

**Evaluation of the Pilot of Voices and Choices: Civil Rights  
Spring 2007**

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--"This is an EXCELLENT PROGRAM. It gave the students the opportunity to compare the methods of resistance of the different civil rights movements. The students are now in a better position to understand where these civil rights movements are coming from and why they emerged in our society and why they continue to emerge...."—Civil Rights Teacher, Spring 2007

The six-week "Voices and Choices: Civil Rights" curriculum was field-tested in eighth-grade classrooms in approximately 30 schools across New York City, with a total of between 75 and 100 teachers, some of whom used it with just one of their classes and some of whom used it with all. There were two iterations, one beginning in January (28 schools) and one later in the spring (11 schools). Each classroom teacher was supported with six (weekly) visits from a TMI professional development consultant.

Overall, the curriculum was received very positively by the teachers, who reported that the curriculum had not only engaged their students but had helped them understand civil rights in broader context. However, there only a small percentage of students finished all six steps, and the teachers reported that the curriculum took far more time than expected, while many had problems making the transition from past to present.

The evaluation was designed to provide formative feedback by focusing on usability, fidelity, and evidence that the curriculum met its learning goals. We used different, although sometimes overlapping, sets of data to evaluate each of these, as follows:

## **Usability**

Teacher surveys at the end of the unit were used to collect data on the teacher's evaluation of the usability of the curriculum, including its structure, content, and the teacher's perspective on its efficacy in reaching learning goals.

## **Fidelity**

Evaluations of previous TMI curriculum projects had suggested that there is wide variation in the extent to which teachers teach the curriculum as designed. The reasons are various, including lack of access to technology, time constraints, and the participating teachers' evaluation of their students' academic and social skills, as well as the teachers' own knowledge base, technology skills, and instructional capabilities. When a teacher adapts the curriculum to fit his/her needs, we can see this a positive adaptation of the curriculum, in which case we call it "flexibility," or a negative adaptation, in which case we refer to lack of "fidelity" to the curriculum as designed. In this case, one key fidelity issue was whether or not the teachers taught all six steps of the curriculum. Since the professional developers were best positioned to measure fidelity, we used their weekly reports and a final brief survey that asked them to report on whether, and how, the teachers had changed the curriculum. We also conducted focus groups with teachers in two contrasting schools, one a struggling SUR school with a highly African/Caribbean-American population in Brooklyn and one a higher achieving school with a ethnically mixed population in Queens, in order to explore further the teachers' reactions to the curriculum.

## **Evidence that the curriculum is meeting its learning goals**

The final student project for this curriculum was to be a piece of "citizen journalism" (published online) in which the students linked their understanding of the past (from the first part of the curriculum) to research on a present-day issue (from the second part of the curriculum), and then made an argument for taking action. Depending on how the teachers organized their classrooms, there could have been at least 4 or 5 artifacts (pieces of journalism) and activities coming out of each classroom, for a total of 100 pieces, although less seemed likely. We planned to assess all of the pieces very quickly to see the extent to which they fulfilled the basic requirements of the assignment and then to compare the results a sample of classrooms. However, as we will discuss below, only a small proportion of the students completed the final

piece of journalism, so that in the end there were far fewer artifacts than expected. They will therefore be discussed as a group, rather than by teacher.

### **Data issues**

Although it would have been preferable to be able to correlate the data from the teachers and professional developers with student work, there was very little overlap among the data sets:

(1) Teacher survey: There were only 13 responses to the end-of-unit teacher survey and these came from only 10 of the schools. In addition, one of the respondents was not a classroom teacher but an administrator and reported on her perceptions of all her teachers:<sup>1</sup>

<b>School</b>	<b>Number of surveys</b>
PS 25	2
PS 188M	1
IS 322	1
192 Q	2
IS 14	1
IS 129	2
MS 254	1
CIS 219	1
MS 571	1
IS 62	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

Six of the teachers and the administrator had participated in other Teaching Matters Voices and Choices programs and two had participated in Digital Documentaries. Most of the responders were therefore familiar with the Teaching Matters curriculum approach and format, which may not have been true of the entire group of teachers.

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<sup>1</sup> One additional administrator responded but she only answered one question, so her results are not included in the analysis.

- (2) Professional developer survey: these were helpful but often partial, so that in only one or two cases could they be matched with the teacher’s survey responses.
- (3) Student publication: Low rates of completed student publication in the online journal made it difficult to use this as a standard of success.
- (4) Focus groups: eight teachers attended two focus groups; none had answered the teacher survey, and the professional developers’ surveys for these teachers were either partial or missing. Only a few had posted student work.

Despite our inability to triangulate data sources, a number of usability and fidelity issues emerged clearly from all the data sources, as did some evidence of the extent to which the curriculum was meeting its learning goals. What follows is therefore a composite picture, with data drawn selectively from the different data sources in order to illustrate the general points.

