"Youth Engagement and K-12 Civics Education"

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- Each participant looked at four charts that compared the civic involvement and political participation of 18-29 year olds as compared to 30+ years old. We asked them what could be done about the gap between the two age groups, specifically how to improve youth engagement.
- Youth might be less likely to contact people because they follow issues, not parties or people
- "politics" might not be very comprehensive
- Young adults are single, getting career started, might have just moved to a new community or subcommunity and then move again two years later
- Chances are, they're not going to seek roots until they're married and have kids
- One of scout requirements is that they attend a public meeting and write a letter to an official
- Insecurity among the youth—feeling they don't have the skills to speak out
- Lack of awareness among youth—meeting times, voting deadlines, etc.
- Young people may not want to commit to a party or belief at a young age
- Youth are becoming more engaged via the internet, so they might close the gap later on

- Maybe there is a lot of engagement that's not reflected in the data since so much happens online
- Lack of language for civic engagement—people don't know how to talk about it or don't realize that what they do IS civic involvement
- Need to match how we measure to how we ask the questions
- Cause of youth disengagement: adults assume that youth are uninformed which discourages them from going out and doing something
- Cause: way it's taught—it's just names and dates and memorizing. We should put it in perspective and make it more relatable to kids and make them understand that they have to vote, etc.
- Country's message today is that big government is bad, anti-government rhetoric—why would kids want to be involved with something like that?
- 25 year olds today grew up with 2000 being their first big political memory which was a very divisive, negative event.
- It's too easy to turn out—tv, video games, etc.
- Have to find youth that are driven—bad government times make them more driven to correct the mistakes that they see instead of getting turned off
- Maybe this is just a phase that all people go to—youth have never participated and always get involved later in life when they have families and jobs and are more interested in the economy and school board elections
- Would be interested in more lateral track of young adults who go on to be more involved
- Debbie: even if you control for that, there's still a generational issue with youth today who are much less engaged that past youth
- Youth might be more likely to get involved when their parents volunteer and donate or if you see people in your community doing it growing up
- Economic inequality is a huge thing here—young people work 2-3 jobs working part time to survive—don't have time to get involved
- Older people have more time to care about community. 18 year olds are planning their own lives instead of caring about community. Education is getting harder and college is getting more competitive

- Incentive system set up for 16 and 17 year olds to volunteer so they can get into college
- Not so for 18 year olds
- Solutions:
- If high schools have a say in school board meetings and could vote it might improve. Start caring at a young age. Voices are heard early. Then they'll keep with it in college and beyond
- Social media can be useful in the classroom
- Role models are essential (story about debate teacher)
- Fundamental problem is communication (or lack thereof). Find common ground with person of another ideology
- Start teaching civics at a younger age (not just executive branch but also participation and volunteering)
- Incentivizing volunteering
- People don't volunteer because they think it takes too much time
- Involving youth early—summer camp at Baylor
- Talking about current events in high school and making it more relatable
- Moving away from two party system—"one party system" that runs on issues instead of partisanship
- Model good discussion—some people don't want to talk about this stuff because it could cause a confrontation or argument