. There is mutual trust and positive interactions among students and teachers. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Students participate in problem-solving. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Students engage in a dialogue about issues that is thoughtful and respectful. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. The program is committed to learning about and interacting with the broader community. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Expectations are high for all students. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. Student achievement and performance are rewarded and praised. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. Teachers and students are committed to academic excellence. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. Parents are informed about student progress on a regular basis. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Attitudes and Culture

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Students feel as if they are part of the program. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Students feel that they are working toward collective goals. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Students speak about the program proudly and positively. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Most students feel listened to and act like they have a voice. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Students feel safe and supported. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. The school conveys the civic purpose of education. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Teachers and students feel that the program contributes to the success of the school. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Appendix B: Focus Group Questions

Student Focus Group

1. Briefly introduce myself and the exercise.
2. Explain how the focus group will work.
3. Thank everyone for participating. Stress confidentiality.
4. Pose questions; summarize. Thank everyone.

Questions:

Do you ever talk about the SVPDP at home? If so, what do you say?

What have you learned in the SVPDP?

What impact has it had on your relations with teachers?

What impact has it had on your relations with other kids?

What impact has it had on your relations with your brothers and sisters?

What impact has it had on your relations with your parents?

What impact has it had on you?

What impact do you think it has had on Ritter?

Parent Focus Group

1. Briefly introduce myself and the exercise.
2. Explain how the focus group will work.
3. Thank everyone for participating. Stress confidentiality.
4. Pose questions; summarize. Thank everyone.

Questions:

Do your children talk about the SVPDP at home? If so, what do they typically say?

Have you noticed any changes in your children's behavior that you attribute to the SVPDP?

What impact has had the SVPDP had on your children's knowledge of American history and government?

What impact has it had on their relations with teachers?

What impact has it had on their relations with other kids?

What impact has it had on their relations with siblings?

What impact has it had on their relations with their parents?

What impact has it had on you?

What impact do you think it has had on Ritter?

Teacher Focus Group

1. Briefly introduce myself and the exercise.
2. Explain how the focus group will work.
3. Thank everyone for participating. Explain that they will be receiving a survey to complete by e-mail. The survey will cover several questions typically asked in school climate studies. Stress confidentiality.
4. Pose questions; summarize. Thank everyone.

Questions:

Has the SVPDP helped you teach social studies better? If so, how?

What impact has it had on your knowledge of American history and government?

What impact has it had on your relations with fellow teachers?

What impact has it had on your relations with students?

What impact has it had on your relations with Ritter's leadership?

What impact do you think it has had on your students?

What impact, if any, do you think it has had on your students' families?

What impact has the SVPDP had on Ritter?

What impact, if any, has the SVPDP had on the Allentown Public Schools?