**Usability**

The teachers who responded to the survey and participated in the focus groups all found the overall curriculum both well-designed and usable. In terms of specific usability issues, the survey asked about the introductory animations and The Voice. All but two of the respondents found the introductory animations at least somewhat useful:

**How useful did you find the introductory animations (for each step) for introducing content? (n = 13)**

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Count</b>
Very useful	62%	8
Somewhat useful	23%	3
Not very useful	15%	2

Six of the thirteen survey respondents found The Voice “Definitely” easy to use and engaging for students, while four found it “Somewhat” easy to use:

**Did you find The Voice ...  
(n = 13)**

	<b>Definitely</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Not very</b>	<b>Did not use</b>
Easy to use	6	4	0	3
Engaging for students	6	2	0	3

However, three reported that they did not use it, and almost none of the participants in the focus group had done so. In other words, those who used it found it useful and engaging but they may not have been representative of the majority of teachers, particularly since, as we will see below, many teachers did not use the blog at all.

**Technology access**

Good access to computers and the Internet were necessary for this curriculum to be implemented within the allotted six-week time period. From the focus groups, it was clear that access varied tremendously, not only from school to school but from teacher to teacher within one school. As a result, some of the focus group teachers reported that their students did a great deal of their online work at home. None felt that this was a drawback, even in the Brooklyn SUR school, but this was primarily because by that point they had decided that only some students would complete the project. About half of the survey respondents also reported that their students used their home computers in addition to those in the labs and classrooms:

**WHERE did your students use computers during this project?  
(n = 13)**

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Count</b>
In the computer lab	77%	10
In my classroom	69%	9
At home	46%	6
Other (please specify)	15%	2

Eleven of the survey respondents answered a question about how often computers were used during this project compared to other projects for research, writing and creating presentations. Half or more thought that their students used computers more for this project than for other projects for these purposes:

**How did your students' use of COMPUTERS during Civil Rights compare with their use of computers during other projects in your classroom?  
(n = 11)**

	<b>More frequent</b>	<b>About the same</b>	<b>Less frequent</b>
For research	7	4	0
For writing	8	3	0
For creating presentations	6	3	0

In responding to a survey question that asked what aspects of the project they had needed support with, many more reported that they needed support getting access to technology than reported that they needed support with using it:

**What aspects of instruction did you need SUPPORT with during this project?  
(n = 13)**

	<b>No support</b>	<b>Some support</b>	<b>A lot of support</b>
Teaching Information Literacy skills	10	0	2
Using the LCD projector in the classroom	6	4	3
Getting access to technology for students	4	3	5

As would be expected, survey respondents reported that they did not use their textbooks very often during this unit and instead relied primarily on the Civil Rights website and the handouts from the website:

**How OFTEN did your students use the following resources during this unit?  
(n = 13)**

	<b>Several times a week</b>	<b>About once a week</b>	<b>Several times</b>	<b>Seldom/ Never</b>
Their textbooks	1	1	5	4
Civil Rights website	6	3	2	1
Civil Rights website handouts	7	4	1	1
Other websites they found themselves	5	0	3	5
The class blog	1	2	2	7

However, only one survey respondent had her students use the class blog more than once a week, while it was not used at all by five of survey respondents, seldom used by two more, and only used "several times" by another two. In the focus groups, it became clear that in some cases this was due to the lack of consistent access to computers but that two additional reasons were that some teachers were uncomfortable with this unfamiliar tool, while others had had difficulty getting the students to use the blog appropriately (particularly the Comments) and stopped using it for that reason.

### **Content and Skills**

In general, no matter what technical or other problems these teachers had, both the survey respondents and the focus group participants rated the curriculum very highly in terms of content and structure, and in terms of the skills it taught (or reinforced).

Most of the teachers who responded to the survey said that they did not need support with such aspects of the curriculum as differentiating primary and secondary sources and mastering the content, but many said they needed help with analogies between past and present and more than half said they needed support using the Internet to find teaching resources:

**What aspects of instruction did you need SUPPORT with during this project?  
(n = 13)**

	<b>No support</b>	<b>Some support</b>	<b>A lot of support</b>
Differentiating primary and secondary sources	10	2	0
Mastering the social studies content	9	2	2
Getting the students to make analogies between past and present	7	5	0
Using the Internet to find teaching resources	5	5	2

Ten out of 13 survey respondents said their students "definitely" had a better understanding of the definition of civil rights and of segregation as a result of the curriculum. More than half also felt that their students also developed an expanded definition of civil rights. In the focus groups, the teachers emphasized this aspect of the curriculum in particular. The African-American teachers felt strongly that it had

helped their students (and even helped them) see that civil rights applied to more than black people and to understand that civil rights issues were not past history. In the Brooklyn school, where all the teachers were African/Caribbean-American, most had never taught any of the other movements; in the Queens school, some of the teachers had taught a little about suffrage and Asian-American civil rights, but not in great depth. For example, they described their teaching about these movements using such phrases as “I tell them about...” “We talk about...” but not “We read about...” or “We study...” In Queens, the teachers reported that the Asian-American material resonated strongly with their students. In both cases, it seemed clear that the teachers themselves had also gained new knowledge and understanding.

However, more than half of the teachers who responded to the survey were at best only “somewhat” sure how much the unit had helped students understand what civil rights movements have in common or what it means to be a civil rights activist today. These were generally the teachers who did not complete the final steps of the curriculum:

**As a result of this curriculum, do you think your students have a better UNDERSTANDING of any of the following?  
(n = 13)**

	<b>Definitely</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Not really</b>
Definition of civil rights	10	3	0
The definition of segregation	10	3	0
The fact that civil rights has expanded	8	3	2
Civil rights issues today	7	5	1
Knowledge of civil rights leaders	6	6	1
Legal achievements of civil rights movements	5	6	2
What civil rights movements have in common	4	7	2
What it means to be a civil rights activist today	4	5	4

In their responses to an open-ended survey question that what they had found most helpful about the unit, most of the respondents focused on the expanded conception of civil rights:

- “Students emerged from the simplistic understanding that civil rights only applies to African-Americans to a more complex awareness that other groups



- shared similar struggles. Therefore, the concepts of segregation, the comparison of different civil rights movements, and discussions of racism, etc., were all extremely beneficial in helping my students to understand related concepts in American history.”
- “The students now understand what some of the injustices were and how people tried to fight against them. They started the unit without any knowledge of specific moments in history that really define the different movements. They also had never heard of the Japanese Internment Camps, so that was eye-opening for them. They are more aware of civil rights issues today, although they are still not necessarily confident that they can make a difference.”
  - “The unit was most useful in looking at the civil rights achievements, what civil rights movements have in common and the fact that it has expanded. Many of these students have always been looking at civil rights movements in terms of the African American civil rights movement. Now they have realized that there were many other civil rights movements.”
  - “I think it helped the students develop a broader definition of Civil Rights. Many of them had previously viewed Civil Rights from a very narrow perspective and the unit helped them to see the issue more globally, as well as something that they need to focus on TODAY--that ‘THE Civil Rights’ movement is not something that’s ‘over,’ but is something that requires current attention.”
  - “Understand civil rights and its impact to different groups.”
  - “The entire program was helpful. It all worked for my students. They were able to see many of the injustices that people faced and how they dealt with these injustices.”

In contrast, only two referred to the way in which the curriculum helped student connect the past to the present:

- “Relating issues of the past to the present.”
- “Defining and connecting.”

All but one or two teachers who responded to the survey felt that the curriculum had helped them teach their students a range of social studies skills. In addition to analyzing primary sources, the two other skills that most felt it “definitely” helped

with were making connections between the past and the present and understanding the past as a prerequisite for taking action. Again, those who did not feel it helped with these concepts were those who did not complete the final steps of the curriculum:

**Did Civil Rights help you TEACH your students the following skills?  
(n = 13)**

	<b>Definitely</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Not really</b>	<b>Did not do</b>
Analyzing primary sources	9	3	1	0
Making connections between the past and the present	9	1	1	1
Understanding the past as a prerequisite to taking action	8	2	2	1
Distinguishing between primary and secondary sources	7	3	3	0
Doing Internet research	7	3	2	1
Writing a case study	7	3	1	2
Developing a web page (Citizen Media Campaign)	4	2	1	5

In response to an open-ended question that asked which skills the curriculum helped most with and why, the teachers wrote about research skills, understanding primary source, and making connections between the past and present. Here are some of the quotes from the survey responses:

- “This unit helped students with the research process (note-taking, organizing notes, writing a case-study). They struggled at first to understand the importance of taking notes, but by the end demonstrated that they understood the ramifications of each step of the research process.”
- “Research skills and using several web links. It gave the students a chance to research current information using the different web links. The students were able to read and take the information which would best help them to put their case study together. This skill gave them choices in the type of materials that they could use in the preparation of their media campaign and case study.”
- “Understanding primary sources and students gaining the knowledge to understand the social injustices of the past as well as today.”
- “Making connections between the present and the past...the lessons that required the students to act out a scene or look at video of situations from another time really allowed them to connect the issues of yesterday to their

world today. They had to understand what worked and what did not work for the different groups they studied to be able to understand how to best help themselves and other current civil rights issues.”

- “It helped most with understanding connections and understanding the laws and how to take action. These students are ELLs; the course helped them to learn about the laws that govern the country in which they are now residing. They learned a lot.”
- “Many of these skills we had already worked on. However, the Teaching Matters program helped bring the concepts of injustice and action into a setting that the children could understand and appreciate.”
- “I think it helped most with the media campaign. This piece of the project forced the students to really consider current issues and how they might be able to make a difference in their society.”

In the focus group, the teachers felt that the curriculum had helped reinforce their students’ Internet research skills, while the Social Studies coordinator in Queens noted that some teachers still needed help with this as well.

All but one of the survey respondents rated the content of the unit as either Excellent or Good and all but two rated the scope and sequence in the same way:

**OVERALL, how would you rate the following aspects of Civil Rights?  
(n = 13)**

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
The content of the lessons	9	3	1	0
The scope and sequence of the unit	8	3	2	0

The one who rated both of these as Fair is an example of a thoroughly disaffected teacher (see Appendix for a discussion of this teacher).

In the focus groups, the teachers particularly mentioned the visuals, the multimedia resources, and the interactivity as being engaging for their students. Two teachers also wrote about these in their final comments on the survey:

- “The articles and pictures worked well with my students. The fact that all of the materials were read to them by the computer was a great help. Many of

my students have comprehension but do not have the skills to read the material on their own. This facet of the website made the research materials more available to the students.”

- “Using the primary documents was useful in placing the movements in context. The students were also able to explore the timelines, make comparisons and draw their conclusions about the issues.”

There were four topics that the students could choose to work on. Although all of the teachers who responded to the survey had at least some students studying children’s rights, all the topics were covered:

**Which of these social movements did your students study?  
[You can check more than one]  
(n = 13)**

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Count</b>
Children's rights	100%	13
African American civil rights	85%	11
Women's suffrage	77%	10
Asian American civil rights	77%	10

The survey asked if this was too many or too few topics. Six of the ten teachers who answered this question felt that the number was fine. They commented that all fit well into the eighth-grade social studies curriculum and also helped them prepare for the eighth-grade state test. Three felt that there should be more topics, and suggested adding Native American Rights, Immigration, and Hispanic Rights. In one of the focus groups, a few teachers also said they would have liked more topics to choose from and also mentioned Native American rights.

Only one teacher who responded to the survey felt there were too many topics, preferring to focus on only two. However, in the focus groups it became clear that the teachers had interpreted what it meant to “teach” the four topics very differently. Most had done all four, but quickly, and then let each group of students choose which one to focus on in depth. However, several teachers reported that they had taught all four in depth. Not surprisingly, these were among the teachers who felt the curriculum was too long and who did not finish.

## **Pedagogy and classroom management**

The survey asked if teachers had needed any help with the pedagogical aspects of the curriculum, such as using the Workshop Model and managing group work. Most reported that they had not:

### **What aspects of instruction did you need SUPPORT with during this project? (n = 13)**

	<b>No support</b>	<b>Some support</b>	<b>A lot of support</b>
Using the Workshop Model	10	2	1
Managing group work	8	4	0

However, the focus group participants in the struggling Brooklyn school had all, without exception, had trouble managing group work—and in fact only one of these teachers had more than one group finish (one had none), and only for one of her classes. In both schools, the teachers reported that those students who had finished had done most of the final work on the project at home. (Note, however, that at the Brooklyn school, some of the students who did not finish converted their research into exit projects, using the PowerPoint format required by the school.)

The survey asked the teachers if they had changed their teaching methods or styles during the project. Only two said they did not change. Three wrote about how it had made it possible to run a more student-centered classroom:

- “I was able to be pretty hands off with some of the lessons, and the kids could follow through the steps without my having to guide them through each detail. Some of the lessons brought up a lot of questions. I was able to use that to teach in an almost Socratic method, which is normally very difficult to create in an 8<sup>th</sup>-grade classroom.”
- “Yes, I was more relaxed and my students participated more.”
- “Allowing more open discussion in class as well as analyzing a primary source.”

The rest answered this question by referring not the teaching methods but to content:

- “I had to use more primary source documents.”

- “I researched the materials more. I look for more to help the students understand the events.”
- “I used technology more in my class and I was able to find more resources through the Teaching Matters website.”
- “Yes, after using the program I began making power point slide shows to teach a unit on the Harlem Renaissance during the 1920's.”

The survey also asked the teachers if they had seen changes in their students during the curriculum. Most reported that their students were more interested in the work than usual, were willing to do more work, and participated more:

- “They were more eager to work with the variety of primary source documents. They could make links between the information they were always reading from their textbooks and the different types of primary source documents they were exposed to in this unit.”
- “They were interested in the work.”
- “Yes, they took this very seriously.”
- “As mentioned above, they participated more. They enjoy working on the computer and this curriculum has that component built in.”
- “Some of the students who worked together surprised me by being much more willing to work in groups than they had previously.”
- “They seemed more concern about their environment and what is going on.”
- “Many of them worked a little better. Some of them became a little more socially aware.”

In the focus groups, the teachers particularly emphasized how pleased they were with the level of student engagement with the issues. At the Brooklyn school, however, the teachers reported that despite initial interest, it had been very difficult to keep the students on task and that as a result—as noted above—many had simply given up.

As with past projects, all the teachers who responded to the survey were very happy with the in-class support from TMI professional developers. However, they rated the professional development kick-off slightly less highly:

**OVERALL, how would you rate the following aspects of Civil Rights?  
(n = 13)**

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>
The professional development kick-off	4	6	1	0
The in-class support for the program	8	3	2	0

The one who rated the kick-off as only “fair” wrote that he had trouble understanding the website and the manual and needed a lot of support in other ways as well. In fact, he seems to have made little effort (see Appendix for more on this teacher).

**Fidelity**

There were six steps that needed to be taken to complete the curriculum. All of the teachers who responded to the survey completed Steps 1 and 2, and most completed through Step 4, but then the number declined. Only one-third reported having completed through Step 6:

**How many of the steps were you able to complete?  
(n = 13)**

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Count</b>
Step 1: Define Civil Rights	100%	13
Step 2: Understand Injustice	100%	13
Step 3: Study Methods of Action	85%	11
Step 4: Describe a Movement	92%	12
Step 5: Create a Campaign	69%	9
Step 6: Make a Difference	39%	5

The teachers who attended the focus groups were asked to indicate how many of the groups in each of their classes had finished each step. The results showed that almost all had completed through Step 3; that about half had completed Step 4 but the other half had skipped this step completely; and that at most one or two groups in each class had completed Step 5 and Step 6--while even those who had done so did not necessarily post to The Voice.

In the Brooklyn school, the teachers felt that this severe attrition was due primarily to students’ inability to stay on task, including (in fact, particularly) when they had

access to technology. In the Queens school, the teachers felt that the attrition was due to lack of time as the curriculum began to compete with the need to review for the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade exit exam (this school was in the second cohort).

The responses to a survey question that asked what support they had needed confirms that pacing and finishing were an issue for many of the teachers:

**What aspects of instruction did you need SUPPORT with during this project?  
(n = 13)**

	<b>No support</b>	<b>Some support</b>	<b>A lot of support</b>
Pacing/finishing the full unit	5	3	5

The TMI professional developers were asked if the teachers they had worked with had kept to the schedule. Ten of the 29 teachers they reported on were described as having kept to the schedule:

- “[The teacher] moved faster than I expected. He does not rely much on the animations. He tends to copy all of the materials; he finds that the laptops take too long to set up, so he is using them mostly for typing the case studies. He delves deeply into the program concepts and has covered most of the information between my visits. He is really relating the children's movement and issues of injustice to the Bill of Rights and law issues. He tends to be flexible and has high expectations for his students. Pace has slowed as students had to type and upload their case studies.”
- “This teacher did keep to the timetable. The pace with this group started off slow but eventually we were back on track.”
- “[The teacher] stuck to the timeline. He did the project with two eighth-grade classrooms. Students were able to complete their case studies and he is currently working on a media campaign with 15 students from both classes after-school.”
- “This teacher did keep to the timetable. The group is on point and they have received the materials in a timely fashion.”
- “Teacher was right on pace.”
- “Yes, kept up with all the steps, and routinely gave out homework to enhance the weekly writing assignments.”



- “[The teacher] kept to the timetable and did not change any elements.”

Several were described as more or less on schedule but needing more time for the media campaign:

- “Although he has completed with the case study, he is taking more time with the media campaign since he is trying to tie it in with the required exit projects.”
- “Yes, although the Citizen Media Campaign has taken more class time than anticipated.”
- “They kept to the timetable until the very end. The citizen media campaign needed much more time than it was given in the unit.”
- “The teacher stayed on pace through first component of program. Then she stretched out the Media Campaigns for her students’ enjoyment.”
- “We kept to the schedule pretty closely until the end. We didn't do every lesson but we kept to the schedule. We needed more time than was given for the citizen media campaigns.”
- “Teacher stayed on pace with much prodding.”

Others kept to the schedule only by cutting lessons or steps:

- “This teacher began following the timetable in earnest; she spent a lot of time on the first sections and then skipped some of the activities (performance).”
- “This teacher fell about one week behind. She decided to select a small group of students to complete the Citizen Media Campaign and have the others stop at the completion of the case study.”
- “This teacher has kept with timetable in terms of following the steps from the curriculum. However, she has not been keeping up with the pacing calendar. Some of the reasons have been testing and field trips. I also think she fluctuated, in terms of following through with the lessons from one week to the next.”
- “More or less. Due to dire lack of technology, we decided fairly early on not to try to go beyond the case study.”

And some simply ground to a halt:

- “Teacher kept timetable fairly well, but stopped implementing the program.”

- “This teacher was doing a fantastic job with the timetable all the way through Step 3. Then, because of testing, field trips, and her own insecurities about her students' abilities (Special Education class) she has been much more resistant to push her students through the entire process of the program.”
- “[The teacher] dropped two of the classes near the end of the project because she felt they were not working hard enough.”

In several cases, the PDs felt that the problem was that the teachers had not been able, or willing, to devote the necessary time to the curriculum between visits:

- “The project is moving slower than expected. [The teacher] chose to work with her first period class, so that I could model the lesson and she could replicate it with later classes. However because of testing, staff meetings, etc., class is cancelled or starts late. On occasion her regular classwork/test prep has pre-empted my work with her class. The teacher also does not have time to devote to the curriculum when I am not there, which has contributed to the slower pace.”
- “No. Few lessons were done when I was not at the school. Due to dire lack of technology, and limited access to the technology that is available, we decided fairly early on not to try to go beyond the case study.”
- “No, the teacher did not keep to the timetable; she did not complete all lessons in between visits as requested; she did do about three to four on her own, but this was not sufficient to sustain the project.”

Note that in the focus groups, many of the teachers at both schools reported that the curriculum had taken more time than they had expected when the TMI professional developer was not there, up to several class periods a week. This was particularly difficult for the Queens school, because of the need to put time aside to review for the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade tests. Most of the teachers wanted to start the curriculum in the fall, not the spring—and certainly not in late spring.

### **Changes made**

Seven of the nine teachers who responded to a survey question that asked what changes they had made to the curriculum to adapt it to their students said they had made changes. The most frequent change was to add more background information:

- “The adjustments that I made came in the form of background information. The units could not be taught the way they were set up or the students would not have learned very much. Therefore I had to teach each unit with an introductory lesson to help the students to make links with the topics they were going to study.”
- “My students needed a lot of background information before they could start this project and be able to work with the materials provided. They are students with limited English proficiency and many of them are new to the country and the curriculum.”
- “I included some of the history that surrounded these various movements. I had to teach a lot of background information, because they did not have much of the prior knowledge.”
- “It was rather an addition as many of my students are of Hispanic background and I also wanted to bring out some of their experiences.”

The PDs also reported that some of the teachers had added material:

- “In exploring the primary photos, he selected additional photos of children, provided a description of Lewis Hine's work and an article from the period provided different perspectives on child labor. He has supplemented the program timeline and movement information with additional research articles such as protest songs and poems from the early 20th century. He feels that his advanced 8th grade class needs more challenge.”
- “She took a few more steps with the writing of the case study, and since her campaign was on the ERA, she incorporated more short stories and articles for student research.”
- “He had students include a PowerPoint, and they watched a few films/docs.”
- “[The teacher] added a movie on Civil Rights.”
- “[The teacher] added lessons in between the end of the case study and the campaign. She felt her students would not be able to create an effective presentation without additional time to learn about their role within the government.”

In terms of deletions, some teachers cut material they had already covered, while others trimmed the curriculum to accommodate the needs of their particular students:

- "I had to cut some of the primary source vs. secondary source materials out...we had already covered that, and we were pretty behind at that point. I used all of the optional extra videos and handouts...they were often the best parts of a lesson."
- "We modified the project to accommodate the ESL classroom. Differentiating instruction you may say. Students wrote short essays and created mini iMovies on their respective movements."
- "Because this was a Special Ed class, we made significant modifications to the unit. We kept the thematic content the same week-by-week, but we didn't do every lesson for each week."

However, as noted above, many teachers cut steps or lessons within steps. The PDs reported that many teachers did not use the Step 3 lessons. In addition, they described other ways in which the teachers had trimmed the curriculum down to meet their time constraints:

- "[The teacher] did not make any changes to the curriculum save for cutting one or two of the introductory lessons as she had covered the material previously."
- "I believe that she cut a number of lessons due to pressures to cover other curriculum topics. She was very enthusiastic about the unit overall but did not have the time and momentum to complete every lesson."
- "Because of time constraints and her students' ability level, this teacher has cut out several lessons from Steps 5 and 6. For example, instead of following the plan of having students add sections to the media campaign one day at a time, she has opted to add the material in 2-3 full class sessions, opting out of the mini lessons, and moving straight into project work."
- "The teacher chose to focus on the women's movement, so lessons that pertained specifically to other movements (i.e., The Emmett Till reading) were skipped."
- "A number of lessons were cut."
- "[The teacher] cut some lessons out due to time constraints."

### **Linking past and present**

Trimming the curriculum need not be a threat to fidelity if the lessons that are cut are not central to the curriculum as whole. Not completing the curriculum—not linking the past with the present—is a definite threat.

Some of the reasons that teachers did not complete all the steps have been noted above, with the two most important being time constraints and difficulty maintaining student engagement and managing groups. But in addition, some of the teachers who completed the first part of the curriculum, which focused on the past, and then moved on to the citizen media campaign reported that they had trouble bridging the two. They felt that the transition from past to present was not as smooth as it could have been—that there was too much going on in the middle that was not closely enough related to the final project. All of the teachers in the Queens focus group felt that the curriculum “sagged” in the middle—although they were not able to provide specific recommendations as to what to do to fix this, there was a general feeling that they somehow lost their way after the first steps, before gaining momentum again for the final campaign. One survey respondent may have been referring to her difficulties with this bridging point when she said that she would have liked her students to have made the link to today for each of the four topics first, before picking their own issues. (This may also have been what the teacher quoted above meant when said she needed to fill in more about the present before she could have the students create their media campaigns.)

### **Student work**

As noted above, only a small percentage of the students actually completed the final project. Although the data we have may be incomplete, by our counts, only about 27 percent of all the entries were developed at all:

**Blogs Created Compared to Blogs Developed**

<b>Created and developed</b>	<b>Created but not developed</b>	<b>Total</b>
69	185	254

There were four components of the media campaign:

- (1) Describe a current civil rights issue: what is it about, why is it important to you, what will the campaign be about, what will the title of the campaign be

- (2) Connect the past to the present
- (3) Describe a news article or organization; describe the information that each source provides to help people understand the issue
- (4) Take action: decide if you are going to do a petition, email campaign, press release, or postcard, plan a method of action, post the method to the campaign page, and describe why you chose the method

Of the 69 who developed the media campaign at least somewhat, only one-third (23) completed all four steps; 45 percent only completed the first two:

Completed 1 step	Completed 2 steps	Completed 3 steps	Completed 4 steps	Total
22	16	8	23	69

The difficulty that the teachers had in bridging past and present was evident in the student work. It was a requirement that the final product link past and present, and the entries in The Voice do this, but most do so in very generally in one sentence or two. In addition, one teacher from the focus groups who had attended the final presentations said although the presentations did show an expanded view of civil rights, they did not make the connection very clear, focusing primarily on current issues.

### **Recommendations**

The teachers and professional developers had a number of suggestions for improving the curriculum. The two most important were:

- Cut it back (particularly in the middle steps) so that the entire unit takes less time but all the steps can be completed.
- Start early in the school year, so that the curriculum can be stretched out (fewer periods per week over more weeks) and will fit better with the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade curriculum.

In addition, the teachers had suggestions about other aspects of the program:

### *Professional development*

- Train teachers for a longer period so they know more about the curriculum beforehand—two hours was not enough to absorb it all.
- Simplify the manual. Some teachers found it too complicated to follow after only two hours of PD.
- Add a PD day in the middle, as the curriculum shifts into the present, so there is not so much to absorb in the first PD day.
- Include more on how to integrate this curriculum into the existing curriculum.

### *Curriculum*

- Rather than expect all the groups in a class to do all the steps, find a way to have a finished project even if all the steps are not completed. (Note, however, that this suggestion would undermine the point of the curriculum if it eliminated the comparison between past and present—see next suggestion.)
- Do the comparison of then and now, but without a full-scale campaign, so that there is more time to draw out the connections with the students. (However, doing this could undermine the goal of having students take action based on what they had learned.)
- Have more than social studies teacher involved—in particular, get the technology teacher so that if laptops are not available, can get access to the computer lab.
- Develop ways to do the project without the blog, which many students used inappropriately.

### *Final presentations*

- Provide students with certificates. All of the teachers in the focus groups were upset that there were no certificates to take back to the schools. Although they recognized that this was not a competition, they felt that students had been chosen to attend because they had done well and that they needed to be recognized. The teachers at the Brooklyn school in particular said that their students desperately need recognition for achievement, and also that they need public recognition in order to be able to continue to do projects such as this.

- One teacher felt that although having guest commentators was wonderful, their comments were less motivating than they could have been. He reported that the commentators suggested additional things the students could do, and that although they did this in a nice way, it ended up being a little discouraging for the students.



## **Appendix**

### **The disaffected teachers**

There were two teachers who had consistently negative responses in the final survey. They are both teachers who seem to have exerted as little effort as possible and who seem to have regarded the project as a burden, not an opportunity. One reported that she did not have any access to computers, did not use the website, did not use the blog, did not find that the curriculum was helpful for her students, and felt that she needed more support than she got for everything from the content to the technology. She did not go beyond Step 3. The other did have access to computers but reported that he did not use them much, did not find the curriculum helpful for his students. He did not go beyond Step 4.

Normally these would not be worth discussing, which is why this is an appendix. But these experiences must be very depressing for the TMI staff developers, and since their logs show that there were many early warning signs, it seems possible that TMI might consider ways of intervening, or even withdrawing, when teachers seem to be undermining the project. Their time might then be redistributed to those teachers who are willing to do the work.

The teacher who reported in her survey that she had no access to computers and that the program had not helped her students in virtually any way only answered one open-ended question, in which she said she felt the program was too long and that the project required too much in too short a period of time. The professional developer's log tells a somewhat different story:

- "... [The teacher] hasn't yet begun teaching the program, but will begin immediately. I met with [the teacher] and [another teacher] together and the three of us examined the website and the lessons. We examined the specific handouts that they will use for the first step of the program and I submitted them to be photocopied. I asked her to email me next week to let me know how it's coming along."
- "I spoke with [the teacher] first thing in the morning. She let me know that she hadn't begun the program as of yet, because she was asked to do something else for her students .... [She] told me that she had reviewed the program thoroughly, and that she would begin immediately following vacation. I think it is going to be

difficult for her to complete the entire program by the end date, but hopefully we can make it happen. For my next visit, [she] has assured me that she will be working on the program, but since neither she nor her students have done this before, I cannot ascertain when she will complete the lessons or where she will be when I do return the Friday following break.”

- “[The teacher] is now fully involved in the project. She is at Step Two with her students and has created a class weblog. [Note that the teacher reported in her survey that she had never used the blog during the unit.] She cannot use the weblog b/c she tells me that she has yet to receive authorization. Today her class will be reading the movement profiles, but she will eliminate the lessons she feels are not necessary and expects to be at Step Five by the time I return in two weeks. She cannot work with her students during Literacy, simply because there are too many students being pulled out for special programs (like Read180). This makes it difficult for her to use the laptops, since using them during one class period is difficult. Another issue she is facing is with regard to her wireless connection in her room-- it doesn't always work. She wants to post to the Voice, and I suggested she use the library computers, since they connected via landline. [She] has opted to skip the lessons in Step 3, in order to have enough time to complete the project. [Note that the teacher reported that she had completed Step 3 but nothing after that.] She is confident that she will have completed the case study by the time I return and that she will be beginning Step 5 by March 16th.”
- “[The teacher] was unable to meet with me as there was a union meeting during her the period she usually meets with me. I have emailed her to ask for a detailed update, but have yet to hear back. When I return to the school this Friday, I will meet with her to discuss her progress and help facilitate completion.”
- “I met with [the teacher] and spent some time in her classroom with her, though she was not working on the program at that time. She complained about not having access to the Voice, so I went ahead and set her up with a user id and login. She was grateful as she said that she had wanted her students to post their work online (though I don't know how genuine this comment was). [She] has been moving through the project slowly, but expects to have her students complete the campaign, even if they do not attend the event (which they will not). [Her] students completed their case study and she was considering not

doing the campaign, since she was sure she wouldn't have enough time, but I encouraged her to complete the campaign despite the fact that she would not attend the event. When I return I will check in with her to see that her students are working on the campaign."

- "[The teacher] was not working on the campaign in her class, but assures me that after break they will continue the project to completion. I don't think this will actually happen. Since [she] knows that she will not be bringing students to the event, she is not compelled to continue. Her students did, however, complete the case study. [The teacher reported that her students did not do the case study.]"

The second disaffected teacher had adequate access to technology and actually rated the content highly, but gave almost everything else a low rating. His comments in response to open-ended questions were all negative: he had to coordinate too many things, including the Internet, the manual, the lesson, and making copies; he needed more support than he got with using the manual and navigating the websites; it had been unclear that he was responsible for teaching the unit, not the TMI staff person. Again, the professional developer's log entries tell a slightly different story:

- "We were supposed to meet 3rd period in the lab, but they were using the lab for testing that would go until 11am (end of 4th period)... so [the teacher] and I arranged to meet in another classroom. We were looking to finish Lesson 1.1 and begin 1.2. After briefly looking at the photo array and gauging reactions, we took a more detailed look at the Louisiana Literacy Test and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. I gave the teacher a copy of the handbook with CD for his reference and asked him to make the necessary copies for each Lesson- best to do it all at once. We reviewed the step by step checklist and I suggested that they be given the consent form and handout 1.b for homework. By my next visit the students should have read the Movement Profiles and chosen a movement to study (1.2) and do preliminary research on their topic (1.3). I would like to start Lesson 2.1 by my next visit, so [the teacher] would have to complete 1.3 on his own. I will set up the class blog with him so that it will be ready for the next lesson. The teacher did not stay in the room while the lesson was going on... Instead the lab teacher stayed in the class with me. It is necessary for the teacher to stay so that they can understand where we left off and can pick up with their students at that point in between my visits."

- “Today we met in the lab with [the lab teacher] and completed Lesson 1.3. The students analyzed the Resources as to whether they were primary or secondary, what rights were being abridged, and what life was like before and after the laws changed. The teacher did not make copies so we did it in SS notebooks. We began Lesson 2.1 having children watch video and read and take notes on the movement background. The video did take an inordinate amount of time to load. I may skip the video intro next time in the interest of time. The teacher should complete Lesson 2.1 through 3.1 between now and March 6, 2007 at the very least in order to be on track for the finale in April.”
- “I met with the class and [the lab teacher] in the computer lab for periods 3 and 4. [The teacher] did not show up. The class was especially difficult to manage today. We did Lesson 3.2 today- Emmett Till article. I projected the image of his open casket and his image before he was killed on the screen. It immediately got kids' attention. They read the article and responded on the VOICE. There were many students using inappropriate language and making rude comments, so much of the time was sent reviewing and deleting comments and blocking accounts. The students told me that [the teacher] has not done anything with the students since I was last here. We should have been able to complete 2 lessons today, but because of classroom management issues, we only completed lesson 3.2. [The teacher] should complete Lesson 3.3 through 4.3 by next visit.”
- “Students did not show up in the lab during 3-4 periods due to assembly. I did, however, speak with [the lab teacher] who told me that the students had not done anything since my last visit. I found [the teacher] and informed him that his students would not likely be prepared for Student Summit. He explained that he would be taking [another teacher's] students as she could not attend.”